

ZOOM COMMUNITY LEADER FORUM WITH CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER

00:03:35- Dr Jeannette Young- Thank you very much, Grace, and thank you everyone for joining to hear this update. So you might be aware that we had that positive case in a cleaner who worked at the grand chancellor and was tested positive on the 6th of January. She has been unbelievably helpful and has been fantastic in sharing with us such accurate information. So as a result, we've been able to work through and find three hundred and seventy contacts so far. Three hundred and four of them are close contacts. All of those that we have results on have come back negative, but we're still waiting on a few results to come through. We are still waiting on some people to come forward because I'm finding it difficult to understand. We haven't found a lot of people actually at Woolworths and Coles and at the newsagent that she was at.

The important time frames are: Woolworths in Calamvale North on Sunday, 3rd of January from 11 a.m. to midday; Coles and Sunnybank Hills from Tuesday 5th of January 7:30am to 8am and in Sunnybank Hills shopping town from Tuesday 5th of January 8am to 8:15am, so we're still trying to find people who attended any of those three venues during those time frames. Since we've got more information, we're not so worried about the train journeys that that lady did on Saturday, 2nd of January.

So we've now had three days of very thorough lockdown in those five LGAs in Brisbane, so Brisbane, Ipswich, Logan City, Moreton Bay and Redlands that have been critical to give us a chance to get as many of those close contacts that we could find into quarantine, so that if any of them test positive, they already have been in quarantine during their infectious period. So it was critical that we did that really fast and as thoroughly and quickly as possible. As I said, I'm still a little bit worried that we've not found everyone who went to those three venues and they're still out in the community. So we have kept some restrictions in place because of that for the full incubation period, which is the full 14 days since the lady hasn't been out in the community infectious. Essentially, for those of you remember, we've gone back to the July restrictions. That is one person per four square meters in most indoor venues, except very small ones, one to 50 people maximum. Eating and drinking needs to be seated. No dancing except weddings. Weddings and funerals, up to one hundred people can attend and only 20 people can attend in someone's home. These restrictions, plus an additional one that's very, very important that we didn't have in the previous restrictions from March to July, is putting on masks. So it's really important that people wear masks when they can't socially distance. So particularly indoors, they don't need to if they're going into dining places, restaurants, cafes, pubs, because you then have to enter your details and if you can't do it, the business needs to do it so that there's an electronic record. You don't have to wear masks when dining as it is difficult to take masks on and off while eating and drinking.

After six o'clock today, if you're in your workplace and you are socially distanced, like I'm in an office here with the door closed by myself, then you don't need to wear a mask. But if you're with other people or your workplace is an area that has many interactions such as restaurant, cafe, pub, that sort of thing, then you have to wear a mask. There is a road map that has been published that you should be able to access on our website or on the Queensland Government website going through all of those restrictions. These restrictions are now in place until one a.m. Friday, the 22nd of January, because that gives us that 14 days during which we'll see whether there's been any spread from the original case, from the lady that's been outside of quarantine. I'm not worried if people test positive now and they've been in quarantine when they get tested as they haven't been out in the community during their infectious period, that's always our aim. This virus is 70 percent more contagious than the previous

variant that we've been dealing with. That's why we did that strong shut down for those five LGAs in Brisbane to give us a chance to find everyone and get them into quarantine. I'm now happy to take any questions.

Q&A with DR JEANNETTE YOUNG

Q- If people have a condition, which means they can't wear a mask, do they need to carry a letter from the doctor with them to prove that?

A-For children: if they are under the age of 12, there's no requirement for them to wear a mask, unless they are happy to and have been prepared to wear a mask. Anyone who has any disability, which means it's difficult to wear a mask or anyone who has a medical condition that causes them shortness of breath, difficulty in breathing etc. shouldn't wear a mask. We don't want people, of course, having heart attacks or respiratory problems. If they can't safely wear a mask, they shouldn't wear a mask. Then also anyone in the workplace where it would be unsafe for them to wear masks e.g. they're dealing with equipment and there is a risk of mask falling off into the equipment and getting tangled. This means workplace health and safety issues are superior to any public health order to wear a mask. That's really important. I'm going to always rely on the side of being cautious, that if there's any risk wearing a mask, don't wear a mask. Police also know this and they are not going to go and find people who are not wearing a mask because they have conditions. You don't need a letter from your GP.

Q- If people are wearing a face-covering niqab, do they need to wear and carry a mask as well?

A- They do. So the only masks people can use are the disposable surgical masks, the P2 high grade masks, or a cloth mask. However, bandanas, scarves or religious headdresses are not to be used as masks.

Q- Indoors vs. outdoors wearing of masks e.g. exercise?

A- If you exercise to the extent where you're huffing and puffing and you can't get your breath back, then, of course, take the mask off. Otherwise you should be wearing a mask indoors. When exercising outdoors, you don't need to wear a mask. If you are a spectator watching outdoors and it is crowded, then you should wear a mask. If you've got any interaction with the general public or you can't socially distance from your colleagues in the workplace, you need to wear a mask.

Q- Vaccine- Which one and when will we start?

