



Aboriginal Sector Communication Update #35

Thursday, 3 March 2022 9:00 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

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

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

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

National COVID-19 Aboriginal epidemiological profile

There has been a significant decrease in the rate of completion of Aboriginal identification among notified COVID-19 positive cases recorded in the National Notifiable Disease Surveillance System (NNDSS). This has likely resulted in the under-reporting of positive or confirmed cases among Aboriginal Australians in the NNDSS.

Below is a summary of the epidemiological profile of COVID-19 among Aboriginal Australians, as at **16 January 2022**. **New data will be provided in the next update.**

Please note, the data is preliminary and subject to change.

January 2020 to January 2022:

- Since the start of the pandemic to **16 January 2022**, around **2.3%** (**29,328** cases) of the **1,254,909** positive cases notified in the Australian National Notifiable Disease Surveillance System (NNDSS) were identified as Aboriginal people. There was more than a threefold increase in reported cases from **5 December 2021** (**8,955** cases).
- Over the last six months (since 16 June 2021), COVID-19 cases among Aboriginal Australians (relating to outbreaks in NSW, ACT, Vic, QLD, SA, Tas and NT) have grown over **191** times since **16 June 2021**, increasing from **153** confirmed cases to **29,328** cases at **16 January 2022**.
- Of the all positive cases among Aboriginal Australians reported in NNDSS, around **60.5%** (**17,742** cases) were from NSW, **18.4%** (**5,401**) from QLD, **14.2%** (**4,170**) from Vic, **3.4%** (**990**) from SA, **1.9%** (**543**) from ACT, **0.9%** (**270**) from NT, **0.7%** (**208**) from Tas and **0.01%** (**4** cases) from WA.
- Around **99%** (**29,012**) of confirmed cases among Aboriginal people acquired their infection locally.
- Of the total **29,012** locally acquired cases, around **59%** were in major cities, **25%** were in inner regional areas, **13%** were in outer regional areas and **3%** were in remote areas.
- The highest proportion of cases among Aboriginal people was in the 18 to 29 years age group (around **30%**).
- Around a quarter (**24.8%**) of reported COVID-19 cases among Aboriginal people in the NNDSS were children aged 0 to 11 years, while the proportion of confirmed cases among Aboriginal people aged 50 years and older was **10.3%**.

- It is estimated that only around **2%** of confirmed COVID-19 cases among Aboriginal people were vaccinated with their third dose (booster), **65%** with their second dose, **1%** with their first dose, **25%** with no vaccination and **8%** have an unknown record of vaccination against COVID-19.
- About **8%** of Aboriginal positive cases required hospital care (including ICU admissions) with around a **0.1%** mortality rate (**31** deaths notified in total).
- NSW had the highest number of deaths (**84%** or **26** deaths), Vic had **3** deaths (**10%**), QLD and NT each had one death (**6%**). These deaths accounted for **1.2%** of all COVID-19 deaths.
- The completeness of Aboriginal status identification fields in the NNDSS dropped significantly to **51%** in this reporting period, down from **81%** in the previous reporting period.

Vaccination status:

As at **22 February 2022:**

- In Western Australia, around **75%** of Aboriginal people aged **12 years and over** have been vaccinated against COVID-19 with their first dose, and **63%** have received their second dose. This is compared to **76%** and **66%** of Aboriginal Western Australians aged **16 years and over** who are vaccinated with their first dose and second dose, respectively.
 - Around **68%** of Aboriginal Western Australians aged **16 years and over** living in Perth metropolitan areas have received 2 doses of COVID-19 vaccine, compared to **58%** for those living in regional areas.
 - In the Perth metropolitan area, Aboriginal Western Australians aged **16 years and over** living in the east metropolitan area have the highest percentage of people who have had 2 doses (**73%**) while the south metropolitan area has the lowest percentage (**62%**).
 - In regional areas, the South West region has the highest proportion of Aboriginal people aged **16 years and over** who are vaccinated with two doses (**71%**), while the Goldfields (**42%**) and Pilbara (**53%**) have the lowest percentage of people who have had two doses of vaccine against COVID-19.
- Around **22%** of Aboriginal Western Australians aged **16 years and over** have received a booster dose of COVID-19 vaccination (**25%** for Perth metropolitan areas and **18%** for regional areas).
- Across Australia, around **83%** of Aboriginal people aged **16 years and over** have been vaccinated with their first dose, while **78%** have been vaccinated with their second dose.
- ACT has the highest percentage of Aboriginal people aged **16 years and over** who have received their first and second doses (**91%** and **89%**, respectively). They are followed by Victoria (**89%** and **87%**), Northern Territory (**89%** and **82%**), Tasmania (**88%** and **84%**), New South Wales (**87%** and **84%**), Queensland (**80%** and **75%**), and South Australia (**78%** and **71%**).

