



Aboriginal Sector Communication Update #33

Tuesday, 14 December 2021 14:00 Hours

COVID-19 is a continually changing situation. Please keep up to date with the most current information and public health advice at the [WA government website](#) and [HealthyWA](#).

This update is intended to keep health professionals informed of available COVID-19 public health messages and resources, developed for the Aboriginal community and health professionals.

COVID-19 Case numbers

As of **14 December 2021**, there are **1,125** confirmed cases, **112** historical cases and **3** active case of Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Western Australia (WA). **1,113** people have recovered from COVID-19 in WA. There have been **9** deaths from COVID-19 in WA.

To date **2,002,621** COVID-19 tests have been conducted in WA.

WA: [Daily snapshot & Vaccination dashboard](#)

National: [Current National Status & Australia's vaccine rollout](#)

Worldwide: [WHO Situation Reports & WHO Dashboard](#)

COVID at our border

Promoting testing and vaccination in border communities

The increasing number of COVID-19 cases in the Northern Territory (NT), and positive wastewater detections in remote communities in NT and South Australia, is a concern for WA communities living close to the border.

It is important that anyone living near the border gets tested for COVID-19 if they have any symptoms, no matter how mild.

Doctors and healthcare workers should encourage anyone presenting with symptoms to get tested.

With the virus so close to our borders, there is no time to delay in getting vaccinated. Vaccination is the best way to protect against COVID-19 and should be promoted at every opportunity. Second doses and booster shots should also be strongly encouraged. Everyone (especially our border communities) should get vaccinated as soon as they can to protect themselves, their family and their whole community. Visit [Roll up for WA](#) for more information.

Expanded East Kimberley COVID-19 wastewater surveillance

WA Health is continuing its COVID-19 wastewater surveillance program in Kununurra and Halls Creek in the East Kimberley and has expanded water sampling to additional communities including Mulan, Billiuna, Ringer's Soak and Balgo.

All results have been negative so far.

Refer to the Department of Health's [COVID-19 wastewater testing](#) webpage for additional information, including test results.

Current Outbreak of COVID-19 among Aboriginal people in NT

The data below is preliminary and is subject to change.

Cluster 1: the first NT community or locally acquired case identified as an unvaccinated non-Aboriginal **man in his 20s** was tested for COVID-19 on **3/11/2021** and returned positive on **4/11/21**. He is a NT resident and lives between Humpty Doo and Katherine where he works at the RAAF Tindal Base. The man visited various locations in Darwin and Katherine during his infectious period **31/10-3/11/2021**. It was later established that the man contracted the virus from a partially vaccinated **21-year-old woman** who flew into Darwin from Cairns on **29/10/2021**.

Cluster 2: A fully vaccinated Aboriginal **man aged in his 40s** who lives in Katherine (with seven other household members) but travelled in and out of Robinson River remote community, tested positive for COVID-19 on **15/11/2021**. An unvaccinated close contact **woman in her 30s** who lives in Robinson River and travelled to Katherine also tested positive on the same date. It is believed the two positive cases had been infectious in the two communities for several days. Genomic sequencing has confirmed the **linkage between these two clusters**, while the epidemiological link remains under investigation.

As at **14 December 2021**, a total of **91** COVID-19 positive cases (including three presumptive cases) associated with the current outbreak in the NT have been reported by the NT Health (an increase of **28** cases from the last update, with the majority of the new reported cases being Aboriginal people). Around **78% (71)** of the cases have been identified as Aboriginal people, **18% (16 cases)** are under investigation, and **4% (4 cases)** are non-Aboriginal people. Of the **71** positive cases among Aboriginal people:

- **48%** (**34** cases) were from Katherine community, **30%** (**21** cases) from Binjari remote community **17%** (**12** cases) from Robinson River remote community, **1%** (**1** case) from Lajamanu community, **3%** (**2** presumptive cases) from Timber Creek community and **1%** (**1** case presumptive cases) from Kalkarindji community.
- **90%** of the cases required isolation/quarantine at an official quarantine facility
- **10%** of the cases required hospital care (including one death).
- The highest number of daily reported cases were **16** cases (on **13/12/21**), followed by **11** cases (on **24/11/21**), **10** cases (on **20/11/21**), **9** cases (on **16/11/21**) and **8** cases (on **17/11/21**).

National COVID-19 Aboriginal epidemiological profile

Below is a summary of the epidemiological profile of COVID-19 among Aboriginal Australians, produced by the Department of Health's Aboriginal Health Policy Directorate. Data is current as at **21 November 2021**. The data is preliminary and is subject to change.

