



CONFIRMED MINUTES OF SPECIAL COVID-19 MEETING WITH IOTHS

Meeting of the Community Consultative Committee (CCC) of the Shire of Christmas Island and the Indian Ocean Territories Health Service held at the George Fam Centre Training Room on Thursday 12th March 2020, 4.15pm

1 Declaration of Opening of Meeting / Announcement of Visitors

1.1 Gordon **THOMSON** declared the meeting opened at 4.20pm

Eddie **GACITUA**, Health Services Manager at IOTHS announced as Visitor.

2 Record of Attendance/Apologies

2.1 Record of Attendance

President-SOCI	Gordon THOMSON
Poon Saan Club	Jackie TEH
Shire Councillor	Morgan SOH
Shire Councillor	Hafiz MASLI
Islamic Council of Christmas Island	Greg MCINTOSH
CI Phosphates	Joy WICKENDEN
Chinese Literary Association	Melanie HAN
CI Neighbourhood Centre	Oliver LINES
CEO SOCI	David PRICE
CI Women's Association	Nora KOH

Minutes

SOCI Manager of Governance	Chris SU
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2.2 Apologies

Malay Association of Christmas Island	Azmi YON
Union of Christmas Island Workers	Kelvin LEE

3 Agenda

3.1 Presentation by Eddie **GACITUA**, COVID-19 Plan for Christmas Island

Eddie **GACITUA** provided professional background. Has been on the island for 6 months and is the Health Service Manager at IOTHS.

He advised that he receives daily briefings from Dept. of Health and DITCRD staff in Canberra daily.

Eddie **GACITUA** informed the CCC that a Service Delivery Agreement exists between the WA Department of Health and the Commonwealth for the provision of health services on Christmas Island.

The SDA was described as being able to make provisions for telehealth, CT scans, MRI and Medivac as well as pathology services with PathWest. Advised that IOTHS has direct access to areas in Dept. of Health that are needed and that the SDA was broad.

Questions Fielded based on Power Point Presentation:

Eddie **GACITUA** showed that 'severe' cases will be medivacced to Perth immediately and will occupy a bed at IOTHS until flight arrives.

Eddie **GACITUA** provided estimate that the majority of cases will be treated on island through home isolation, or admitting to hospital.

Question 1: Chris **SU** asked which hospital in Perth will receive island corona patients?

Eddie **GACITUA** advised that WA Health has a central command to issue a bed to a patient across the network. IOTHS dovetails into that system.

Eddie **GACITUA** showed protocol for minimising risk including washing hands, towel drying hands and wearing surgical masks.

Question 2: Chris **SU** asked if cold water was effective as the PPT showed warm water was to be used and if it was ok for a family to all dry hands on the same towel.

Eddie **GACITUA** advised that cold water was still efficient and that ideally separate towels or paper towels would be better, however if one had washed their hands effectively, that the same towel would be acceptable.

Eddie **GACITUA** clarified that wearing a surgical mask was only when the doctor requires you to. It is not useful to wear one without a doctor's request.

Eddie **GACITUA** advised that commonly touched areas in the house and phones should be cleaned frequently.

Question 3: Oliver **LINES** asked what was the lifespan of the virus on surfaces?

Eddie **GACITUA** advised that 72 hours was the current known limit for survival on surfaces.

In the case of a confirmed Corona Virus Patient on island, Contact Tracing would occur which is the standard operating procedure. It looks to see the history of contact the patient had during the incubation period.

Question 4: Jackie **TEH** asked about local testing capacity for COVID-19.

Eddie **GACITUA** advised that samples from the patient are taken on island and sent to Perth on Tuesday / Friday flights for testing.

Testing takes 3 days to do, noting that PathWest currently does 1000 per day.

The only labs that could do these tests were 'CATEGORY A' labs, of which the only one in the state is in the capital.

Question 5: Greg **MC INTOSH** asked will contact tracing only occur when cases are confirmed?

Eddie **GACITUA** advised that is so.

