

## NEWS

Jindabyne  
cafe shut  
down over  
breaches

Alex Crowe

AN ORGANIC grocery store and cafe in Jindabyne has been forced to close its doors for a week after it allegedly continuously ignored Covid health directives.

The Market Jindabyne has been directed to shut from Friday after its owners allegedly refused to enforce a mask mandate, introduce QR code check-ins or comply with limited patronage regulations.

The cafe owners, a 32-year-old woman and 33-year-old man, were arrested and charged last month for failing to wear a mask while working at the premises.

Police say while the pair were released on bail, officers revisited the cafe and found no face coverings being worn by members of the public, no QR code and no sign-in sheet.

Messaging on the Market Jindabyne Facebook page this week proclaimed the couple's innocence.

"We are not guilty of the allegations and have elected to voluntarily shut the doors of our cafe and retail business until these matters resolve," the message says.

Comments on the post were mixed, with Jindabyne residents seemingly divided on whether or not the owners had done the wrong thing by failing to comply, or done the right thing by making a stand against heavy-handed health measures.

The owners have been issued a \$2000 fine for breaching public health orders and are due to appear before Cooma court next month for breaching bail conditions.

The grocery store and cafe will be closed for one week from July 9.

The capital's  
quiet home  
quarantine  
success story

Sarah Basford Canales, Steve Evans, Kathryn Lewis

HOME quarantining is being touted as the way forward as the country grapples with the burgeoning return of overseas Australians and the risk of further hotel outbreaks of Covid.

But in the ACT, where a full year has passed since the last case of community transmission, the concept has been quietly, and successfully, under way since the deadly virus first arrived in March last year.

Russian diplomat Alexey Katkov, who has quarantined at home in Canberra three times in the last 16 months, is one of nearly 2200 diplomats and government officials from more than 100 countries to do so.

He returned from a three-week holiday in Moscow in November. He has also done two working day-trips to Japan, flying out in the morning, having meetings in the Russian embassy in Tokyo and then back in the evening.

Each time, he has landed in Sydney and been met by an embassy driver to take him straight to his apartment in Forrest.

He's then done the 14-day quarantine alone.

When diplomats land from abroad, they go into the same queue as everyone else but when they reach the Border Force officials, they say who they are and present a letter from the Department

of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

They are then tested and allowed to go on.

Japanese Ambassador to Australia Shingo Yamagami said the necessary process he, his wife and their chef were subject to had made his welcome to the country in late 2020 a cold and lonely one.

"I didn't have anyone to receive me [at the airport on arrival] - I felt really isolated," he said.

He joked he felt embassy staff treated him like "dirty laundry" for those 14 days he was confined to his Yarralumla residence.

"Joking aside, Australia is doing an exemplary job and I was lucky I could do quarantine in my residence with my wife and chef," he said.

More than half of the foreign diplomats who have returned to Australia since March last year have completed their home quarantine in Canberra.

An ACT Health spokesperson confirmed 1339 diplomats and family members and 851 Australian government officials had completed home quarantine in the capital territory.

There are currently 60 diplomats and their families, and 20 Australian government officials in quarantine.

Over that period, there have been five COVID-19 cases reported in returned diplomats in Canberra.

Diplomats are exempt from hotel quarantine, as



## COMING HOME

**Diplomats home  
quarantining in Canberra:**

**2020: 656**

**2021: 708 (to date)**

**Total: 1364**

**Total COVID-19 cases from returning  
diplomats in Canberra: 5**

**Australia-wide: 2000 (since March  
2020, from more than 100 countries)**

Japanese Ambassador to Australia Shingo Yamagami and Russian diplomat Alexey Katkov (inset) have quarantined in the ACT. Pictures: Karleen Minney, Keegan Carroll

Australia has a legal requirement under the Vienna Convention to allow them freedom of movement and protection from detention.

A Foreign Affairs spokesperson said the process was subject to "rigorous controls" by health authorities and was "provided on a reciprocal basis".

Much like anyone under quarantine, diplomats are regularly tested for COVID-19, contacted by ACT Health and face random check-ins from police.

They will be tested at

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**Japanese Ambassador to Australia Shingo Yamagami**

the airport on arrival into Australia, on the first or second day at their residence and again on day 12.

A specialised team within the Australian Federal Police, the Security Investi-

gation Diplomatic Liaison team, conduct random checks on diplomats both in-person and on the phone.

Penalties for quarantine breaches can cost those subject to them up to \$8000.

## Canberra Airport boss backs stay-at-home return plan

Steve Evans

CANBERRA'S home quarantine success has prompted the head of Canberra Airport to call for the system to be extended to include more returned travellers.

Stephen Byron said the capital had shown home quarantine had not led to wider community transmission.

There have been zero cases of a person quarantined at home instead of a hotel infecting others, then spreading out into the community,

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well.**

**Stephen Byron**

despite more than 2000 diplomats and Australian government officials being allowed to skip the official process.

"The ACT has been doing

it and it's worked exceptionally well. There hasn't been a leakage," Mr Byron said.

"In my mind, it's safe. Home quarantine can work. In future, as we open our borders to low-risk countries, there are options around home quarantine."