January 2020 to November 2021:

- Since the beginning of the pandemic to **21 November 2021**, around **4.3% (8,532)** of the **198,830** positive cases notified in the Australian National Notifiable Disease Surveillance System (NNDSS) were identified as Aboriginal people (a gradually increasing trend since the last update).
- COVID-19 cases among Aboriginal Australians (relating to outbreaks in NSW, ACT, Vic and NT) have grown almost 56 times since June 2021, increasing from around **153** confirmed cases in June 2021 to **8,532** cases in November 2021.
- Around **79%** of all positive cases amongst Aboriginal Australians reported in NNDSS were from NSW, **17%** from Vic, **3%** from ACT, and about **1%** were from other jurisdictions (Tas, QLD, SA, NT and WA).
- The highest proportion of cases among Aboriginal people was in the **18 to 29** years age group (around **23%**) followed by the **5 to 11** years age group (**18%**) and the **30 to 39** years age group (**14%**).

- It is estimated that less than 5% of all confirmed cases among Aboriginal Australians have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19.
- Around 12% of Aboriginal positive cases required hospital care (including ICU admissions), with 0.2% mortality rate (16 deaths).
- The completeness of Aboriginal status identification fields in the NNDSS was around 81%.

Outbreak of COVID-19 among Aboriginal people in NSW

As of 27 November 2021, around 6,874 Aboriginal locally acquired COVID-19 cases were associated with the current outbreak in NSW which started in June 2021. These cases represent about 9% of all locally acquired cases in NSW. The outbreak peaked at around 729 weekly cases in the week ending 2 October 2021. Since then, the number of new weekly reported cases has gradually declined to around 128 new cases in the week ending 27 November 2021.

Outbreak of COVID-19 among Aboriginal people in Victoria

The current outbreak of COVID-19 in Victoria started on 5 August 2021 with two unlinked cases. Genomic sequencing confirmed association with recent clusters in NSW and two seeding events in Victoria in July 2021. As at 21 November 2021, around 1.5% (1,392 cases, no deaths) of all community acquired cases (90,602) have been identified as Aboriginal people. About 50% (701 cases) were from regional and remote areas.

Vaccination rates among Aboriginal people

As at 7 December 2021:

- In Western Australia, around 61% of Aboriginal people aged 16 years and over were partially vaccinated (i.e. vaccinated with at least one dose), and 43% were fully vaccinated (2 doses) against COVID-19, compared to 56% and 39% of Aboriginal Western Australians aged 12 years and over were partially and fully vaccinated, respectively.
- Across Australia, around 76% of Aboriginal people aged 16 years and over were partially vaccinated, while 65% were fully vaccinated (2 doses) against COVID-19.
- ACT had the highest percentage of Aboriginal people aged 16 years and over who had been partially and fully vaccinated against COVID-19 at the rate of 90% and 87%, respectively, followed by Vic (88% and 84%), NSW (86% and 83%), Tas (81% and 74%), NT (82% and 66%), SA (70% and 57%) and QLD (69% and 55%).

Latest updates and new resources

Public health advice issued for Western Australians

WA Health has updated its list of COVID-19 exposure locations following three truck drivers testing positive to COVID-19 after spending time in WA last week.

Anyone who has visited the listed exposure locations at the specified times and dates must get tested immediately and isolate until they receive a negative result, unless directly advised otherwise by the Department of Health.

Western Australians are encouraged to stay vigilant and get tested immediately if they develop COVID-19 symptoms, and use SafeWA and mandatory contact registers to check in to businesses and venues.

Regional testing is available at:

- Norseman Hospital – 8:00am to 6:00pm
- Southern Cross – 24/7 – phone ahead on 08 9081 2222
- Kalgoorlie Health Campus, 8:00am to 6:00pm.

A full list of testing clinics is available on the HealthyWA website.

More information is available in the media statement and the announcement.

Safe Transition Plan update

The Western Australian Government has announced a plan to safely ease the State's hard border controls in line with a 90 per cent vaccination rate, from 12:01am on Saturday 5 February 2022.

To safely enable quarantine-free travel into the State, new testing requirements for arrivals will be introduced to assist with the safe transition of COVID-19 in the WA community.

Based on health advice, interim baseline public health and social measures (PHSMs) will be applied at the point of transition.

Additional restrictions may be required in some at risk regional communities where current projections suggest higher levels of vaccination may take longer to achieve.

