



Our Ref: ODG LOG21/156
Your Ref: D2100860

Ms Rebecca Brown
A/Director General
Department of the Premier and Cabinet

Dear Ms Brown

REVIEW OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S HOTEL QUARANTINE ARRANGEMENTS

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback to Professor Weeramanthri's interim advice from his *Review of Western Australia's Hotel Quarantine Arrangements*.

As Professor Weeramanthri has noted, WA has implemented a successful public health response to COVID -19, which has resulted in no community acquired cases of COVID-19 from 12 April 2020 to 29 January 2021.

Since March 2020, and as part of State's overall response to COVID-19, the Department of Health (the Department) has overseen a hotel quarantine program that has been instrumental in protecting the health of the Western Australian community. To date, more than 38,000 people have been safely quarantined in WA hotels since the program's inception.

Throughout the pandemic, the Department has continued to review its hotel quarantine processes and policies, as the COVID-19 situation evolves. This has become even more critical with the recent emergence of new, more virulent strains of COVID-19.

Following the detection of case #903 in January 2021, the first case of community transmission since April 2020, the Department immediately sought to implement enhanced measures to ensure the health and safety of hotel workers and the broader community. These included:

- mandating the use of masks and eyewear for all hotel quarantine staff in high risk areas, where this was not already in place;
- revising the current contract for security companies to ensure that security staff do not attend work while experiencing COVID-19 symptoms as defined in the Presentation for Testing Directions;
- revising its current policy to require all hotel security staff on shift be tested daily for COVID-19;

- temporarily ceasing the intake of persons at the Four Points by Sheraton hotel from 2 February 2021; and
- engaging a team from its Environmental Health Directorate, along with an independent occupational hygienist, and mechanical engineer, to undertake an initial assessment of airflow and ventilation in all WA quarantine hotels. This work has started, with an initial assessment by an independent occupational hygienist of the Four Points by Sheraton hotel.

The Department welcomes Professor Weeramanthri's Review which provides further opportunities for the Department to build on its work to date to improve current hotel quarantine policies and procedures where required. The Department's initial response to Professor Weeramanthri is provided in Attachment 1.

The Department remains committed to ensuring it has a robust, safe and effective hotel quarantine program to ensure we continue to protect the health of the Western Australian community.

Yours sincerely



Dr D J Russell-Weisz
DIRECTOR GENERAL

og February 2021

Att: Department of Health's Initial Response to the Review

Ventilation recommendations		
1	WA Government to instigate an immediate independent expert review of airflow and ventilation in all WA quarantine hotels, to inform any risk mitigation strategy for airborne transmission from infected guests to quarantine workers and determine appropriate ventilation standards. This review could be conducted by a consulting engineer (mechanical building services) in conjunction with an occupational hygienist.	<p>Supported.</p> <p>The Department of Health has already engaged a team from its Environmental Health Directorate (EHD), along with an independent occupational hygienist, to scope and undertake a review of airflow and ventilation in all WA quarantine hotels. This will also include a mechanical engineer.</p> <p>As a start, EHD staff and an occupational hygienist examined the Four Points by Sheraton Hotel on 5 February, and a report from this visit is due to the Department during the week beginning 8 February 2021.</p> <p>The outcome of this initial assessment will help inform any broader work regarding airflow and ventilation.</p> <p>The Department is planning to commence the broader review into the 9 SHICC hotels later this week or early next.</p>
2	In the meantime, SHICC to require all quarantine centre workers to wear face masks at all times while indoors, and strongly consider a higher level of respiratory protection (e.g. P2/N95 masks and/or eye protection) for all workers at sites where ventilation may be problematic or not adequately assessed.	<p>Supported.</p> <p>All Hotel Quarantine Workers (HQWs) must wear masks and eyewear in high risk areas (this means anyplace where guests are accommodated or when guests enter/exit hotels).</p> <p>In addition, all guests must now wear masks when opening their door for any reason, such as collecting meals and putting out laundry. Directions for guests on how to do this safely have been written and will be provided to all arriving guests.</p> <p>The Department is seeking a nationally consistent approach to PPE requirements for hotel quarantine staff. The Chief Health Officer has raised this matter with AHPPC</p>
3	Consider ventilation adequacy when requisitioning quarantine hotels.	Supported. See response to Recommendation 1.
Other non-ventilation recommendations		
4	Introduction of daily shift salivary PCR testing, in addition to weekly nasopharyngeal swab PCR. This has already been introduced in WA and is welcome as it potentially provides a means for early diagnosis of COVID-19. SHICC should now monitor compliance with such testing, to provide system assurance that all HQ staff (whether hotel employees, government employees or contractors) are being tested.	<p>Supported</p> <p>Daily shift salivary PCR testing has now been introduced. This is in addition to weekly nasopharyngeal testing.</p> <p>Plans to strengthen compliance monitoring are underway.</p>
5	Quarantine centre workers to not work at other sites, and not to be financially disadvantaged by such a restriction. This is consistent with recommendation 22 of the Victorian COVID-19 Hotel Quarantine Inquiry that stated, 'every effort must be made to ensure that all personnel working at the facility are not working across multiple quarantine sites and not working in other forms of employment'. We are informed that this is being actively progressed by the WA Government.	<p>Supported.</p> <p>Contract variation letters, mandating that hotel security officers must not engage in secondary employment, have been sent to the four Security Companies that provide security officers across the 9 quarantine hotels.</p> <p>Similar contracts have been provided to the 9 SHICC hotels for other HQWs.</p> <p>The Department expects to receive all signed contracts during the week of 8 February 2021, with all coming into effect no later than 15 February 2021.</p>
6	SEC to strengthen the Direction, and SHICC to strengthen protocols for testing and medical care of quarantine workers who develop any symptoms or fall ill.	Supported.
7	SHICC to: A) monitor and provide system assurance that all HQ staff undergo regular face to face IPC training. B) introduce periodic external IPC safety audits (as recommended by the Victorian COVID-19 Hotel Quarantine Inquiry) to complement the current weekly internal safety audits at each site.	<p>Supported</p> <p>All HQW in high risk areas undergo face to face Infection Prevention Control (IPC) training and are audited by IPC experts weekly.</p> <p>The introduction of periodic external IPC safety audits is supported.</p>