The ACT government should "have an open and positive mind", he said. The government was not so keen, though. It indicated it would follow federal policy.

"We will continue to work with the Commonwealth on what alternative quarantine

models could be implemented in the ACT, in line with any national cabinet decisions," a statement from ACT Health said.

ACT chief health officer Kerryn Coleman said home quarantine was the "way forward" but transforming the program from diplomats and officials to the general public was challenging. "There's a different degree of support and in-reach kind of supports that have to happen for home quarantine, as opposed to hotel quarantine," she said.

"Doing that from a bespoke up to a scale model can be quite challenging. There are lots of things to look at to do that."

Dr Coleman said the logistics of a broader home quarantine would need to be worked through.

"In a hotel we can just send a group of nurses into a hotel, but how do we get the entry and exit testing that we do currently," she said.

"How do we check on people and make sure they're safely where they need to be? That's easy [at a hotel]; you

just put a security guard at the front door."

Home quarantine has been a controversial topic in recent weeks.

The federal government and the governments of states and territories have preferred keeping incomers in hotels or at two "mandatory supervised quarantine facilities" in the Northern Territory - one at Howard Springs near Darwin and the other at Alice Springs.

Despite the leakages, governments felt that hotels were easier to monitor.





Mr Yamagami said he received questions every day from ACT Health about his physical and mental wellbeing.

On one day, towards the end of the two-week period, he recalled telling them he was feeling very constrained and isolated and was quickly phoned up for wellbeing check.

"They treated me really well," he said.

Mr Katkov faced a similar situation with regular check-ins by officials. If he didn't respond to the questions, he was told he would be phoned, and if he didn't answer by two o'clock, he

was told he would then be visited in person.

He said that didn't happen because he stayed in his apartment.

A lot depended on trust but there are some safeguards, the diplomat said. He lives in the middle floor of a three floor block and if he had moved out of his room, others might have seen him.

He accepted that it was harder to control home quarantine than quarantine in hotels but it was much better.

Perhaps it should be expanded as the vaccines are rolled-out, he felt.

There is one potential gap in the system.

"They don't tell you how to put the garbage out. I picked a late time in the evening or early in the morning and used the stairs. I wore gloves and a mask and chose a time when I wouldn't meet a neighbour," Mr Katkov said.

Six months into his role, Mr Yamagami said his experience in Australia was one admired by colleagues posted to other countries around the world.

"They are really, truly impressed with how Australia has handled the pandemic. I feel very lucky," he said.

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## INTERNATIONAL BORDERS

# Vaccine travel perks emerge as pilot gets national cabinet nod

Harley Dennett, Dan Jervis-Bardy

FROM July 16 all inbound arrivals to Australia will have to declare their vaccination status.

A home quarantine pilot program will also proceed in South Australia for arrivals vaccinated against COVID-19.

That alternative to hotel quarantine was an important development, Prime Minister Scott Morrison said following the 46th national cabinet meeting with state and territory first ministers.

"I think it's trialling out these new quarantine arrangements which will take significant pressure off [the states and territories], if it's successful," Mr Morrison said on Friday.

A new communication campaign will also be coming soon for the vaccination rollout, he said.

"This is the next phase of those communication campaigns and coincides neatly with the additional supply that is being brought forward to support the vaccination program," Mr Morrison said.

More than 900,000 Australians have received a COVID-19 vaccine since last Friday's national cabinet meeting, where the government opened the door for anyone over the age of 16 to opt into taking AstraZeneca rather than waiting for the preferred Pfizer doses to become available.

A total of 8,871,572 vaccines have been administered since the start of the rollout, to 32.2 per cent of the population in Australia aged 16 or older, with 10.5 per cent of the eligible population in Australia now fully vaccinated.

Australia's weekly supply of Pfizer vaccine doses is set to triple, in what the prime minister hailed as a shot in the arm for the nation's beleaguered rollout.

The federal government announced Pfizer supplies would rise to roughly 1 million per week from July 19 - up from between 300,000 and 350,000 currently.

The pharmaceutical company confirmed the total volume of Australia's order had not changed.

"Pfizer is committed to delivering 40 million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to Australia over 2021. The



Vaccinated travellers could soon get an easier quarantine. **Picture: Shutterstock**

total number of 40 million doses we are contracted to deliver to Australia over 2021 has not changed. We continue to work closely with the government to support the ramp up of their rollout program," Pfizer said in a statement.

"While the details of our agreement with the government are confidential, we can confirm that deliveries to Australia remain on track, and we continue to update our weekly delivery schedule in line with the ramp up. We expect the remainder of the 40 million doses to be delivered by the end of 2021."

Labor health spokesman Mark Butler seized on Pfizer's statement, claiming it showed there was "nothing new" in Mr Morrison's vaccine supply announcement.

"When the prime minister is not in hiding he pops his head up to mislead the Australian people," Mr Butler said.

Labor leader Anthony Albanese said despite "government spin", a significant increase in vaccine supply was not being seen in GP clinics.

"It's good that he's now acknowledging that it's shortage of supply that is the problem. It is shortage of supply that means that people who want to get vaccinated, who are ringing up GP clinics ... can't get access to the vaccine," Mr Albanese said.

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