Further information can be found in the [announcement](#) and [WA's Safe Transition Plan summary](#).

Learn how to have a conversation about COVID-19 vaccines

Roll up for WA has a new information sheet for stakeholders about how to start a COVID-19 vaccine conversation. This resource is available in the Roll up for WA [stakeholder toolkit](#).

New videos promoting vaccination by the WA Primary Health Alliance

The WA Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA) has produced two videos encouraging Aboriginal people to get their COVID-19 vaccination.

The first video focuses on the importance of getting vaccinated and was made in conjunction with Dr Raji Krishnan from the Pramana Medical Centre in Gosnells.

Video - [Dr Raji – The importance of getting vaccinated](#)

The second video tells the story of Rowena Brown from Port Hedland. Rowena was initially frightened to get vaccinated, but after talking to her doctor she realised how important it was and is encouraging others to get vaccinated too.

Video - [Rowena's story COVID-19 vaccination](#)

Roll up for WA – Keeping culture safe and strong: vaccination focus

The 'Keeping Culture Safe and Strong' vaccination focus continues through December, providing more opportunities for Aboriginal people to get vaccinated.

A range of in-reach programs are taking place, based on bringing COVID-19 vaccines directly to communities to make them easier to access. This includes house-to-house visits and vaccinations for hospital inpatients and outpatients.

[The program has a strong community-led focus](#) with local leaders involved such as health staff, the local police, council and shires, and Aboriginal-led organisations.

Resources including posters, videos, infographics and social tiles are available on the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia [website](#).

To follow all the Roll up for WA news and stories, [subscribe to their newsletter](#).

Helping communities get vaccinated

A COVID-19 Vaccine Community Funding Program has been announced, aimed at facilitating and encouraging vaccination uptake amongst priority cohorts.

These groups include Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people who are homeless and sleeping rough, people with a mental health illness, and those who are at greater risk of COVID-19.

Funding of up to \$5,000 is available for various projects including local education programs, venue hire, training and transport. Funds can also be used for events promoting participation in the COVID-19 vaccination program. [More information on how you can help is available on WA.gov.au.](#)

Encouraging the 2nd dose

The Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia (AHCWA) has designed a graphic to help staff discuss with the residents of a remote community, the benefits of the COVID vaccine, particularly to those who people couldn't see the value of the second dose. The feedback from the staff using the graphic has been very positive.

The graphic is available for others to access here: <https://nacchocommunique.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/INFOGRAPHIC-AHCWA-infographic-importance-of-second-covid-vax.pdf>

COVID-19 vaccination program

Vaccination is the best way to protect our community from COVID-19.

Everyone aged 12 and over is eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccination.

People can book in to receive the COVID-19 vaccine that is appropriate for them at their local Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS) OR at a state-run COVID-19 vaccination community clinic or at a regional public hospital-based vaccination clinic. Alternatively, participating AMS or GP clinics can be found by using the Vaccine Eligibility Checker [here](#).

All State-run community vaccination clinics are now open for people to attend without an appointment. Some regional clinics also offer the opportunity to be vaccinated without appointments. Please check the community vaccination clinic list [online](#) for further information and opening times.

Pregnant and breastfeeding women, and those planning to become pregnant are now recommended to have the Pfizer vaccine. Read the full statement from the Australian Government Department of Health [here](#) and the updated COVID-19 vaccination – shared decision making guide for women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or planning pregnancy [here](#).

The WA COVID-19 Vaccine Myths and FAQ factsheet can be found [here](#).

Community clinics

Existing [Community vaccination clinics](#) in WA include Armadale, Mirrabooka, Carramar, Mandurah, Canning Vale, Midland, Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre, Claremont Showgrounds, Joondalup, Kwinana, Ellenbrook, Wanneroo and Bunbury.

The Comirnaty (Pfizer) COVID-19 vaccine is now being rolled out to, and administered by, GPs in WA. Approved pharmacies can also now administer the Spikevax (Moderna) and AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines for eligible populations. Participating GPs and pharmacies can be found by using the [COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic Finder](#).

Alternatively, you can contact your local Aboriginal Medical Service or General Practice to find out if they are offering COVID vaccinations. Anyone having difficulties booking on VaccinateWA can call 13 COVID (1326843) for assistance.

Pop-up clinics

There will be numerous regional pop-up clinics available for walk-ins in the coming weeks. Visit the [COVID-19 vaccine](#) webpage for a list of these clinics and their opening times and follow the [WA Government Facebook page](#) to keep up to date with new vaccination events near you.

