



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

In separate advice on 29 January 2021, I have recommended that Queensland and Victoria should move from the Low Risk Category to the Very Low Risk Category on or after 01 February 2021 and the 03 February 2021 respectively. If approved, travellers will be able to enter Western Australia (WA) without 14-day quarantine or Day 11 testing requirements. They will still be required to undertake health screening on entry.

In previous advice, when jurisdictions moved from the Low Risk Category to the Very Low Risk Category, travellers currently in quarantine from these jurisdictions have been required to complete their quarantine and undertake day 11 testing. This has been a very precautionary approach based on a theoretical risk of contracting disease from undiagnosed asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic COVID-19 cases circulating in the community 15 to 28 days after the last community case. Given the extensive contact tracing and testing occurring in all Australian jurisdictions, there is negligible risk of this occurring. In addition, the risk posed by those who have been in home isolation in WA is equivalent or less than those who have entered without quarantine after day 28 in the Very Low Risk Category. Reviews of outbreaks in several Australian States have demonstrated that, should a State or Territory get to 14 days of no community cases, they will reach 28 days of no community cases unless there is a fresh unrelated outbreak, which have usually been linked to locally acquired cases from hotel quarantine.

Most Australian jurisdictions have moved to easing their border and 'hot spot' restrictions after 14 days of no community cases and WA is currently reviewing whether a 14, 21 or 28-day 'no community cases' restriction policy remains optimal to protect public health, while maintaining and enhancing safe movement across the interstate borders. Other jurisdictions also allow travellers from affected states or territories to leave quarantine once their border restrictions are removed. While there is a limited risk that some of these travellers could have been infected in the first 14

days, the risk of their having acquired the disease between 15-28 days is negligible. Should a future recommendation be made on a shortened period of no community cases prior to opening borders, the subsequent impact on this cohort will be reassessed.

The employment and social impacts of keeping these travellers in home or, in limited cases, hotel quarantine, beyond the date of the move to the Very Low Risk category, are substantial, including reduced productivity, ongoing monitoring costs and decreased confidence in the COVID-19 response. There are also unintended consequences of such a policy, including encouraging people to leave and re-enter WA to bypass such a requirement.

On these public health grounds, I would recommend, for jurisdictions transitioning from Low Risk to the Very Low Risk category, that travellers be released early from quarantine on the same day that the change comes into force.

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

29 January 2021