



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

Your Ref:
Our Ref:
Contact:

The Honourable Mark McGowan MLA
Premier of Western Australia
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RELAXATION OF RESTRICTIONS

Dear Premier

On 23 April 2021, the Acting Chief Health Officer, Dr Paul Armstrong, provided advice to the Commissioner of Police and the State Government of Western Australia (WA) supporting a 3-day lockdown of the Perth and Peel regions in response to the detection of a COVID-19 case in a traveller who had recently left a State Quarantine Facility (Victorian case), and had been infectious in the WA community between 17-21 April 2021, and a secondary case who had infectious in the community from 19-21 April 2021. The Victorian case had been identified as a 'close contact' of a couple in a room diagonally opposite and a family in the room immediately next to him in the Mercure Hotel, who had been infected by an intra-hotel transmission of SARS-CoV-2. All other close contacts have tested negative. He was notified by the WA Department of Health and was tested in Victoria, where a positive result was reported on 23 April 2021. At 12:40pm on 23 April 2021, one of his close contacts, an adult female, returned a positive test for SARS-CoV-2 (Case 984). She was believed to be early in her infection.

Contact tracing conducted throughout the day revealed that the Victorian case had visited numerous venues across a wide area of metropolitan Perth whilst he was infectious. This included a variety of cafes and restaurants, a public swimming pool, various retail outlets, a medical practitioner, an alternative health practitioner, a family of three with whom he stayed, and commercial accommodation. Contact tracing efforts revealed that Case 984 had visited numerous venues with the Victorian case and had worked in a publicly-facing role in a dental clinic.

The 3-day lockdown came into effect from midnight on 23 April 2021 and required:

- people in the Perth and Peel regions not to leave these regions, unless they had an exemption;
- a 'stay at home' requirement, with exemptions for work, essential shopping, medical care and limited exercise;

- wearing of face masks becoming mandatory from 6pm on 23 April 2021, with exceptions for home, car, when doing vigorous exercise, or if aged less than twelve years;
- closure of places of worship, and hospitality, entertainment and community facilities;
- ceasing of entertainment events and community sport;
- banning of visitors to hospitals or residential aged care or disability facilities, unless there are exceptional circumstances; and
- allowing weddings and funerals with a 100-patron capacity, not including staff, and requiring masks be worn.

The 3-day lockdown was recommended as a circuit breaker that was designed to immediately minimise everyone's number of close contacts until it could be established whether there had been any community spread of disease. This was implemented from 00:01 am Saturday 24 April for 3 days until 00:01 am Tuesday 27 April by way of the 'Stay at Home and Closure (Perth, Peel and Rottnest) Directions', issued under the *Emergency Management Act 2005*.

The Public Health Emergency Operations Centre (PHEOC) identified the close and casual contacts on the Victorian case and Case 984 and required them to be immediately tested for COVID-19 and to quarantine for 14 days at home if a close contact. On 24 April 2021, an adult male WA resident (Case 986), who had coincidentally been at the Kitchen Inn restaurant in Kardinya on 18 April at same time as the Victorian case and Case 984, was diagnosed with COVID-19 after developing symptoms and seeking testing on 23 April 2021. He was transferred to a SHICC hotel for hotel quarantine, as Case 984 had been. Tests of household members and all other close contacts in the Kitchen Inn have been negative. Extensive contact tracing for the Victorian case and Cases 984 and 986 is progressing. Whole Genome Sequencing of Case 984 has confirmed that the strain was the B.1.1.7 (United Kingdom) variant, and was linked to the Mercure cluster. There have been no further positive COVID-19 test results received in respect to these cohorts.

Extensive testing of the public has also been undertaken, with all persons, who were present at a list of locations that the 3 cases visited on the dates and times specified, instructed to get tested as soon as they were able. 1,112 close and casual contacts have been identified, with all the tests returned being negative at this stage. Additionally, people who were symptomatic were strongly encouraged to be tested. This has resulted in over 28,000 people presenting for testing at our COVID clinics. I am pleased to advise that there have also been no further positive COVID-19 test results received in respect to these cohorts.

With these results in mind, I now recommend that the lockdown restrictions can be relaxed as follows:

- The stay at home order can be removed and replaced with a requirement that most venues may open, subject to complying with the 4m² rule to allow venues to accommodate 1 person per 4m², up to a maximum of 20 patrons. This is to include cafes, restaurants, hospitality and entertainment venues. The intent of this is to allow people to socialise, but in very restricted groups to reduce the potential for

the spread of COVID-19 from large numbers and mixing, should a case be subsequently identified in the community. I recommend that casinos, nightclubs and large events continue to remain closed, as they accommodate large numbers of people mixing in close groups. Where a person wishes to have a gathering at their own premises, this should be restricted to a maximum of 20 guests.

- The requirement for face masks should remain in place in all public places, including workplaces. The Australian Health Principal Protection Committee (AHPCC) advise that where there is low community transmission of COVID-19, the wearing of masks in the community is not generally recommended. However, where there is significant community transmission, covering the face with a mask can provide extra protection. As we remain within the first incubation period of the three cases, there is a possibility that further cases may be detected, and I therefore recommend that the requirement to wear face masks continues, except for primary school students, those with medical exemptions and those people undertaking strenuous exercise.
- Regarding healthcare facilities, I recommend that non-urgent category 2 or 3 elective surgery be deferred; healthcare provided outside the hospital setting, such as at physiotherapy and radiology practices, should recommence, but that visits to aged care facilities and hospitals should remain restricted. COVID-19 presents risks to older people, who are particularly vulnerable to respiratory diseases. As physical distancing is the most important action to protect vulnerable people from exposure to COVID-19, visitors to aged care facilities should be restricted.
- Finally, the current 'Stay at Home and Closure (Perth, Peel and Rottnest)) Directions' apply to the Perth and Peel Regions. This decision was made due to the large volume of people who travel between these regions for both business and pleasure. Based on the testing results received to date, I am satisfied that travel between the Perth and Peel regions and other regions should be permitted, although masks should continue to be worn by those coming from the Perth and Peel region.

Please see Attachment 1 for a table detailing my recommendations. I recommend that these eased restrictions become effective from 00:01 am on Tuesday 27 April 2021 and are in place until 00:01 am on Saturday 01 May 2021.

I am happy to re-consider the above advice should there be significant changes in the public health situation.

Yours sincerely



Dr Andy Robertson
CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER

26 April 2021

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