

Qld on alert amid 16 suspected flu cases

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There are nearly fifty suspected cases of swine flu across Australia, as the virus spreads worldwide. [Gallery: Global epidemic fears as swine flu spreads](#)

Doctors are looking at ten cases in New South Wales, 14 in South Australia , 16 in Queensland, five in the ACT and three in Western Australia . In Victoria, three tourists were tested for the virus but were found to be clear.

In Mexico , where more than 150 people have died from the flu, authorities shut schools across the country and tried to follow up with families of swine flu victims on Monday in a bid to stop the virus' spread.

The Mexican outbreak has sparked global concern as rising cases are detected around the world, and the World Health Organisation has raised its flu pandemic alert level from three to four, signalling a "significant increase in risk of a pandemic."

The outbreak has prompted fears that the world may finally be experiencing the flu pandemic that health officials have been warning about for years.

"There are 149 who have died that we're investigating to allow us to confirm" that they meet the strict criteria that defines swine flu, Health Minister Jose Angel Cordova said. In Australia, Queensland Premier Anna Bligh has activated the state's pandemic plan.

[Swine flu links and information](#)

Ms Bligh was briefed on Tuesday morning by health officials and the disaster management group and put in place the plan, which if escalated could see border screening and the cancellation of major public events.

"The Queensland Health pandemic plan has been activated," Ms Bligh said.

"We are in the standby phase, making sure we have all the resources available across government if we do have an outbreak."

She said Queensland had to be ready for "the prospect of this virus spreading to all countries and particularly here in Australia".

"This morning I convened the state disaster management group in readiness for a possible declaration of a disaster in the next couple of weeks," she said.

"We have no cause to declare any disaster at this stage but we are making sure we are ready." Chief health officer Jeannette Young said two women - one in her mid 20s and one in her mid 40s - who were taken off a Qantas flight from Los Angeles that landed in Brisbane on Tuesday morning were sent home with Tamiflu medication, but have since been cleared.

"Both of those people fell ill with flu-like symptoms," Dr Young told reporters.

"They've been ill in the last 24 hours and they've had contact with people in Mexico ."

Qantas said another three people from the flight had also been screened by quarantine officials but cleared.

No aircrew had reported flu symptoms yet nor would they have to wear surgical masks, a Qantas spokeswoman said.

Four people were cleared over the past three days after presenting to Gold Coast and Brisbane hospitals.

Tests are underway on other patients with flu symptoms.

There are no confirmed cases of swine flu in Australia.

Ms Bligh said in the event of a serious outbreak, mass gatherings would have to be reconsidered.

"Clearly mass gatherings will have to be considered as will the activities of schools where you have large numbers of children and families gathering," she said.

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