Greg **MC INTOSH** felt this might put us 4 days behind compared to the mainland; Eddie **GACITUA** advised that it was a 3 day turnaround on lab samples provided off the Tuesday/Friday flights.

Question 6: Jackie **TEH** asked if the hospital has the capacity to deal with COVID numbers; will people have to leave the island?

Eddie **GACITUA** referred to a PPT slide with MILD, MODERATE and SEVERE case scenarios for patients.

MILD – self isolation at home
MODERATE- hospitalisation
SEVERE - medivac

Persons who carried risk factors such as old age, diabetes, steroid use, etc were at higher risk of danger and could be flagged for medivac. The doctor makes the call.

Question 7: David **PRICE** asked how many high risk patients could the IOTHS handle?

Eddie **GACITUA** advised that there are four beds comprising of:

- Two Emergency Department beds
- Two In Patient beds

Eddie **GACITUA** provided medical estimates that showed 4-5% of cases will be SEVERE, and that 16% will be MODERATE. The balance will be MILD.

Question 8: David **PRICE** asked if IOTHS fills up the four beds, how will the IOTHS handle the regular in-flow of patients?

Eddie **GACITUA** advised that any patient deemed SEVERE will be medivacced immediately.

Question 9: David **PRICE** asked if there had been any talk about the use of the Immigration Detention Centre?

Eddie **GACITUA** advised that there had been, and the decision was not to use the IDC.

Question 10: Greg **MCINTOSH** asked for clarification who is in charge on Christmas Island regarding COVID-19 management?

Eddie **GACITUA** advised that the Public Health Unit, Kimberly Area is responsible. Every case concerning COVID-19 will be dealt with by the PHU as COVID-19 is a '*notifiable disease*' under legislation which makes it a statutory obligation of the PHU.

Gordon **THOMSON** summarised that IOTHS has four beds and that two of those are contingency.

Eddie **GACITUA** advised the CCC that he as Health Service Manager has lowered the threshold for evacuation, allowing doctors to send off cases easier.

Question 11: Greg **MCINTOSH** asked about the ability to medivac out?

Eddie **GACITUA** advised that there is capacity. IOTHS has access to six different medivac providers (Royal Flying Doctor Service, Medical Air, etc) to call upon. This is a higher level of service than remote WA health services.

Question 12: Morgan **SOH** asked in the case of breakout, do we have enough masks on island to suit our needs?

Eddie **GACITUA** responded yes and that there was a local stockpile and that the island has access to a national stockpile.

Question 13: Mel **HAN** asked how will IOTHS assess walk-ins and protect medical professionals?

Eddie **GACITUA** advised that people should call the hospital first before coming so that staff can be ready to assist patients to a separate area and not have to spend time in the waiting room.

IOTHS medical staff have the necessary personal protective equipment to see and treat patients.

Question 14: Mel **HAN** asked about the annual flu jab regime's efficiency in managing COVID-19.

Eddie **GACITUA** says that the flu jab isn't for COVID-19 management. The annual flu jab differs year on year based on an assessment of which strains of flu have been active in the northern hemisphere in the preceding winter season (Australian summer season).

Question 15: Chris **SU** asked that in the case of SEVERE cases that require Medivac and the likelihood that that person would be elderly and statistically ESL based on CI demographics, would there be a PATS carer flight offered to a family member to assist in the elderly SEVERE cases?

Eddie **GACITUA** said that there was likely no space on the Medivac flight itself having need to carry health professionals to attend to the patient during the flight and that a follow up PATS flight may be considered case by case for a family member to support the COVID-10 medivacee.

Question 16: Joy **WICKENDEN** put forward that Home Isolation for a person within a one-bathroom unit especially in Flying Fish Cove and Poon Saan might not produce the social-distancing outcomes that Home Isolation aims for. What could be done about this?

Chris **SU** put forward that although the Shire was restricted from attending any Interagency Communication Committee (ICC) perhaps Eddie **GACITUA** could request putting forward a request to consider utilising the disused Immigration

Accommodation Buildings in Drumsite, Silver City and Poon Saan to help Home Isolate patients who live in too close a proximity in high-risk areas?

