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Andrew.Robertson

Day 1 testing for asymptomatic close contacts

Dear Premier

DAY 1 TESTING FOR CLOSE CONTACTS

I am writing to inform you of changes to the public health management of asymptomatic close contacts of COVID cases.

On 7 February 2022, I wrote to you with respect to the definitions of 'Close Contacts' that should be used in a high case load setting. I mentioned in my advice that a paper published in *Nature Communications* in 2021 supported a shorter quarantine period and demonstrated the relative advantages of a Day 6 test compared to an 'entry' test, with the former having a much higher chance of picking up a new case of COVID. CDNA had also provided national advice previously which supported this for asymptomatic patients. Symptomatic close contacts are required to have an early test. While this may be true in an ideal setting, WA Health has found operationally that many close contacts are only aware of their exposure some days after the fact, making the value of an early test in their quarantine period much greater, as a person is most likely to become a case following exposure after 3-5 days.

For asymptomatic close contacts, a Day 1 test will potentially lead to the earlier identification of new cases (and their own contacts) and enhance the identification of linkages to other cluster or exposure sites, with better control of the outbreak. This change will align with changes to the national advice for the public health management of close contacts of COVID-19 cases. The national advice is due to be published in the *CDNA National Guidelines for Public Health Units COVID-19* document on Friday, 18 February 2022. All other jurisdictions now require or strongly encourage Day 1 testing for asymptomatic close contacts.

Based on this, I have approved our Public Health Operations team requesting that all close contacts have a PCR or RAT on Day 1 and either a PCR on Day 6 or RAT on Day 7 of isolation, regardless of whether they are experiencing symptoms. This will also be reflected by a change to the *COVID Transition (Testing and Isolation) Directions*.

My office will liaise with Department of Premier and Cabinet to inform them of this change so that communication materials can be adjusted accordingly.

I trust this information provides some clarity regarding the public health operational management of close contacts.

Yours sincerely

Andy

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