



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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EASING OF CONTROLLED BORDER CONTROLS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Dear Premier

The current WA controlled border arrangements are designed to manage the risk from COVID-19 outbreaks currently or previously occurring in New South Wales (NSW), Victoria and Queensland. The 'Controlled Border for Western Australia Directions' came into force on 14 November 2020.

New South Wales

On 25 September 2020, I recommended that changes be made to the border arrangements to move New South Wales (NSW) from the Medium Risk category to the Low Risk category from 05 October 2020. This change came into force on 05 October in accordance with the 'Quarantine (Closing the Border) Amendment Directions (No 7.)'. At the time, NSW, after reaching of peak of 22 cases in the outbreak, had less than 5 cases per day and had reported only 24 cases in the previous week, with 106 active cases. Given the testing and contact tracing being undertaken, and the fall in cases to less than 1 community case per day over a five-day rolling average, the move to a Low Risk category, including 14 days quarantine and day 11 testing only, was recommended. NSW subsequently moved on 08 December 2020 to the Very Low Risk category after greater than 28 days of no community spread, as per Attachment 1.

On 19 December 2020, the Acting Chief Health Officer (CHO) recommended that changes be made to the controlled border arrangements to move NSW from the Low Risk category to the Medium Risk category, as of 0001 hours on 20 December 2020. NSW had moved from the Very Low to Low Risk category on 18 December on the advice of the CHO after the reporting of the outbreak in Avalon.

NSW, having had 192 cases in this current outbreak, now has less than 2 cases per day. NSW has reported 7 locally acquired cases in the last week and no new community cases since 15 January 2021. Given the testing and contact tracing being undertaken, the number of community cases is expected to continue to fall. As NSW is now at a similar stage to where it was in late September 2020, I recommend that changes be made to the border arrangements to move NSW from the Medium Risk category to the Low Risk category, on or after 25 January 2021, which will remove exemptions while still requiring 14 days quarantine and day 11 testing only.

Queensland

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 tested positive on 06 January 2021. She had attended work on one day while infectious (2 January 2021) and had limited time in the community in southern Brisbane in the days prior to testing. Queensland Health subsequently advised that she was infected with the United Kingdom B.1.1.7 variant strain. On 12 January 2021, Queensland Health reported that the partner of the cleaner, who had been quarantining since 07 January, had tested positive for COVID-19. Genomic sequencing has subsequently linked these cases to two separate groups of international arrivals (2 from the UK and 2 from Lebanon) currently in hotel quarantine. There have been no further community cases detected despite extensive contact tracing and community testing.

Given the importation of the UK variant strain into Queensland, its increased potential to spread rapidly through a susceptible population, the risk of importation of the B.1.1.7 variant strain into WA, and the risk of developing subsequent community cases in WA should the strain be introduced, I recommended on 08 January 2021 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. Queensland travellers were restricted to those who have received exemptions. Exempted travellers were required to self-quarantine in suitable premises for 14 days and to undertake testing on arrival and on day 11. This came into effect at 0001 hours on 09 January 2021. Queensland travellers who remained in WA, having arrived on or after 2 January 2021, and before 1000 hours on 08 January 2021, were required to 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 was confirmed. WA has had no positive tests from these cohorts.

In similar circumstances, on 02 December 2020, after NSW had no community cases for 26 days, NSW Health reported on a case in a hotel quarantine worker in Sydney. This worker was believed to have been infected by a United Airlines crew member while working between 27-30 November in a Sydney quarantine hotel. Testing of close contacts, targeted testing in the likely affected community and wastewater testing was undertaken, but no further related cases were identified. As this was a single case related to hotel quarantine exposure, with no recorded spread and no community cases 7-10 days after initial exposure, the risk of secondary cases was assessed as

very low in NSW. With no other community cases in NSW in the last 30 days, I assessed on 07 December 2020 that the risk of importation to, and subsequent community cases in, WA remained very low. On those grounds, the borders were opened to NSW from 08 December 2020.

