

NATIONAL QUEENSLAND CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Brisbane firm builds portable COVID-19 rooms in case second wave emerges

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By **Tony Moore**

May 11, 2020 – 11.40am



A Brisbane engineering and logistics company has built 10 portable hospital rooms that can isolate infections and be delivered anywhere in Australia.

Canstruct International, which has developed engineering and logistics skills over 60 years working in Papua New Guinea and the Asia-Pacific region, wants to donate the units to Australia's health authorities.



A Brisbane-based asset engineering management company has made 10 portable hospital rooms.

They can be used to help bushfire recovery victims and COVID-19 sufferers because they create an airlock that prevents infections from leaving the room.

The company believes they could isolate infected people if a second wave of COVID-19 infections emerges as social restrictions are relaxed.

Each unit is built from a shipping container and has been repurposed as a portable, single-bed hospital room.

They are now sitting at Canstruct's office at Parkinson, but can be taken anywhere in Australia on the back of a truck, company chief executive Rory Murphy said.

The rooms were designed after Canstruct worked with the [French health and medical authority, International SOS](#).

International SOS provides medical help in 90 countries.

"We got together in early April and said 'let's make something that is robust, that you could deliver to a hospital, put in the car park, plug it in get it up and running two hours after arrival'," Mr Murphy said.

"You need to be able to move it around as it is required."

The family-owned business wanted to make a COVID-19 contribution to Australia.



Ten of these portable isolation units are being offered to Queensland Health by Brisbane's Canstruct International.

"It was a Team Australia moment and we felt Australian businesses should contribute and many have done so," he said.

"We wanted to do our bit in helping in the response to COVID-19."

The negative pressure inside the portable unit creates an airlock, Mr Murphy said.

"It transforms the container into a room basically where the pressure is less than outside, so when you open the door the air does not escape," he said.

"You could have a patient inside the self-contained main room and the doctor or the nurse attending the patient can go through the airlock so the air from that patient's room cannot get out.

“In a normal hospital ward, for example, if you have a patient who had COVID-19 in the bed beside you, you could very well end up with COVID-19.

“What these portable rooms do is isolate the patients so the air cannot escape.”

Mr Murphy said Canstruct had spoken with Queensland health authorities and offered the facilities.

“Because we have ‘flattened the curve’, the hospitals have not been over-run, which is a very fortunate situation, he said.

“So they are very interested and it might be that if there is a second-wave hot spot somewhere, they could be used.”

State and federal health experts are warning of a possible second-wave of COVID-19 infections, linked to the flu season and outbreaks from relaxed social restrictions.

“We are all hoping for the best, but as we’ve seen overseas, we must be ready for the worst-case scenarios, and also for other health crises in the future.

“These rooms help Australia become crisis-ready, and are so adaptable that they can be used for health, defence or humanitarian need.”

International SOS’ occupational health medical Dr Kalesh Seevnrain said rooms for isolating airborne infectious disease were in short supply in hospitals.

“Special rooms like this are essential for controlling pathogens and making sure they stay contained to one patient’s room, rather than infecting others nearby, as happened with COVID-19 on cruise ships.”

Canstruct saved 15 full-time jobs within and provided work for many Australian suppliers and subcontractors to complete the portable room.

Queensland Health on Monday said they welcomed the offer from Canstruct.

"It has been heartening to see how many Queensland businesses have offered to donate their supplies and ideas to contribute to Queensland Health’s response to treating people with COVID-19," a spokesman said.

"Queensland Health appreciates every offer of donation from the community," he said.

Queensland Health asked any business interested in making a donation to register their details here: www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19/information-for/industry-and-businesses/supply-or-donate-critical-ppe-items/donate-covid-19-supplies



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