



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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WEST PERTH WA 6005

CONTROLLED BORDER CONTROLS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Dear Premier

On 11 May 2021, the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHSS) reported a case in a returned traveller who recently undertook hotel quarantine in South Australia. The man in his 30s returned to Australia from India via the Maldives on 19 April 2021. He isolated in the Playford quarantine hotel in South Australia before returning to his home in Wollert in Melbourne on 04 May. A positive case had been diagnosed on that floor in an adjacent room, who was then transferred to the SA MediHotel on the same day (04 May). The Melbourne case had a negative PCR test on Day 13. He developed symptoms on 08 May and was tested on 10 May 2021. No further cases arose from this case. Genomic sequencing supported the hypothesis that this case acquired COVID-19 from a guest in an adjacent room.

Based on the situation at the time, and noting that he was infectious in the community from 06-10 May 2021, I provided the following advice to the State Emergency Coordinator on 11 May 2021:

- Effective immediately, anyone who arrived in WA on or after the 06 May 2021 and has been at the Victorian listed venues at the times specified between 06 May and 10 May 2021 should be required to self-quarantine for 14 days and be tested immediately (within 48 hours) and at day 11.
- Anyone from the Melbourne area who did not visit the venues and has arrived on or after 06 May 2021 should be advised to get tested if they develop any symptoms that may be related to COVID-19.

The Victorian Limited Self-Quarantine and Presentation for Testing (May 2021 Outbreak) Directions were subsequently brought into force and remain in force.

On 24 May 2021, the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHSS) reported four new cases of COVID-19 in the northern suburbs of Melbourne. All four cases are part of the same family, living across three households in Whittlesea area. Whole genome

sequencing results indicate that they are genomically linked to the Wollert case and are infected with the B.1.617.1 (Indian) strain. Epidemiological links between this cluster and the Wollert case are still being investigated. 14,892 tests were carried out on 24 May 2021.

A fifth separate community case and four of their house hold contacts have been reported as confirmed cases by DHSS today (25 May 2021). Contact tracing has identified the fifth case as a close contact of the initial Whittlesea Community Cluster case. This case had symptoms before the initial case and was urgently tested on 24 May 2021. He was believed to have been infectious from 15 May 2021 and developed symptoms on 17 May 2021. While he is linked to the Wollert case, he had not attended any of the exposure sites related to that case. The number of exposure sites continues to expand and includes shopping, sporting and eating venues in the Epping, Reservoir, Bundoora, Maribyrnong and Brunswick areas.

On 24 May 2021, the Acting Chief Health Officer recommended that the current Directions remain in force and that all arrivals from Victoria who had been in Melbourne since 6 May should:

- check the Victorian public exposure site website to determine if they had been to any of the venues listed there and, if they had, to immediately quarantine themselves for 14 days after their exposure, and get tested within 48 hours and at Day 11; and
- otherwise be on the lookout for symptoms and get tested immediately and isolate until a negative result is returned, if they do develop symptoms.

Given the additional cases, and that this outbreak is linked to the more transmissible B.1.617.1 strain, further measures are recommended. The seeding of a single case of a more transmissible variant could have significant consequences. A strain with a 50% (or greater) increase in transmissibility could require much more stringent public health measures to control an outbreak. The B.1.617.1 strain is assessed to have a greater than 50% increase in transmissibility. Modelling underway to assess the impact of the new variants, should they spread in Australia, supports rapid public health action to control such outbreaks. Fortunately, both the Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines appear to be effective against the B.1.617 variant and its subvariants.

After briefing the Emergency Management Team (EMT) this afternoon (25 May 2021), I recommended the following:

- Effective from 1800 on 25 May 2021, all passengers arriving from Victoria should be required to get tested immediately (within 48 hours) and isolate until they have received a negative result. Any passenger who refuses to get tested should be required to self-quarantine for 14 days.
- As per previous advice, anyone who has been at the listed venues should be required to self-quarantine for 14 days and be tested immediately (within 48 hours) and at day 11.
- Anyone from the Melbourne area who did not visit the venues and has arrived from the 15-25 May 2021 should be advised to get tested if they develop any symptoms that may be related to COVID-19.

Airport testing is being arranged for both domestic terminals and both public and private COVID Clinics will be expanded to deal with the additional testing.

Given continuing changes in the epidemiology in other States and the situation in Western Australia, I am happy to re-consider the above advice should there be significant changes in the public health situation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Robertson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr Andy Robertson
CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER

25 May 2021