



6 May 2020

The Hon Scott Morrison MP  
Prime Minister  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister,

I write to advise that the Multicultural Council of Tasmania (MCOT) supports the Australian Government's call for an independent inquiry into the initial transmission to humans of COVID-19.

MCOT is the peak body representing more than 80 multicultural organisations in Tasmania. Our members span the breadth of cultural, linguistic and religious groups that call Tasmania home, including Tasmanians of Chinese heritage.

Tasmanians with a recent migrant background are suffering from COVID-19 like their fellow Tasmanians. Many of them also have a personal connection with the catastrophic loss of life we have seen in other countries.

In light of the suffering arising from COVID-19, reasonable steps should be taken to attempt to prevent or delay a recurrence of an initial transmission to humans of such a disease.

An independent inquiry into the initial transmission to humans of COVID-19 would be a reasonable step.

An inquiry could conclude that there are reasonable actions individual governments could choose to take within their borders that would prevent or delay recurrence. This would be useful. Alternatively, an inquiry could conclude that the initial transmission to humans of COVID-19 was inevitable and that there are no reasonable actions that would prevent or delay recurrence. This would also be useful, as it would concentrate efforts on preparing for the inevitable transmission to humans of other diseases in the future.

I note that MCOT supports the Australian Government's call for an independent inquiry notwithstanding objections from representatives of the Government of the People's Republic of China. The views of MCOT, its member organisations and the broader multicultural community of Tasmania do not align with any foreign government.

Finally, I take this opportunity to report that many Tasmanians of Chinese appearance face discrimination and racism during the COVID-19 crisis. This includes baseless suggestions



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that they are responsible for the emergence and transmission of the disease. In reality, the Chinese Tasmanians we represent have steadfastly observed self-isolation and social distancing directions and have donated considerable time and money to helping their fellow Tasmanians through this crisis.

I have copied this letter to the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Health, the Federal Leader of the Opposition, the Shadow Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Health, the Premier of Tasmania and the Tasmanian Leader of the Opposition.

I have also written in similar terms to the Ambassador for the People's Republic of China to the Commonwealth of Australia.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Waqas Durrani  
Chair  
Multicultural Council of Tasmania