

# BIRD FLU AND PANDEMICS

PREPARING BUSINESS TO  
MANAGE THE RISKS  
– THE NEXT STEPS

## PANDEMIC – the Business Continuity Challenge



*‘Once a pandemic virus emerges, it is too late to begin planning or to begin collaboration. There will be only a 20-30 day window between emergence and pandemic’*

*Dr Klaus Stohr – WHO Global Pandemic Project*

*Julian Heath*

*Managing Director – Australia Pacific*

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## The Current Situation

Is there an immediate threat of death or serious illness of personnel traveling throughout an infected area?	No
Is there a threat of death or serious illness to expatriate or third country nationals resident in an infected area?	No
Is it likely, given the current incidence of the 'Bird-flu' disease in birds and humans, such a threat will develop in the short term, say 7 to 10 days?	Yes
Is there any indication of the spread of Avian Flu from human to human?	No
Is there any evidence of a business traveler transferring the disease to a new country?	No
Currently, does any danger exist that a traveler will transfer the disease back?	No
Is there an immediate threat of major disruption to business travel	No
Is it likely that such disruption will develop at short notice?	Yes
Is there evidence of minor disruption to business travel?	No
Is there any indication of government agencies or other parties, i.e. airlines, being about to implement actions likely to restrict travel?	No
Have any quarantine controls been imposed?	No
Have business operations been affected significantly?	No
Is there reasonable justification for companies introducing travel restrictions due to the risk of a pandemic?	No
Should the risk of a pandemic constitute a significant factor in business planning or business operations?	Yes
Does the current risk of a pandemic justify inclusion within your business continuity planning process?	Yes
Does the situation need to be monitored	Yes

## WHO Pandemic Phases

### Inter-pandemic Period (Monitoring Period)

- Phase 1 (Monitoring) - No new influenza virus subtypes in humans
- Phase 2 (Monitoring) – increased risk of human disease

### Pandemic Alert Period

- Phase 3 (Contingency Preparation) – animal to human infection (not in Australia)**
- Phase 4 (Contingency Implementation) – limited human to human infection
- Phase 5 (Contingency Management) – infection increasing but not fully transmissible

### Pandemic Period

- Phase 6 (Business Impact) – increased and sustained outbreaks in general population
- Recovery – your goal

Note: The distinction between phase 1 and phase 2 is based on the risk of human infection of disease resulting from circulating strains in animals. The distinction between phase 3, phase 4 and phase 5 is based on an assessment of the escalation of the risk of a pandemic.

## Likely Issues - Intuitively

### Phase 4 (limited human to human transmission) onwards:

- Increased absenteeism – *loss of capacity/productivity.*
- Closure of businesses and restrictions on essential and other services (hospitals, transport) – *outrage, panic and a slowing down of response.*
- Outbreak areas quarantined - *panic.*
- Closure of schools and child care facilities – *compounds absenteeism.*
- Restrictions on local and international travel – *reduced operations.*
- Evacuation (and quarantining) of expatriates – *restrict recovery capacity.*
- Increased demand on basic commodities and infrastructure - *shortages.*
- Increased need for self-sufficiency – *not a cultural norm.*
- People will stop going out – *business closures.*

## What you can do now #1

### Monitor and Advise (*the facts*)

- Establish a process for monitoring developments (noting that we may be at Phase 3 for some time).
- Develop communication strategies for employees and their families:
  - **Information:** The current situation (WHO, CDC and Commonwealth Health),
  - **Education:** Personal preparation and hygiene guidelines (Commonwealth and NZ Health), and
  - **Action:** What you intend to do if the situation escalates (senior management).

## What you can do now #2

### Planning (*the assumptions and scenarios*)

- Identify your core activities and how they can be sustained for up to four weeks:
  - Assume absenteeism will be >30%, and
  - Identify the critical dependencies on third parties and review their preparation.
- Plan for disruptions to essential services.
- Consider the triggers for scaling back or suspending operations:
  - Be prepared to go through some ‘false alarms’
- Be prepared for the direct (outbreak in Australia) and indirect (outbreak where you have management/personnel/suppliers or markets).

## What you can do now #3

### **Actions (*response options and priorities*):**

- Review your current business continuity processes including:
  - Crisis plans, disaster recovery, denial of access, loss of production;
  - Alternative management options (virtual, offshore, maintaining a reserve); and
  - Travel policy.
- Align your preparedness with the WHO Alert Levels.
- Be prepared to act early.
- Establish a healthy work environment.
- Review your flexible work practices.
- Workshop/rehearse.
- Be prepared to absorb the losses – insurance may not cover it.
- Consider the establishment of strategic alliances with other organisations or government departments e.g. establishment of industry reference groups to assist in managing the crisis.

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*“To assist our clients to operate successfully in hostile or complex business environments”*



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