



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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## **CONTROLLED BORDER CONTROLS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

Dear Premier

On 7 January 2021, Queensland Health advised that a cleaner in one of their quarantine hotels had tested positive for COVID-19. The cleaner had developed symptoms on 04 January and was tested on 07 January 2021. She had attended work on one day while infectious (2 January 2021) and had been out in the community in southern Brisbane in the days prior to testing. Queensland Health subsequently advised that she was confirmed to have the United Kingdom B.1.1.7 variant strain. Western Australia (WA) has recently reported 4 cases of the B.1.1.7 strain in international passengers in quarantine, including in an elderly woman currently in Royal Perth Hospital. On the evening of the 07 January 2021, Queensland Health reported that 8 close contacts had tested negative. Extensive contact tracing and testing has commenced in Brisbane. On 08 January 2021, the Queensland Government announced a 3-day lockdown for the greater Brisbane area to commence at 6pm Queensland time tonight.

A 22 December 2020 statement by the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) noted the emergence of a new variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, the virus that causes COVID-19, in the United Kingdom (UK). The variant (B.1.1.7) is rapidly becoming the dominant virus in the UK and is now being seen in other regions of the world, including in North America, Europe and parts of Asia. An updated AHPPC statement will be provided to National Cabinet on 08 January 2021.

Two variants, B.1.1.7 and B.1.351, which emerged in South Africa, have been shown to spread more readily between individuals (higher transmissibility of up to 70% in some studies) than previous SARS-CoV-2 viruses. However, there is still much not known about these viruses, including whether they result in cases having shorter incubation periods or being infectious for a longer period. To date, there is no evidence that either of these variants cause more severe disease or that the current proposed vaccines would not be effective against the new variants, although there is some evidence that they spread more easily to and amongst children.

The seeding of a single case of a more transmissible variant would have significant consequences. A strain with a 50% (or greater) increase in transmissibility would require much more stringent public health measures to control an outbreak. Modelling is underway to assess the impact of the new variants should they spread in Australia.

On the 28 October 2020, I recommended that the then 'Quarantine (Closing the Border) Directions' should be amended from 14 November 2020 to permit, subject to a declaration of their whereabouts, health status and a temperature check, any person who has been in a non-COVID affected jurisdiction for 14 days to enter WA without the requirement for quarantine or testing. This included Queensland at the time. The subsequent 'Controlled Border for Western Australia Directions' have been amended to manage outbreaks in South Australia, New South Wales (NSW) and Victoria. NSW and Victoria remain in the Medium Risk Category, while all other States and Territories have moved to the Very Low Risk category.

Given the importation and currently limited spread of the UK variant strain in Queensland, and its increased potential to spread rapidly through a susceptible population, the risk of importation of the B.1.1.7 variant strain, and the risk of developing subsequent community cases in WA should the strain be introduced, is now assessed as having moved from very low to medium risk. Current modelling continues to show that WA, even in Phase 4, remains the most susceptible to a major outbreak of all the States, only just surpassed by the Northern Territory, due to the increased numbers of people moving around in our society and the mixing between non-family groups. This susceptibility has continued to increase in recent modelling. On these grounds, it is recommended that changes be made to the controlled border arrangements to move Queensland from the Very Low Risk category to the Medium Risk category, as of 1000 hours on 08 January 2021. All Queensland travellers will be restricted to those who have received exemptions. Exempted travellers would be required to self-quarantine in suitable premises for 14 days and to undertake testing on arrival and on day 11.

With regards to Queensland travellers who remain in WA after having arrived on or after 2 January 2021, and before 1000 hours on 08 January 2021, it is recommended that they self-quarantine in suitable premises for a period of 14 days after arrival in WA, undertake a COVID-19 PCR test within 72 hours and again on day 11, and be released from self-quarantine after 14 days if a negative test result is confirmed.

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



Dr Andy Robertson  
**CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER**

08 January 2021