



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

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Our Ref:  
Contact:

The Honourable Mark McGowan MLA  
Premier of Western Australia  
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## **IMPLEMENTATION OF RESTRICTIONS IN RESPONSE TO A COMMUNITY CASE OF COVID-19**

Dear Premier

I am writing to you to advise you of a case of COVID-19 in a person who has been infectious while in our Perth/Peel community and the restrictions that I recommend as a result of various related exposure events.

This morning, the Department of Health was notified of a person aged in their twenties, living in the community, who had been tested and found to be positive for SARS CoV-2. This individual had returned from Queensland prior to a time when travellers from that state were required to quarantine. They developed symptoms and got tested, however, they were infectious while in the community for several days.

The contact tracing team is working with the case to trace all places that they were while infectious. Significant exposure sites so far include two nightclubs, a music event, shops and various public venues. There is a reasonable likelihood of secondary cases occurring, which will lead to further exposure sites being identified. As exposure sites come to light, we will alert the public, including testing and isolation/quarantine requirements.

It is not yet clear if this case acquired COVID-19 interstate or from within Western Australia (WA). Furthermore, it is not known if this case has infection with the Delta variant or the newer, more transmissible, Omicron variant. Further testing over the next few days will, hopefully, provide answers to these questions.

While this event is of concern, it should be noted that the Perth Metropolitan and Peel Regions have a double dose vaccination rate of over 80%, which will mitigate against a severe outbreak occurring. In addition, COVID-19 waste water surveillance results do not indicate a widespread outbreak is underway in these regions. Given this, I recommend that several public health social measures are implemented immediately to limit any further transmission from secondary cases that have already occurred and

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to allow some time to better understand the risk. My recommendations include mask wearing indoors and on public transport; closure of nightclubs; cancellation of large (>500 people) music events; cessation of dancing at public venues (except weddings). The reasons for each are outlined below.

### **Mask mandate - indoors**

As outlined in previous advice from the Chief Health Officer, SARS-CoV-2 is mainly transmitted via respiratory droplets (close contact) or aerosols (especially in indoor spaces) and, to a lesser extent, via contaminated surfaces. Masks create a physical barrier between the mouth and nose of the wearer and other people in the immediate environment. If worn properly, a mask helps to block large-particle droplets that may contain viruses and bacteria, preventing transmission from an infected wearer's mouth and nose. Masks also help reduce exposure from saliva and respiratory droplets from others to the wearer. Therefore, masks form a useful mitigation measure for reducing the spread of COVID-19. During this holiday period particularly, when many people will be in shops, restaurants, churches and other public venues, masks should be worn at all times in these venues, other than when eating/drinking, to reduce the risk of ongoing transmission. I recommend that mask wearing be made mandatory in indoor public venues and public transport, but not for residential settings. This is particularly important for high risk facilities, such as hospitals, disability services, and aged care facilities. Furthermore, people should be strongly encouraged (not mandated) to wear masks when outdoors when physical distancing cannot be maintained.

### **Nightclubs, dancing, music events**

My recommendation to close nightclubs, stop dancing at public venues, and cancel music events with crowds of over 500 people is based on the particular circumstances of this case and the presumed behaviours of secondary case that have already occurred. I believe that we may see more cases of COVID-19 in the next few days in people who have been at the higher risk social events, such as the nightclubs and the music event attended by the case, and these measures are to prevent further transmission in this cohort of people who may themselves be infected and attend similar events. Events at which there is dancing in public venues pose a particular risk to transmission, as people are not socially distanced and generally not wearing masks. In addition, because background noise levels in these types of venues are often high, people tend to talk to one another at close quarters, thereby increasing the risk of transmission via respiratory droplets.

### **Summary of Public Health Social Measures**

In summary, as a result of the case of COVID-19 diagnosed today who was infectious while in the WA community, it is my advice as the Acting Chief Health Officer that public health social measures be implemented in the Perth Metropolitan and Peel Regions from 1800Hrs today, Thursday 23 December 2021, until 0600Hrs, Tuesday 28 December 2021. These measures should include the following:

- mask wearing to be made mandatory in all indoor spaces except residential settings. These include public transport, workplaces, hospitals, disability and

aged care facilities, and other public venues. An exemption should apply to people undertaking vigorous exercise indoors

- mask wearing outdoors be strongly encouraged (not mandated) where physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- nightclubs to remain closed and no dancing at other at events/venues, other than weddings
- cancellation of major music events (where crowds are >500 people).

It should be noted that if a person has been in the Perth Metropolitan or Peel Region on or after 1800Hrs, Thursday 16 December, and they are now elsewhere in WA, they should also adhere to the mask wearing recommendations as outlined above.

This event is a timely reminder to all Western Australians that COVID vaccination is a vital protection from COVID-19 for themselves personally, as well as indirectly to protect friends and family and the broader community. Also, that the use of the QR codes for check-in at venues is of great value for contact tracing, as it provides a rapid ability to contact many people who may have been exposed, such as we have done today. The community should be strongly encouraged to continue to use QR code check-in system over the holiday period. Anyone who has been to an exposure site or has signs or symptoms of COVID-19 should isolate and immediately get tested.

I am happy to re-consider the above advice as the situation becomes clearer and in light of any significant change to the public health risk.

Yours sincerely



Dr Paul Armstrong  
**ACTING CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER**

23 December 2021