



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

Your Ref:
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Contact:

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

Dear Premier

On 27 June 2021, I advised you of two key issues relating to the diagnosis and management of COVID-19 cases that had arisen in Western Australia (WA) over the preceding 24 hours. One issue related to a case of COVID-19 in a Western Australian returned traveller from Sydney, who had been exposed at the Lyfe Café in Bondi on 19 June 2021 (Case 1022), and the other related to the potential for COVID-19 positive personnel of the Granites gold mine having travelled to WA.

Granites Gold Mine

On 26 June 2021, Northern Territory (NT) Health reported an infectious community COVID-19 case employed at the Newmont-owned Granites gold mine in the Tanami Desert, around 540 kilometres north-west of Alice Springs. A worker, infected with the Delta variant strain at the Airport Novotel Langley quarantine hotel in Brisbane, had been infectious at the mine from 18 – 24 June 2021. Approximately 800 workers, including 184 from WA, had left the mine during that period.

On this basis, I recommended that anyone who had travelled to WA from Granites gold mine, and was at the mine between 18 – 25 June 2021, should be required to self-quarantine for 14 days and be tested immediately (within 48 hours) and at day 11. Anyone from the Northern Territory who was not at the mine and has arrived after 18 June 2021 should be advised to get tested if they developed any symptoms that may be related to COVID-19.

Three flights from the mine site had arrived in Perth during this period with 251 passengers onboard. The 74 passengers who arrived on the flight on the 18 June were considered casual contacts given their limited or non-existent period of exposure to the case. The 177 passengers who arrived on the flights on the 23 June and 25 June were managed as close contacts, requiring testing and 14 days home quarantine. All

177 initial close contacts had a negative test result. Of the 74 casual contacts, 28 have remained in WA and 46 have returned to the NT. 27 had an initial negative test and 1 casual contact remains uncontactable. While further cases may appear in this cohort, given the incubation period of the disease, they all remain in home quarantine with suitable testing and monitoring. On this basis, I am satisfied that the risk of an outbreak from this source has been contained.

Northern Suburbs Cluster

Late on 26 June 2021, WA Health was advised of a positive COVID-19 case. The case was in a female in her 50s, who travelled to New South Wales with her husband on 15 June 2021 and returned to Perth on 20 June 2021. She had a meal at the Lyfe Café in Bondi on 19 June 2021 with her husband and son. She and her husband followed public health requirements on arriving in WA and had an initial COVID-19 test on 21 June, which was negative. Her son was tested in NSW and was also negative.

Between 22-24 June 2021, she worked as a physiotherapist, visiting clients in a gym, a special skills school and two primary schools. She also visited a restaurant, a shopping centre, Ikea and various grocery stores during that period. On 24 June 2021, she began developing symptoms and remained home on 25 June 2021. On 26 June 2021, realising that a place she had visited in New South Wales had now been added to the list of NSW hotspots, she presented for a further COVID test, which was positive. Whole genome sequencing confirmed that she was infected with the Delta (B.1.617.2) variant from her exposure at Lyfe Café. She was assessed as being infectious from 22 June 2021. Her partner was retested and was negative. She had previously been vaccinated with one dose of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine.

Given her confirmed COVID-19 disease, the potential for community spread of the SARS-CoV2 Delta variant between 22-24 June 2021, including to vulnerable populations, schools and hospitality venues, and the high susceptibility of WA to an outbreak, I recommended that, from 12 noon on 27 June 2021, physical distancing and capacity restrictions be implemented in the Perth-Peel region. This required that masks be worn indoors and on public transport, public gatherings be restricted to 150 people and the 2 square metre rule be implemented. To reduce the risk of spread to vulnerable cohorts, visits to hospitals and residential aged care facilities were restricted to four personal visitors per person per day and travel to remote Aboriginal Communities was restricted.

On the evening of 28 June 2021, I advised of two further COVID-19 cases. Case1023 was a woman in her 30s who attended the Mobius Health and Performance gym in Joondalup on 24 June 2021. After developing symptoms on 27 June 2021, she was tested, and WA Health was notified of a positive PCR test on the morning of 28 June 2021. She had been active in the community during her infectious period including spending time at her workplace, Craigie Leisure Centre and the IGA in Mullaloo. Contact tracing identified that she was a casual contact of Case 1022 at the Mobius Gym. She is currently in isolation at her home address.

Case 1024 was a man in his 20s who attended the Indian Ocean Brewery in Mindarie on 22 June 2021. After PCR and serology testing on 28 June 2021, he was confirmed as a case late on 28 June 2021. Case 1024 was a casual contact of Case 1022 at the Brewery. He is also currently in isolation at his home address. Genomic sequencing has now confirmed that Cases 1023 and 1024 are linked to Case 1022.

Given confirmed COVID-19 disease in two further cases, both of whom were in the community and were not household or close contacts of Case 1022, and the potential for further community spread of the SARS-CoV2 Delta variant, I recommended a lockdown of the Perth-Peel region for a minimum of 4 days. This commenced at 12.01am on Tuesday 29 June 2021 and was designed to stop the transmission chains, while allowing for testing and contact-tracing to identify those most at risk.