Queensland has had no further locally acquired cases since 06 January 2021 related to the hotel cluster and no community cases detected due to these quarantine hotel acquired cases, despite extensive contact tracing, targeted community testing and wastewater testing, over the last 15 days. Prior to this, there had been no community spread since a small outbreak on 09 September 2020, which was rapidly brought under control. Queensland will lift all its remaining restrictions from 22 January 2021. Except for Tasmania, who still requires quarantine but is anticipated to lift these restrictions on 22 January 2021, all other jurisdictions have eased their quarantine restrictions. As Queensland is now at in a similar position to NSW in December 2020, albeit with cases with the B.1.1.7 strain, with a prescribed hotel quarantine cluster and no community spread, on a background of no community spread since September 2020, I recommend that changes be made to the border arrangements to move Queensland from the Medium Risk category to the Low Risk category, on or after 25 January 2021, which will remove the requirements for exemptions and on arrival testing. If there are no further locally acquired cases, I recommend that changes be made to the border arrangements to then move Queensland from the Low Risk category to the Very Low Risk category, on or after 01 February 2021, which will remove the requirements for 14 days quarantine and day 11 testing.

Proposed amendments to Border Controls

For the reasons outlined above, I recommend that, on or after the 25 January 2021, changes be made to the controlled border arrangements to move NSW and Queensland travellers from the Medium Risk category to the Low Risk category, as per Attachment 1. If approved by the WA Government, the following would occur in accordance with that risk rating:

- exemption requirements would be removed for travellers from NSW and Queensland;
- NSW and Queensland travellers arriving in Western Australia would be required to home quarantine and to be tested at Day 11; and
- persons who travelled from other jurisdictions, but had been in NSW and Queensland in the last 14 days, would have the same conditions apply to them.

With regards to Queensland, I further recommend that changes be made to the border arrangements to move Queensland travellers, on or after the 01 February 2021, from the Low Risk category to the Very Low Risk category, as per Attachment 1. If approved by the WA Government, the following would occur in accordance with that risk rating:

- Day 11 testing and quarantine requirements would be removed for travellers arriving from Queensland;
- Queensland travellers currently in quarantine in WA would be required to complete their day 11 testing and 14 day quarantine requirements; and
- Queensland travellers arriving in WA would be required undertake the health screening requirements of Very Low Risk jurisdictions.

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', written in a cursive style.

Dr Andy Robertson
CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER

21 January 2021

Trigger Points for Reviewing Border Controls

Risk of importation from affected jurisdiction (as at 21 January)	Trigger Point for Review	Proposed amendments to current conditions	Recommended review date and proposed action
High Risk	Greater than 20 new community cases per day, on 5-day and 14 day rolling average	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hotel quarantine for travellers 2. Exemptions restricted to Commonwealth, State and specialist functions only 3. Testing at days 2 and 12. 	
Medium Risk	5 to 20 new community cases per day, on 5-day and 14 day rolling average	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Home quarantine for travellers 2. Testing at days 1 and 11. 3. Exemptions restricted to Commonwealth, State and specialist functions only 	2 weeks. If risk falls to a low risk, implement low risk conditions
Low Risk	Less than 5 new community cases per day, on 5-day and 14 day rolling average	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Home quarantine for travellers. 2. Testing at day 11. 3. General exemptions may be considered if community cases are still occurring 	4-6 weeks. If risk falls to a very low risk, implement very low risk conditions
Very Low Risk	No community cases, from either an unknown source or where the contacts of a case were not in quarantine, for 28 days	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No quarantine or testing required. 2. Declaration that visitor has been in a very low risk jurisdiction for last 14 days 3. Health screening. 	4 weeks. If all jurisdictions meet the very low risk criteria, implement the negligible risk conditions
Negligible Risk	No community cases, from either an unknown source or where the contacts of a case were not in quarantine, for 28 days in all jurisdictions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Open all interstate borders 	