Quarantine Advisory Panel

GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Quarterly Report
CEO, Hazard Management Agency
31 January 2022

Recommendations

- Enhance incident and compliance reporting mechanisms across the quarantine system to clearly demonstrate severity of the incident, risk level and outline mitigating actions taken to avoid further incidents.
- Integrate all Assurance Frameworks to ensure continuous quality improvement across the entire quarantine system.
- Develop a Communication Plan to clearly articulate information flow across all agencies and to users of the quarantine system.
- The Panel needs to be clearly identified in governance structures across all agencies involved in WA's quarantine system.
- Finalise the review of 'Principles' for the Care and Management of Unaccompanied minors subject to quarantine Directions.

Background

The Review of Western Australia's (WA) Hotel Quarantine Arrangements recommended the establishment of an advisory panel to provide strategic and forward thinking, risk assessment, and adding value by asking the difficult questions of Hotel Quarantine line management (Weeramanthri, 2021[1]).

Government has confirmed state supervised quarantine will continue to be a key component of WA's quarantine system and response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The role of the Quarantine Advisory Panel (Panel) is to provide assurance to government, hotel quarantine is fit-for-purpose, agile and responsive to the dynamic and complex challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since its establishment in May 2021, the Panel have affirmed their role and responsibilities in providing advice and supporting the Hazard Management Agency's (HMA) Chief Executive Officer and the Minister for Health.

Approach

The Panel defined WA's quarantine system as;

"the mechanisms and levers involved in the management of individuals who are positive or suspected positive of COVID-19. This includes arrivals into WA from medium, high or extreme-risk national or international locations and/or WA residents who are impacted by community transmission events."

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[1] Review of Western Australia's Hotel Quarantine Arrangements, Professor Tarun Weeramanthri.

On the 27 July 2021 the Panel agreed to take granular approach to review operations and risks within the hotel quarantine system. To understand at an operational level current policies, procedures and protocols; and the underpinning evidence that supports WA's current quarantine arrangements.

Assurance and Risk Mitigation

In September 2021 the Panel reviewed WA Hotel Quarantine (WAHQ) operational documents, policy, process gap analysis and the actions occurring to ensure the quarantine system are working properly.

As a result, the Panel developed guiding Principles to assist the review of WAHQ Assurance processes and potential risks impacting the WA quarantine system. The intent was to provide multi-faceted principle-based assurance as the system evolves.

The Principles were endorsed by the Panel in November with the agreement to establish an Assurance Working Group (Group) consisting of the Panel Chair and independent members to overlay the Principles in an ongoing in-depth review of operational documents.

The Group, with the overall intent to protect the health and wellbeing of individuals and workers associated with the quarantine system and the WA community reviewed a number of operational documents including audit and compliance report.

The final recommendations were submitted to the Panel for endorsement in January 2022. The report addresses areas of strategy, performance, risk, compliance and monitoring with the final recommendations relevant for short-term improvements of the state supervised hotel quarantine model. The Group highlighted the importance of having ongoing oversight of incident reporting and remedial actions to drive continuous improvement processes suggesting enhancements to current compliance and incident reporting processes to support ongoing management.

The Group acknowledged the success, hard work and agility the operational teams had demonstrated over the preceding 18 months of operations and highlighted the intent of the strength-based report were to add value and support ongoing continuous improvement of the state's quarantine system and should not be considered a criticism.

It is important the Panel retains oversight of established processes and their effectiveness is constantly reviewed for continuous improvement. Effective incident and compliance reporting and analysis would assist in early identification of emerging patterns, managing and mitigating risk and support continuous improvement. This could be achieved through enhanced incident and compliance reporting mechanisms across the quarantine system to clearly demonstrate the

severity of the incident, risk level and outline mitigating actions. Continuous improvement of the monitoring and reporting mechanisms must be underpinned by the appropriate collection and recording of incident data that has clearly defined and repeatable criteria for risk level/severity rating, type and category.

Unaccompanied Minors

In July 2021, the State Health Incident Coordination Centre (SHICC) raised concerns relating to the identification and management of unaccompanied minors arriving in WA and subject to supervised quarantine.

Following an investigation which included stakeholder feedback, the Panel were presented findings on 21 September 2021.

The Panel reviewed and accepted the paper; agreeing to recommendations to;

1) Define the roles and responsibilities of all agencies involved in the management of unaccompanied minors within the WA quarantine system.

2) Obtain a cross jurisdictional perspective via Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC).

3) Define principles to guide the assurance process as it relates to minors.

The Principles incorporated the 'National Principles for Child Safe Organisations' and aimed to promote the care, safety and welfare of minors' subject to quarantine Directions. The Panel sought expert paediatric clinical and expert advice, to ensure the Principles achieved their objective and enable agencies working in the quarantine system to provide the best possible care for children. Their advice was endorsed by the Chair and will be included in the final UM Principles.

The draft report was presented to the Department of Communities (Communities) for comment resulting in the Director General attending the November Panel meeting to discuss concerns in operationalising the UM Principles and agreeing to work with SHICC via the Office of the Chief Health Officer (OCHO) to refine the Principles. The review was to be considered by the Panel out of session and inform the final recommendations for the HMA.

The Panel's final recommendations will be presented to the HMA on receipt of the OCHO report.

User Journey Maps

The Panel agreed in order to provide assurance to Government and identify areas of high-risk within WA's current quarantine system, they must first clearly identify all touchpoints of the 'user' within the system and understand the traveller experience.

Engaging an independent consult, the project focused on the experience of international and domestic travellers who were issued a quarantine Direction in 2021 with the objective to identify key themes and areas of risk.

The project engaged with travellers who have been through WA's quarantine system and operational and executive level stakeholders across all agencies and departments involved in the quarantine system.

The final report provides a summary of areas of sub-optimal experience and corresponding improvement opportunities identified by quarantine system staff. Traveller maps will be published on the Panel's web page.

The final report will be considered by the Panel at the February 2022 meeting and will then be presented to the CEO of the HMA for consideration.

Next steps

Over the first two months of 2022, the Group will review the implementation of recommendations from Professor Weeramanthri's Review of Western Australia's Hotel Quarantine Arrangements.

The Panel has discussed the continual evolution of the disease and the changing demands on quarantine. The Terms of Reference for the Panel have been considered in the light of these changes and the Panel has determined that their focus should pivot to the transition of ongoing quarantine services through the Centre for National Resilience Perth.

This interim report is a summary of both current and closed projects which have identified potential operational and system improvements that will reduce risk and enhance the user experience.

Acknowledgement

The Quarantine Advisory Panel acknowledge and appreciate the continued support of all key emergency management agencies. Numerous units within the Department of Health, Department of Communities and WA Police have generally engaged without hesitation and supported the efforts for the Panel through verbal feedback and the provision of operational procedures and policies. The success of the Panel heavily relies on the ongoing support of all stakeholders within the quarantine system above their daily, highly demanding roles during an emergency response.

Quarantine Advisory Panel

References

Australian Human Rights Commission. (2019). National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. Retrieved from National Office for Child Safety: https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-02/National_Principles_for_Child_Safe_Organisations2019.pdf

Weeramanthri, T. (2021). Review of Western Australia's Hotel Quarantine Arrangements – Final Advice. Perth: Government of Western Australia.