On 30 June 2021, I advised that a further case (Case 1028), thought to be related to this outbreak, had been detected. The fourth case is a 37-year-old man who attended the Mobius Health and Performance gym in Joondalup on 22 and 26 June 2021. The man had previously been identified as a close contact and had been in quarantine since 27 June 2021 and was therefore not expected to have been infectious in the community. His initial COVID test on 27 June 2021 was negative but he subsequently developed symptoms and presented for re-testing on 29 June 2021, which was positive. On 01 July 2021, a further case (Case 1029) was confirmed in a 21-year old female, who was a household contact of Case 1024 and had been in home quarantine during her infectious period. She had previously had a negative test on 28 June 2021.

The Public Health Emergency Operations Centre (PHEOC) have identified the close contacts of Cases 1022, 1023, 1024, 1028 and 1029 and has required them to be immediately tested for COVID-19 and enter 14 days quarantine. The PHEOC have also identified casual contacts of these cases and required them to undertake immediate testing and isolate until they obtained a negative test result. As of 02 July 2021, 2,863 close and casual contacts have been identified, with 93% of close contacts testing negative and 60.5% of casual contacts testing negative, with the majority of the remaining tests pending.

Extensive testing of the public has also been undertaken, with all persons, who were present at a list of locations these cases visited on the dates and times specified, instructed to get tested as soon as they were able. Additionally, people who live or work in the affected suburbs were strongly encouraged to be tested. This has resulted in over 70,744 people presenting for testing at our COVID clinics since 26 June 2021. I am pleased to advise that there have also been no positive COVID-19 test results received in respect to these cohorts.

Recommendations

I am confident that the steps taken following the detection of Case 1022 have been effective in containing the resulting outbreak. The community, however, was exposed over 5 days to the SARS-CoV-2 Delta variant, with the last community exposure on 27 June 2021. Depending on the exposure date, people within the Perth and Peel region may have been exposed between 4 and 9 days ago, which is well within the

14-day incubation period of this cluster. In addition, recent modelling, based on the Alpha variant, showed that WA had the highest transmission potential of all the major States, including NSW, and that, without appropriate intervention, would be highly susceptible to a major outbreak. Research from Public Health England suggests that the Delta variant is associated with an approximately 60% increased risk of household transmission compared to the Alpha variant, often with limited exposure times. The infection of 27 people by one individual at a birthday party in West Hoxton in Sydney by this Delta strain illustrates its transmissibility. Any reduction in restrictions must factor in the potential for yet undetected community cases and subsequent large outbreaks if not controlled.

I also note that school holidays are scheduled to commence from the end of the school day of Friday 2 July 2021, which could reasonably be expected to result in a large volume of people seeking to travel from the Perth-Peel region to other areas of the State, or beyond. Retaining restrictions in the Perth-Peel region, 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 further cases be detected.

With these results in mind, I recommend that the lockdown restrictions can be relaxed, on or after 12.01am Saturday 03 July 2021, as follows:

- The Stay at Home order be revoked, although working from home is advised for vulnerable people and those who can do so.
- All venues may open, subject to complying with the 4 square metre (4m²) rule, up to a maximum of 20 patrons. Hospitality and entertainment venues (including bars, casino and nightclubs), beauty/hairdressers, recreation centres (including gyms, Pilates, yoga, dance and swimming pools) and places of worship may open, subject to the 4m² rule and 20 patron capacity limit. 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 of non-household members and mixing, should a case be subsequently identified in the community. Hospitality venues, including restaurants, bars and nightclubs, can provide seated service only. Where a person wishes to have a gathering at their own premises, this should be restricted to a maximum of 10 household or family guests.
- Non-sporting events and indoor community sports are not permitted. Sporting events, including outdoor community sport, are permitted without spectators.
- The requirement for face masks should remain in place for indoor and outdoor public areas and on public transport, including workplaces. The Australian Health Principal Protection Committee (AHPPC) 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 these 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 outside.

- Wedding and funerals can proceed but should be limited to a maximum of 20 attendees.
- No visitors to be permitted at Hospitals except for compassionate, paediatric and obstetric visits – masks should be mandatory for staff and visitors.
- With regard to healthcare facilities, non-urgent category 2 or 3 elective surgery in private hospitals and healthcare provided outside the hospital setting, such as at physiotherapy and radiology practices, should recommence.
- Visits to residential aged care facilities 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 to essential care, compassionate, end of life and advocacy visits.
- Schools and childcare centres can remain open.
- Finally, the current 'Outbreak Restrictions (Circuit-Break Lockdown – Level 3) 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 close and casual contacts should be prohibited from leaving the city, masks should continue to be worn by those coming from the Perth and Peel region and the current restrictions on attending gatherings larger than 20 people should still apply to the travellers. Travel to remote Aboriginal Communities should not be permitted.

I recommend that these relaxed restrictions are put in place for a minimum of 3 days, when I will then consider a further easing of these restrictions, if appropriate. 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

02 July 2021