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Public health response to COVID-19

The public health response to COVID-19 or novel coronavirus (encompassing a series of directions issued by the Chief Health Officer, Dr Jeannette Young) has been remarkably successful in suppressing the community transmission of the virus, to the extent that there is talk of the staged lifting of the measures, given their social and economic impact.

In a media release of 20 April 2020, Dr Young said that in Queensland there had been “very limited community transmission” and that “93 per cent of confirmed cases have recently travelled overseas or had close contact with someone who travelled overseas, such as their partner or flatmate.”

Importantly, Dr Young went on to say:

Lifting restrictions too early could cost lives. We need to keep up our current approach, and ensure we can sustain these low numbers over a period of weeks until we can look into lifting restrictions.

When it's appropriate to do so, we will see if there's some measures we can lift in conjunction with National Cabinet that will not lead to a bounce back of cases.

Any lifting of restrictions will be conducted in a phased approach - they will not be lifted all at

once. We will need to maintain a number of social distancing measures for many months to come to continue to contain the spread of COVID-19.

On 28 April 2020, the Premier, the Honourable Anastacia Palaszczuk MP, said that it was encouraging that the curve is being flattened. She said that a taskforce of health and economic experts across Government is looking at a staged approach to opening up the economy. She said: “We have a clear path to recovery and I'll be sharing that once we have that final advice, but it really depends on the epidemiology over the next couple of weeks.”

All Queenslanders have a role to play in limiting the transmission of COVID-19 by observing social distancing (less contact between you and other people) and complying with the directions of the Chief Health Officer.

The following combination of information has been extracted from either the website of the Australian Government Department of Health or the website of Queensland Health.

The symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to other colds and flus and include fever, sore throat, cough, tiredness and difficulty breathing. Most people with these symptoms are likely suffering with a cold or other respiratory illness - not coronavirus. If you believe you have been exposed to, or have COVID-19, you should

phone the National Coronavirus Helpline on 1800 020 080 or contact 13HEALTH on 13 43 25 84 for advice.

COVID-19 is most likely to be spread from person-to-person through:

- close contact with a person while they are infectious or in the 24 hours before their symptoms appeared
- close contact with a person with a confirmed infection who coughs or sneezes
- touching objects or surfaces (such as door handles or tables) contaminated from a cough or sneeze from a person with a confirmed infection, and then touching your mouth or face.

There are five ways to stop the spread of viruses:

- clean your hands regularly with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitiser
- cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or bent elbow when coughing or sneezing
- avoid touching your face, nose and mouth and avoid shaking hands
- stay home as much as possible, especially if you are sick

- practice social distancing, including staying 1.5 metres away from others as much as you can.

The best way to protect yourself from COVID-19 is to stay at home as much as possible and wash your hands often.

Germs can survive outside of the body, on surfaces, after a person coughs or sneezes. Regular cleaning is important for reducing the spread of germs and minimising the number of germs surviving on surfaces. Frequently touched surfaces, such as tables, benches, hand rails and doorknobs, should be cleaned and disinfected frequently. Also open windows or adjust air conditioning for more ventilation. A relevant fact sheet on environmental cleaning and disinfection is available here:

www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-information-about-routine-environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-in-the-community

For further information:

- www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19
- www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/coronavirus-covid-19-news-and-media

Sole operator sex workers and the COVID-19 pandemic

The *Non-essential business, activity and undertaking Closure Direction (No. 5)*, issued by the Chief Health Officer on 9 April 2020, added sole operator sex workers as a non-essential

business, activity or undertaking. The Closure Direction requires a person who owns, controls or operates a non-essential business, activity or undertaking in Queensland, not to operate the business, activity or undertaking until the end of the declared public health emergency.

The Closure Direction includes an exception for sole operator sex workers in that they may continue to provide online or phone services, such as video streaming or phone chat.

The Closure Direction is one of a number of directions issued by the Chief Health Officer in order to contain the spread of COVID-19 in the community, so as to safeguard the health and lives of all Queenslanders.

Sex work involves close physical contact, incompatible with social distancing, and the clear intent of the Closure Direction is to ensure that sex workers do not provide services involving physical contact. As an alternative, they may instead provide online or phone services.

It should also go without saying that clients should avoid asking sex workers for physical contact services at this time. They most certainly should not pressure workers to provide these services.

It is understood that the Closure Direction will have a substantial impact on the livelihood of sole operator sex workers, but it is important that they comply to protect not only their own health, but that of clients, and the wider community. COVID-19 is a global pandemic unprecedented in recent generations, and all

Queenslanders are making sacrifices for the greater good. The Queensland Police Service is conducting checks to ensure compliance with the Closure Direction and officers can issue on the spot fines of \$1334.50 for individuals who fail to abide by health directions.

Sole operator sex workers may be eligible for the JobKeeper payment or the JobSeeker payment and can obtain further information here: www.treasury.gov.au. For those workers who might not be eligible for Government support, such as non-Australian residents, they should think about how they can support themselves such as by using any savings, applying for the early release of superannuation, or by seeking support from family and community networks and charities. The Australian Government has encouraged temporary visa holders who are unable to support themselves to return home if they are able.

2020 PLA meeting dates

The PLA Board generally meets on the first Monday of each month. Meeting dates for the remainder of 2020 are: 1 June, 6 July, 3 August, 7 September, 12 October, 2 November and 7 December. *Whilst current at the time of printing, these dates are tentative and subject to change without notice.*