This plan is enacted when a **PANDEMIC** is declared and the level of risk to personal safety, property or environment is an immediate risk to escalate. This plan relates to the response of staff and students to a critical incident and supports the Emergency Response Plan (ERP) that exists for the individual buildings.

Actions

**You can ring your local health unit on 1300 066 055 for further information and advice. If a pandemic is confirmed you will also need to ensure you report this to the UNE Work Health and Safety Department on 6773 1715.**

The World Health Organisation (WHO) warns that there is a serious threat of a worldwide influenza pandemic and that we should take all reasonable steps to prepare for it. It is a seasonal influenza virus that is of most concern. It should be stressed that influenza pandemics are not one off events but regularly occur a few times per century (1918: Spanish Flu, 1957: Asian Flu, 1968: Hong Kong Flu). As long as the influenza virus continues to mutate, we will continue to have influenza pandemics.

**The following diagram is the WHO Pandemic Alert Levels with the current Phase circled**



Because the University is a public institution where a large number of people gather, the decision to close the University could potentially be made by the Government. The period of closure will obviously vary and activation of UNE’s Business Continuity Plans should begin. Note, there may be several waves of the pandemic and the University may be closed a number of times.

An influenza pandemic represents a significant risk to Australia. It has the potential to cause high levels of morbidity and mortality and to disrupt our community socially and economically. Like any other hazard, Australian authorities will approach this risk by undertaking activities to:

• prevent, where possible, the development of a pandemic overseas or in Australia;

• ensure we are prepared to meet the health needs of our community should a pandemic occur;

• respond promptly and effectively to minimise the pandemic’s impact; and

• contribute to the rapid and confident recovery of individuals, communities and services.

The activities required to support our University during a pandemic will involve state and territory governments, the Australian Government and many other health sector parties. Coordination and communication at national level will be particularly important during the active response, when a pandemic is currently circulating in our community.

While an influenza pandemic would have no direct effect on physical infrastructure and assets here at UNE, it would have a wide range of impacts on organisations including disruptions to business operations, increased staff absenteeism and changed workplace functions. There may be problems with fuel and power supplies as well as with supplies of goods and services.

Influenza disease information

**Signs and Symptoms of Pandemic Influenza**

Symptoms are similar to ordinary influenza but may be more severe: characteristically sudden onset of symptoms including fever (temperature >38˚C), headache, severe weakness, fatigue, muscle aches and respiratory symptoms such as a sore throat, and nasal and chest congestion. Complications include bronchitis and pneumonia. Deaths may occur.

**Infectious Period**

Infected people can spread influenza virus from one day before symptoms appear until up to 7 days after the onset of illness. Young children may remain infectious for as long as three weeks while people with lowered immunity may be infectious even longer.

**Treatment**

The mainstays of treatment for uncomplicated pandemic influenza will be rest, adequate fluid intake and nutrition, as well as medications such as paracetamol to help with fever and pain. Those who are severely affected may need hospitalisation, supplemental oxygen therapy, or respiratory support through artificial ventilation.

The effectiveness of antiviral medications in the treatment of pandemic influenza is unclear. Current data relating to seasonal influenza indicate that antiviral medications are only effective if commenced within 48 hours of the onset of symptoms. The Australian Government has developed a large stockpile of antiviral medications which can be used for prevention and treatment of people exposed to pandemic influenza.

Further Information

NSW Health Influenza Factsheet

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/influenza_factsheet.aspx>

NSW Health Influenza home page

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/infectious/influenza/pages/default.aspx>

NSW Health Influenza surveillance reports

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/Influenza/Pages/reports.aspx>

NSW Health Influenza in travel groups fact sheet

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/influenza_outbreaks_in_travel_groups.aspx>

NSW Health Influenza Pandemic Plan

<http://www0.health.nsw.gov.au/policies/pd/2016/pdf/PD2016_016.pdf>

Australian Health Management Plan for Pandemic Influenza

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-ahmppi.htm>