Boosters recommended from 5 months

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) [recommends](#) a COVID-19 booster vaccination for anyone aged 18 and older who completed their primary course of COVID-19 vaccination 5 or more months ago, given the likelihood of ongoing transmission of both Omicron and Delta variants. The receipt of a booster dose is particularly important for people with increased exposure risk (e.g. occupational risk or outbreak areas) or who have risk factors for severe disease. A third (primary) dose of COVID-19 vaccine is also recommended for anyone with immunocompromising conditions, a minimum of two months after their second dose.

Moderna approved as booster dose

ATAGI have [recommended](#) that Spikevax (Moderna) vaccine can be used as a COVID-19 booster vaccine in people aged 18 years and older who have received their second dose 5 or more months ago. This follows the provisional [approval](#) of Moderna as a booster by the Therapeutic Goods Administration. The dosage for use as a booster dose is 50µg (0.25mL), i.e. half of the recommended dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine used for the primary course. Severely immunocompromised people who are receiving a third primary dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine should receive a 100µg dose. A booster dose is not yet recommended for this cohort.

Pfizer for 5-11 year olds in early January 2022

Following the Therapeutic Goods Administration's (TGA) provisional [approval](#) of the Comirnaty (Pfizer) COVID-19 vaccine for use in 5 to 11 year-olds, on 10 December 2021 ATAGI released [recommendations](#) on the vaccine's use in children aged 5 to 11 years. Clinical trials have demonstrated the vaccine to be more than 90 per cent effective at preventing laboratory-confirmed symptomatic COVID-19 from seven days after receiving the second dose. The vaccine was demonstrated to be well tolerated, with most adverse events being mild and transient. The vaccine approved by the TGA is the same safe and effective vaccine used for other age cohorts, however is one-third the dose approved for those aged 12 and over. The Australian Department of Health [announced](#) that this phase of the COVID-19 vaccination program for 5 to 11 year-olds would be rolled out from 10 January 2022.

Priority COVID-19 health messages for Aboriginal people

Aboriginal health professionals and sector representatives are encouraged to promote and reinforce the following key messages to Aboriginal clients and community. Remember to:

- get your COVID vaccine as soon as possible
- get your second dose of COVID vaccine as soon as you are due
- **get your booster dose as soon as you are due**
- physical distance where possible
- practise good hand hygiene and cough etiquette
- stay at home if unwell and rest to stay strong
- if unwell with flu-like symptoms, get tested (make sure to quarantine until you receive your test result)
- make sure your family gets the flu vaccine
- keep attending your regular health checks, especially for chronic illnesses
- download and use the free [SafeWA app for your phone](#)
- look after your mental health and social emotional wellbeing during this time

COVID-19 resources for Aboriginal people

Statewide Aboriginal resources

A suite of statewide Aboriginal tailored resources have been developed by the Department of Health WA. The aim of providing culturally-appropriate communications is to increase awareness and

reduce anxiety and fear in our communities. We encourage Aboriginal health professionals to demonstrate leadership when working with the Aboriginal community by:

- being “on message”
- reinforcing and encouraging people to ‘stay vigilant’ and ‘don’t get complacent’
- using positive strength-based messaging and language
- ensuring consistent, accurate and timely communication is provided, based on the official public health messages and health information issued by the Chief Health Officer from the Department of Health.

To access previous Aboriginal Communication Updates and other information specific to people working in the Aboriginal Sector, please visit [WA Department of Health – Aboriginal Sector](#).

To access general resources for your community (including factsheets, posters and video/radio messages) relating to COVID-19 and vaccination, please visit [HealthyWA - Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) for Aboriginal People](#). GP and other support phone lists are also provided on this site.

Health services are welcome to tailor WA Department of Health COVID-19 Aboriginal resources to meet community needs. Please reference the Department of Health WA and contact PHEOC (pheoc@health.wa.gov.au) for further information.