The Australian Government provides weekly reports, listing the percentage of people aged 15 and over who have self-identified as Indigenous, and who have been vaccinated against COVID-19. This information is provided by statistical area 4 (SA4) and is further broken down by geographic regions and number of doses. These reports can be found [here](#).

Living with COVID and latest updates

Bidyadanga and Beagle Bay cleared of COVID-19: based on follow up pathology testing

The WA Department of Health can confirm that follow up pathology testing carried out in the Bidyadanga and Beagle Bay communities has given an 'all clear' COVID-19 result.

Initial tests in the communities (carried out on a GeneXpert rapid PCR machine) indicated positive results however, secondary PCR testing showed that some community members have respiratory virus infections – such as the flu and rhinovirus – but not the more virulent COVID-19.

The Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Service (KAMS) provided an immediate response, working closely with the Bidyadanga and Beagle Bay communities, WA Country Health Service and the Department of Health to ensure the communities were protected.

See the [media statement](#) for more information.

COVID is in the WA community

There is now community transmission of COVID-19 throughout WA and people should not rely only on the exposure sites listed on the HealthyWA website to consider getting tested.

Anyone experiencing COVID-19 symptoms should get tested immediately and isolate until they receive a negative result, unless directly advised otherwise by the Department of Health.

The following resources, available on various websites, may be useful:

WA Department of Health:

- [Get COVID ready](#)
- [I have COVID - what should I do?](#)
- [TTIQ \(Test, Trace, Isolate and Quarantine\) Plan](#)
- [Guidance for the management of COVID-19 in the workplace](#)
- [COVID-19 guidelines for healthcare practices in the community in a high and very high caseload environment](#)
- [Community preparedness COVID-19 fact sheet – for remote communities](#)
- [Poster – COVID is in WA](#)
- [Poster – How Does COVID Spread?](#)
- [What is Covid and how does it spread?](#)

AHCWA:

- [Rapid Antigen Tests](#)

Department of Premier and Cabinet

- [I am a close contact with no symptoms](#)
- [I am a close contact with symptoms](#)
- [I am not a close contact but I have symptoms](#)
- [I have tested positive to COVID-19](#)

Australian Government Department of Health

- [Rapid antigen tests \(RATs\)](#)
- [What to do if you have COVID-19 \(animation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people\)](#)

New public health and social measures to keep WA safe

Level 2 [PHSM](#) were applied state-wide from 12:01am on Thursday, 3 March 2022.

Refer to the WA.gov.au [website](#) for further information.

New drive to increase Aboriginal vaccinations

A new vaccination campaign for Aboriginal people, *'Keeping Culture Safe and Strong - Get the needle now'* has deployed teams of metropolitan vaccinators and support staff into regions with low vaccination rates.

Like a fly-in-fly-out model, Department of Health staff will support vaccination and administrative teams from the WA Country Health Service and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations in the Kimberley, Pilbara, Mid-West and Goldfields-Esperance regions over the next six weeks. Aboriginal Medical Services will also play an important role, engaging and vaccinating local people.

Outbreaks of the Omicron variant across Western Australia have highlighted the importance of the booster dose, as well as the primary course (two doses) of COVID-19 vaccines.

Free rapid antigen tests for Western Australians

Every household in Western Australia can [register to receive 5 free COVID-19 rapid antigen tests](#) (RATs). You can register [online](#) or by calling 13COVID (13 268 43).

As part of the program, a member of each household can register for the 5 free RATs and have the tests delivered to their home address.

10 additional free RATs are available to concession card holders through the Australian Government and can be collected from participating pharmacies. See the [announcement](#) for more information.

