

PUBLIC HEALTH ACT 2016 (WA)

Sections 157(1)(k) and 190(1)(p)

MENTAL HEALTH INFECTION CONTROL DIRECTIONS (NO 3)

The World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic on 11 March 2020.

On 23 March 2020, the Minister for Health declared a public health state of emergency with effect from 1:30pm on 23 March 2020 in respect of COVID-19 pursuant to section 167 of the *Public Health Act 2016 (WA)* (Act). On 22 September 2021, the Minister for Health declared a further public health state of emergency with effect from 4.25 pm on 22 September 2021 in respect of COVID-19 pursuant to section 167 of the Act. The public health state of emergency applies to the State of Western Australia.

I, Dr Andrew Robertson, Chief Health Officer, in accordance with my authority as an emergency officer under the Act to exercise any of the emergency powers while the public health state of emergency declaration in respect of COVID-19 is in force, consider it reasonably necessary to give the following directions to all persons in Western Australia to prevent, control or abate the serious public health risk presented by COVID-19 pursuant to sections 157(1)(k) and 190(1)(p) of the Act.

PREAMBLE

1. The purpose of these directions is to require medical practitioners (including psychiatrists) and authorised mental health practitioners to use infection control measures when conducting mental health assessments and examinations under the *Mental Health Act 2014 (WA)* (the MHA) where the patient has, or is suspected of having, COVID-19 in order to prevent, control or abate the serious public health risk presented by COVID-19 by limiting the spread of COVID-19.

CITATION

2. These directions may be referred to as the **Mental Health Infection Control Directions (No 3)**.

COMMENCEMENT

3. These directions come into effect upon signing.

DIRECTIONS

4. A practitioner who is responsible for conducting an assessment of a patient pursuant to section 48 of the MHA must conduct the assessment as specified in paragraphs 6 and 7 if:
 - (a) the patient has COVID-19;
 - (b) during the 14 days preceding the assessment, the patient arrived in Western Australia from a place outside Western Australia;
 - (c) during the 14 days immediately preceding the assessment, the patient had known contact with a person who has a confirmed case of COVID-19;
 - (d) during the 14 days immediately preceding the assessment, the patient disembarked from a cruise ship;
 - (e) the patient has any **symptoms**; or
 - (f) the practitioner has been directed to self-isolate for any reason.
5. A practitioner who is responsible for conducting an examination of a patient pursuant to section 79 of the MHA must conduct the examination as specified in paragraphs 6 and 7 if:
 - (a) the patient has COVID-19;
 - (b) during the 14 days preceding the assessment, the patient arrived in Western Australia from a place outside Western Australia;
 - (c) during the 14 days immediately preceding the assessment, the patient had known contact with a person who has a confirmed case of COVID-19;
 - (d) during the 14 days immediately preceding the assessment, the patient disembarked from a cruise ship;
 - (e) the patient has any symptoms; or
 - (f) the practitioner has been directed to self-isolate for any reason.
6. Subject to paragraph 7, to prevent, control and abate the risk of COVID-19, an assessment or examination may only be conducted using one or more of the following infection control measures:

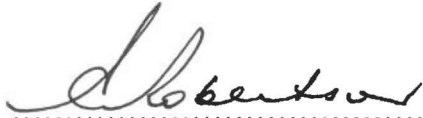
- (a) the practitioner wears appropriate and adequate personal protective equipment in accordance with the advice and recommendations for the use of personal protective equipment published on the Western Australian Department of Health COVID-19 (coronavirus) internet page as amended from time to time;
 - (b) the practitioner takes all reasonable steps to avoid coming within 1.5 metres of the patient at any time;
 - (c) the practitioner ensures there is a physical barrier between themselves and the patient, such as a door, window or perspex screen, but must be able to see and hear the patient; or
 - (d) the practitioner uses audiovisual communication.
7. A practitioner who has been directed to self-isolate for any reason may only conduct the assessment or examination using audiovisual communication.
8. A practitioner must comply with these directions despite the provisions of the MHA.

DEFINITIONS

9. **Practitioner** means the health practitioner responsible for conducting:
- (a) the assessment pursuant to section 48 of the MHA; or
 - (b) the examination pursuant to section 79 of the MHA.
10. **Symptoms** means any one or more of:
- (a) a fever of 37.5 degrees or above; or
 - (b) a recent history of fever; or
 - (c) symptoms of acute respiratory infection (including, but without limitation, shortness of breath, a cough or sore throat); or
 - (d) loss of smell or loss of taste.

PENALTIES

It is an offence for a person to fail, without reasonable excuse, to comply with any of these directions, punishable by a fine of up to \$20,000 for individuals.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dr Robertson', written over a dotted line.

Dr Andrew Robertson
Emergency Officer
22 September 2021