Eddie **GACITUA** responded that he doesn't attend the ICC either and acknowledged that transmission is through close contact and that there was a likelihood for poorer public health outcomes if a Home Isolation Patient was in too close a proximity to other persons, especially in a Flying Fish Cove or Poon Saan unit. Eddie **GACITUA** thought it could be arranged on a case by case basis.

Question 17: Nora **KOH** asked about the incubation period for COVID-19.

Eddie **GACITUA** responded that the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Australian Department of Health had the incubation period as 14 days.

He advised that children were the biggest incubators of the virus and were found to be fairly asymptomatic with no or very mild symptoms of illness.

Question 18: Greg **MCINTOSH** asked for the takeaway points.

Eddie **GACITUA** referred the CCC members to the flyers the IOTHS had put out that day and asked them to distribute and refer to them widely in dealings with the community.

Hafiz **MASLI** said the trilingual flyers were very good and noted they had been distributed around shops and other public buildings that day.

Question 19: Greg **MCINTOSH** asked if we as local community leaders in charge of meetings and social/cultural events for the public should be looking at social distancing now?

Eddie **GACITUA** responded that a confirmed case of COVID-19 on island will have authorities put suggestions and limitations for group contact situations.

Question 20: David **PRICE** asked if one of the Shire employees tested positive, do we all have to go into isolation?

Eddie **GACITUA** provided that IOTHS would have to examine the situation on a case by case basis.

Question 21: David **PRICE** asked about contingency planning for essential island services and food outlets. What if both of the bakeries tested positive and could not work? If grocery stores / organisations in the chain were shut down, how would the island feed itself?

Eddie **GACITUA** advised that he was in charge of Health and suggested DITCRD or the Emergency Management Committee as the agency to ask contingency planning scenario questions.

David **PRICE** agreed that contingency plans need to be created and communicated regarding this matter. Eddie **GACITUA** advised that there were Federal and State continuity planning in place.

Question 22: Greg **MCINTOSH** asked with regards to testing to date, is it correct to assume that COVID-19 tests have only been carried out when someone has felt ill after international travel or close contact with a known COVID-19 carrier?

Eddie **GACITUA** said that the Dept of Health has guidelines as for when and how to test persons who present themselves and that IOTHS had been adhering to that protocol.

Question 23: Gordon **THOMSON** asked if he came from Perth and felt ill, would he be tested for COVID-19?

Eddie **GACITUA** responded that protocol would be followed and if it says you should be, you will be.

Question 24: Gordon **THOMSON** asked how can the CCC best assist the IOTHS at this time in regards to information?

Eddie **GACITUA** asked the CCC to help distribute the flyers and refer people to the flyers if they have questions.

Gordon **THOMSON** said that Sunday 15th March was the date for the evening Union Day celebrations, which would involve hundreds of residents coming together in Poon Saan to eat and socialise for several hours. Asked for advice on when to call off the plans based on what cautionary messages the authorities would deliver.

Eddie **GACITUA** advised that a confirmed case of COVID-19 on island would have the Public Health Unit Kimberly place advisories specific to Christmas Island. The chain of command would follow down and perhaps the Administrator would be the Commonwealth official to advise islanders. The information would definitely be posted on the Dept. of Health's website where a Corona Virus related page was currently active.

Question 25: Nora **KOH** asked on behalf of the supermarket owner that should one of his employees test positive, would the entire staff have to close?

Eddie **GACITUA** said that Home Isolation may be needed for the staff if a person has been identified as having COVID-19. Like the Shire case earlier, it will be done on a case by case basis.

Question 26: Greg **MCINTOSH** asked how do we notify the community in the case of a confirmed COVID-19 patient on island?

Eddie **GACITUA** said that the Public Health Unit, Kimberly Area would notify publically first, with likely a Ministerial notice to follow.

6. Closure of Meeting – 6.10pm 12th March 2020

7 Date of Next Meeting

7.1 Next scheduled CCC to take place at 4.15pm April 1st 2020.