COVID-19 Vaccination resources

- The WA COVID-19 Vaccine Myths and FAQ factsheet can be found [here](#).
- [Mary G interview with Dr Carapetis \(part 1\)](#)
- [Mary G interview with Dr Carapetis \(part 2\)](#)
- [Dr Dan McAullay: COVID-19 and flu vaccination](#)
- [Dr Dan McAullay: COVID-19 vaccination](#)
- [Dr Sandra Eades: COVID-19 vaccination – young people can protect families and elders](#)
- [Dr Sandra Eades: COVID-19 vaccination – vaccination protects vulnerable people](#)
- [Dr Sandra Eades: COVID-19 vaccination – how it strengthens your immune system](#)
- [Dr Sandra Eades: COVID-19 vaccination – common side effects](#)
- Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Service (KAMS) Pfizer vaccination [animated video](#)
- [KAMS - Get vaccinated against COVID-19 - 30 sec video](#)
- [KAMS - Get vaccinated against COVID-19 - 60 sec video](#)
- [KAMS - Get vaccinated against COVID-19 - 15 sec video](#)
- Roll up for WA – nostalgic moments - [TV commercial](#)
- [Protect yourself, your family and our community- vaccination-Young men – 30 sec video](#)
- [Protect yourself, your family and our community-COVID vaccination-“The virus doesn't care how old you are” – 30 sec video](#)
- [Importance of second dose – infographic](#)
- [COVID-19 vaccination – Poster – COVID-19 spreads like wildfire in communities](#)
- [COVID-19 vaccination – Poster – COVID-19 infects young and healthy people as well](#)
- [COVID-19 vaccination – Poster – How fast can COVID-19 spread in unvaccinated people?](#)
- [COVID-19 vaccination – How a COVID-19 outbreak can affect communities – Social media content](#)
- [Protect our communities and culture – animated video 1min 30sec](#)
- [Dr Raji – The importance of getting vaccinated](#)
- [Rowena's story COVID-19 vaccination](#)

Further resources can be sourced on the [WA Government website](#). Check the [stakeholder kit](#) regularly for updates. If you would like to receive a Roll up for WA poster pack, please send your request to COVID19Vaccines@dpc.wa.gov.au.

The Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia (AHCWA) has a substantial collection of vaccination focused resources available on their [website](#).

National Aboriginal resources

The Australian Government has produced a collection of materials created for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander vaccine providers to download and print to utilise in their health clinics and practices. These materials include posters, social media resources, handouts and web banners. These are all available on their [website](#).

A collection of general COVID-19 resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and remote communities is also available [here](#).

Getting a COVID-19 test resources

- **WA Department of Health COVID-19 Resources for Aboriginal people**

The WA Health Department has developed a suite of culturally-appropriate resources to support the Aboriginal community and health services in being COVID-19 safe and informed. They are found here.

- [COVID Clinics location in WA](#)
- [Where to get tested for COVID-19 in regional and Remote WA](#)

- **Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council**

- [How are you tested for COVID-19?](#)

- **Getting the COVID-19 test: Story books**

The Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency has developed two easy-to-understand story books to help children understand what a COVID-19 test is.

- [Getting the COVID-19 test at the testing station or hospital](#)

- **Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AHMRC) COVID-19 Testing**

The AHMRC of New South Wales has provided various resources on their website <https://www.ahmrc.org.au/coronavirus/> to support their member services across NSW during a COVID-19 outbreak and to minimise the impact on Aboriginal communities. Below are some resources on COVID-19 testing.

- [Getting ready for a COVID-19 test](#)
- [Do what's best. Get a COVID-19 test](#)
- [#swab4mob campaign](#)
- [Symptom poster #swab4mob](#)

Crisis hotlines

- **Brother to Brother 24 hour crisis hotline** (1800 435 799) for Aboriginal men to provide extra support during the pandemic.
- **1800RESPECT** (1800 737 732) for advice concerning sexual, domestic or family violence.
- **Women's Domestic Violence Helpline** (1800 007 339) for support and referral for women experiencing domestic violence (incl referrals to women's refuges)
- **Crisis Care** (1800 199 008) if you require emergency accommodation.
- **National COVID-19 Older Persons Support Line** (1800 171 866)
- **Kids Helpline** (1800 55 1800)
- **Beyond Blue** (1300 224 636)
- **Lifeline** (13 11 14)
- **Suicide Call Back Service** (1300 659 467)

Who to contact for more information

- **COVID-19 Clinic ONLY Test Results Enquiry Line: 1800 313 223** (Note: NOT for GP

referred testing or private pathology clinic tests)

- **COVID-19 WA Public Information Line: 132 6843 (13 COVID)**
- **COVID-19 Travel Restrictions Exemption Application:** Visit the [**G2G PASS**](#) website or complete the **exemption application form**
- **COVID-19 WA Police Line: 131 444** to report breaches of: self-quarantine, business closures, border controls and other State of Emergency Directions.

Last updated **9 December 2021**

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with disability.

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