Alert but not alarmed

Tourism bosses don’t fear virus outbreak

Queensland chief executive Mark Oliphant said it was believed the outbreak would not affect tourism and he was confident in the efforts of Cairns Airport and biosecurity officers.

"With one in three visitors to Cairns and the Great Barrier Reef travelling internationally, we will monitor the situation with Queensland Health and respond as required to assist in keeping our community and visitors safe," he said.

Cairns and District Chinese Association president Melanie Kingsley said she would discuss the matter at a committee meeting today.

"I personally don’t feel there will be anything to worry about," she said.

"The number of visitors to Cairns from China has dropped due to the decreasing number of flights, so we’re expecting the Chinese New Year celebrations to be mainly targeted at the local community."

"We may get some visitors flying in, but most are coming from the bigger cities like Hong Kong, whereas the outbreak originated in Wuhan."

Leichhardt MP Warren Entsch said he was optimistic Cairns health processing would be up to the task.

"There’s always concerns when you have an outbreak. The important thing is not to panic," he said.

"Any international airport worthy of its salt will have procedures in place to deal with this and I’m confident we’ll be able to manage it."

Australian chief medical officer Brendan Murphy said nothing could "absolutely prevent" the disease’s spread into Australia.

"The incubation period is probably a week. Many people who have this may present as asymptomatic," he said.

TESTING TIMES

THREE direct flights from Wuhan to Australia are being screened and anyone with symptoms asked to identify themselves.

Biosecurity and Australian Border Force officials are looking to expand the action to more of the 150 direct flights each week from China to Australia.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said all actions were being taken to mitigate the risk.