



Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Health**

Your Ref:  
Our Ref:  
Contact:

Mr Chris Dawson  
Commissioner of Police  
State Emergency Coordinator  
Western Australia Police Force

Dear Commissioner Dawson

## **INTRODUCTION OF PHASE 4B IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

I am writing to provide advice regarding the introduction of Phase 4B of the COVID-19 Western Australian Roadmap.

The implementation of public health, mass gathering, and physical distancing measures has been highly effective in controlling the COVID-19 outbreak in Western Australia (WA). While all States and Territories have been effective in reaching the goal of no community spread, the re-introduction of COVID-19 back into the WA community from international, interstate or maritime travellers could lead to substantial outbreaks that may require either delay in easing of restrictions further or re-introduction of physical distancing and mass gathering measures, as was seen in the recent WA lockdown. Current modelling continues to show that WA, even in Phase 4A, remains one of the most susceptible to a major outbreak of all the jurisdictions, due to the increased numbers of people moving around in our society and the mixing between non-family groups. This susceptibility, while dropping during the lockdown and subsequent restrictions, continues to increase in recent modelling. This has been complicated by the emergence of recent variants, including the B.1.1.7 and B.1.525 (United Kingdom variants), B.1.351 (South African variant) and P1 (Brazil variant), which have increased transmissibility of between 35 and 70%. Phase 5, which would remove the final restrictions on physical distancing and would significantly increase the numbers and mixing at high risk venues, including at nightclubs, music venues and events, is anticipated to raise that susceptibility to the highest level in Australia. I would not recommend progressing to Phase 5 at this stage.

I do recognise, however, that the current Phase 4A restrictions, while largely effective, have created implementation difficulties in some sectors, particularly those sectors that are lower risk because they are outdoors or involve indoor seating with limited numbers and mixing. Some other jurisdictions have moved to full capacity in stadiums with fixed seating, while maintaining the 2 square meter rule for unfixed seating. Mask wearing on entry and exit is encouraged. For indoor entertainment venues, several States have moved to 75% of the fixed seating capacity. This is broadly consistent with Step 3 ('COVID Normal') of the Roadmap to Reactivating Live Performance

Venues and Events, which was endorsed by AHPPC on 05 November 2020 and approved at National Cabinet for release on 13 November 2020. In WA, it is proposed that the capacity limit would be limited to 75% of capacity, for both indoor and outdoor venues, with no upper numerical limit. While open air stadiums are lower risk than internal facilities, the risk of large numbers and mixing on public transport in travelling to and from these events needs to be mitigated by capacity limits, revised public transport arrangements and masks. Mask wearing on entry and exit and on public transport should be encouraged, but not mandated at this stage. Public transport to large outdoor venues should be enhanced to minimise crowding through extended hours at venues and on transport, and increased numbers and frequency of public transport options, particularly during peak periods.

Given their low risk, the changes to capacity could be extended to other seated venues, including restaurants, clubs, cafes, bars and places of worship. All other facilities and venues, including nightclubs and music events, would continue to apply the 2 square metre rule, up to a maximum of 10,000 patrons, which is consistent with other jurisdictions. This new Phase could be considered Phase 4B.

Moving WA to Phase 4B, where there are still limits on mass gatherings, mixing and physical distancing measures, will assist in reducing the numbers of people exposed and requiring public health and clinical interventions, should an outbreak occur. The addition of QR codes and attendance register requirements also greatly assists contact tracing in the event of an outbreak. Given the ongoing potential for outbreaks from international travellers, the introduction of new strains of the virus, ongoing outbreaks internationally, limited outbreaks interstate and the roll-out of the Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines, it is not anticipated that current public health advice on proceeding beyond Phase 4B will change in the next 2 months. Consequently, I recommend that the State moves to Phase 4B on or after 13 March 2021 for at least 2 months while the broader Australian control measures and public health measures continue to be undertaken.

## Recommendations

In summary, for the reasons outlined above, I recommend that the State move to Phase 4B on or after 13 March 2021 with a review of Phase 4B continuation or any further proposed changes occurring in 2 months. Given continuing changes in the epidemiology in other States and the situation in Western Australia, I am happy to reconsider the above advice should there be significant changes in the public health situation.

Yours sincerely



Dr Andy Robertson  
**CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER**

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G O V E R N M E N T O F W E S T E R N A U S T R A L I A