People who have self-administered a RAT for COVID-19 and tested positive must register their result [online \(external link\)](#) with the WA Department of Health.

People who do not have access to the online registration system must still report their positive test result by calling 13 COVID (13 268 43).

TTIQ (Test, Trace, Isolate and Quarantine) Plan

As WA transitions to living with COVID-19, and caseloads are higher in the community – businesses, facilities and service providers will have to play a more active role in managing COVID-19 communications in their workplaces.

The [TTIQ Plan](#) webpage provides guidance and resources for businesses, facilities, and service providers to assist with the transition. These resources provide information on how to notify close contacts in the workplace of a COVID-19 positive case, and the testing, contact tracing, isolation and quarantine (TTIQ) requirements in different settings – including businesses, schools and aged care.

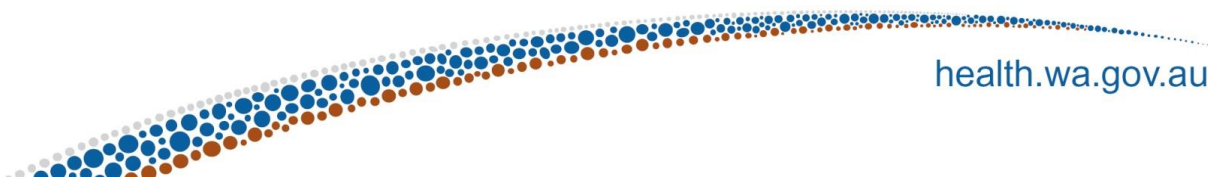
Community healthcare practice guidelines

The COVID-19 Guidelines for Healthcare Practices in the Community in a High and Very High Caseload Environment will assist healthcare practices in assessing the risk following a COVID-19 exposure. They are considered different to general workplace settings due to the potential susceptibility of patients and the duty of care related to providing health services. The guidelines will ensure that healthcare practices in the community can risk-assess COVID-19 exposure and ensure continuity of critical services, particularly in remote and rural WA, and that healthcare practitioners are better positioned to support patients in their ongoing health needs.

Refer to the Department of Health [website](#) for information.

WA COVID Care at Home program

The [WA COVID Care at Home program](#) has been launched to provide home monitoring care for COVID-19 positive people who have risk factors which put them at greater risk of requiring hospitalisation. It is a free service; however registration is required to determine whether the case



would benefit from additional monitoring through COVID Care at Home. People can register on the [HealthyWA website](#) or call 13COVID if they need assistance registering.

Kids and COVID-19

The Telethon Kids Institute has developed a variety of resources about COVID-19 and children which can be downloaded from the Telethon Kids Institute [COVID-19 Resource Hub](#). Information to help parents and guardians with [COVID-19 positive children](#) is also available on HealthyWA.

New resources

New information on HealthyWA

The WA Department of Health continues to develop resources and update information to ensure the WA public can access health advice relevant to the current COVID-19 situation in WA.

The [HealthyWA website](#) has useful advice on [managing COVID-19 at home](#) and in the community, which will continue to be updated as the situation evolves. The WA COVID Care at Home [program](#) and positive rapid antigen test result online registration [portal](#) are also on HealthyWA - check these pages regularly for updates.

The current COVID-19 situation in WA is different to what is occurring in other states. Business, industry and other agencies developing their own COVID-19 resources are strongly encouraged to source information from [HealthyWA](#), the [Department of Health](#) and [WA.gov.au](#) websites, to ensure messaging is consistent with current WA advice.

Video resource - COVID-19 vaccine is now available for kids aged 5-11 years

The Australian Government has developed an animation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, explaining that kids aged 5 to 11 years are now eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine. Watch the video on www.health.gov.au.

Video resource - COVID-19 infects young and healthy people too.

Last year the Delta variant of COVID-19 infected more than 2,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 20 years and under in eight short weeks. Omicron is more than doubling this rate of infection. More than 23,000 COVID cases have been notified among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in January 2022.

The Australian Government has produced an [animation](#) showing how fast COVID-19 spreads and encouraging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to get their COVID-19 vaccine now.

“Stay COVID safe” resources for remote Aboriginal communities

A series of posters have been developed for use in remote Aboriginal communities, encouraging community members to get vaccinated and stay COVID safe.

Posters can be downloaded from the [HealthyWA website](#) under the heading “Remote Aboriginal Communities”.

COVID-19 vaccination program

Vaccination is the best way to protect our community from COVID-19. **Everyone aged 5 years and older is now eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccination.** People can book an appointment 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](#).

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

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

Community clinics

Please check the [community vaccination clinic list](#) for further information and opening times. To avoid extended queues, people are encouraged to make a booking at [VaccinateWA](#) or 13COVID, as people with bookings will be prioritised.

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 AMS 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.

Door to door vaccination success

Indigo Junction: Congratulations to Indigo Junction, a not-for-profit organisation providing homelessness services, who have been conducting door-to-door COVID-19 vaccination services. More than 500 people who may not have had access to vaccinations, have now been protected with their first, second, or third dose of a COVID-19 vaccine as a result of this program.

Mobile Vaccination Program

The State's COVID-19 vaccination program offers an in-reach mobile vaccination service. This service makes access to vaccination easier for people who are having difficulty attending other vaccination service providers.

The mobile vaccination program is a cross government/community initiative that works state-wide with Aboriginal leaders and agencies in regions where rate of vaccination uptake is low.

Recently, the COVID-19 Vaccination Aboriginal Health Team partnered with the Aboriginal Health Team in Community Health, Child and Adolescent Health Services (CAHS) to vaccinate a group of mums who hadn't been previously vaccinated. The mums were not against vaccination; they didn't know how to book an appointment or where to go to get vaccinated. The team organised a suitable venue for the mums to meet and the mobile vaccination team was able to get everyone vaccinated on the day.

Aboriginal health teams and community health teams within Health Service Providers (HSPs), sector and not-for-profit organisations can request this mobile vaccination service to assist people in the community getting vaccinated. For more information please contact Francine Eades on 0473 130 160 or Francine.Eades@health.wa.gov.au.

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 [ServiceWA](#) or [SafeWA app](#) for your phone
- look after your mental health, and social and emotional wellbeing during this time

COVID-19 resources for Aboriginal people

Statewide Aboriginal resources

The Department of Health has developed a suite of statewide resources tailored for Aboriginal people. 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, strengths-based messaging and language
- providing consistent, accurate and timely communication, 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 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

- [WA COVID-19 Vaccine Myths and FAQ factsheet](#)
- [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 – vaccination myths](#)
- [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 \(Facebook\)](#)
- [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 1 min 30sec](#)
- [Dr Raji – The importance of getting vaccinated](#)
- [Rowena’s story COVID-19 vaccination](#)
- [Indigenous Vaccination Mark McGowan – Ngaanyatjarra translation – video](#)
- [Indigenous Vaccination Mark McGowan – Martu translation – video](#)
- [Indigenous Vaccination Mark McGowan – Walmajarri translation – video](#)
- [Corona is at the WA border – Kriol \(30 sec audio\)](#)
- [Corona is at the WA border – Martu \(30 sec audio\)](#)
- [Corona is at the WA border – Ngaanytjarra \(30 sec audio\)](#)
- [Corona is at the WA Border – Plain English \(30 sec audio\)](#)
- [COVID-19 vaccine is now available for kids aged 5-11 years – 30 sec video](#)
- [COVID-19 spreads fast and infects young and healthy people too – 15 sec video](#)

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.

A substantial collection of vaccination focused resources is available on the [Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia \(AHCWA\) website](#).

National Aboriginal resources

The Australian Government has produced a collection of materials created for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander vaccine providers to download, print and use in their health clinics and practices. These materials include posters, social media resources, handouts and web banners. These are all available on www.health.gov.au.

General resources are also available on the [COVID-19 resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and remote communities webpage](#).

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 New South Wales AHMRC has provided various resources on <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. Resources on COVID-19 testing include:
 - [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 (including referrals to women's refuges)
- **Men's Domestic Violence Helpline** (1800 000 599) provides support and referrals for men who are concerned about their violent and abusive behaviours, and for male victims of family and domestic violence in Western Australia.
- **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 **3 March 2022**

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

© Department of Health 2022