A- The prime minister has confirmed that we should be able to start vaccinating people mid-February, starting with the special cohorts that have already been decided. However, the amounts of vaccine that will be available at that stage are quite low and will be the Pfizer vaccine that needs to be stored at minus 70 degrees Celsius. Therefore, it will only be distributed to a few centres in Queensland and then we'll organise for those high priority groups: the quarantine workers, the workers at the border, airports, ports and health care workers who are managing active COVID-19 cases. We will then move to the vulnerable groups: workers at aged care facilities, then older people and those with chronic disease. This will not probably happen until we get the AstraZeneca vaccine which TGA is currently looking at the data before it is approved. This vaccine is also already close to being produced here in Australia.

Q- Will the vaccines cover the UK strain as well?

A-Yes. All the vaccines that are currently being tested will cover the two new variants. The B117 strain which is circulating in the UK and becoming the dominant variant there and is now in almost 40 other countries. There is also the South African variant, which is different to the UK variant but it has similar mutations.

Q- Are the new strains more contagious and are they harder to treat?

A- At the moment, they are more contagious. The B117 strain circulating in the U.K. is 70 percent more contagious, but it does not have a higher mortality and it does not cause more severe disease. Here in Australia, the advice from our experts is that it would be very hard to contain it using the strategies we have contained in the past. It took over 6 months to get the Victorian outbreak under control and almost 4 months to control the previous NSW outbreak, which is why we are taking hard measures in Queensland to ensure the new strain is under control. We also understand the South African variant might possibly be more contagious. Younger people might be a bit more at risk of getting these strains because of the way it attaches to the cells, but not getting sicker than what younger people do at the moment. However, the information at this stage is still very early.

Q- Is it possible for a person to get two or multiple strains of the virus at the same time?

A- I think it is highly unlikely. Nothing is impossible, particularly with a new virus but I do not think so. What we know is that people can get infected with a new strain- brand new infection, but whether you would have the two variants at once, I don't think so. I must admit, I haven't considered that one.

Q- Is the vaccine going to be essential for everyone to have it in the future? What will be the costs associated with the vaccine and particularly for people who like international students who have already been quite disadvantaged through this.

A- There will be no cost to anyone getting the vaccine when Queensland Health is rolling it out. We are going to do mass vaccination clinics throughout the state and there will be no cost to anyone. We encourage anyone who is in Queensland to get vaccinated. It is only the younger than 12 who will not be vaccinated until those trials in that age group are done, but there is no upper age limit. Eventually, this vaccine will just become like any other vaccine and will be available through GP's and through pharmacies and all those other processes, therefore there might be charges. This is however after the first roll out has been done. The Commonwealth will probably turn some of their fever clinics and testing clinics into vaccine clinics. So they'll be providing vaccine and there is no charge.

Q- Can community members travel interstate or to other states from this evening after six o'clock?

A- All the states and territories are currently putting in place travel updates after 6:00pm today. From Queensland, we will not stop anyone getting on a plane or a car to go to another state, but when you arrive in the other state, that state may require you to go into 14 days total quarantine or they might require you to get tested or they might require you to go into home quarantine. Every state has a different process at this stage. So you will have to go to their individual websites because it had not been determined when I met with them but they are considering to make some changes. In Queensland, after six p.m. tonight, there are no travel restrictions in place within Queensland except

anyone who's been in those 5 LGAs in Brisbane since 2nd of January onwards will need to wear masks the same way as if they were still in Brisbane, no matter where they are in the state.

Q- If people coming into Britain still have restrictions that apply to them?

A- Once you get into Brisbane, you're captured by the same restrictions as everyone in Brisbane at that time.

Q- Queensland health strategy to disseminate translated information to communities? Are there any strategies to help overcome some of the conspiracy theories and myths that seem to be going around?

A- I'm regularly doing Facebook sessions to try and address those myths. Maybe if people see my face and hear what I've got to say, they might pay more attention to that rather than the conspiracy theories and myths. We also have translated various information and more translations are occurring and we do try and put up as much information as we can on our website. We are also working through a media campaign to put out some messaging about the vaccine, to try and address the myths and the misinformation about vaccination. The Commonwealth is similarly doing work in this area.

Q- Some organisations are thinking about the events and activities they had planned in the next couple of weeks e.g. can my organization go ahead and run a school holiday program for children under 12 and over 12?

A- Yes, so you need to go and look at the road map, it will be up on the website and there are Q&As. You can run school type programs and events. Indoors: with 50 percent seated capacity or one person per square meter you need a COVID safe plan; under five hundred people, you just need a checklist; 500-10,000 people, you need an event plan; over ten thousand, you need a plan signed off by myself. Outdoors: under one thousand, you don't need anything other than a COVID safe event checklist; 1000-10,000, you need a plan; over ten thousand, you need a plan that I have signed off. So it's going back to where we all were, in July last year with an additional requirement of wearing your mask.

Q- How do the restrictions on visiting hospitals, aged care facilities and disability accommodation change after six p.m. tonight?

A- They are still in place until one a.m. on the 22nd of January because they are the most vulnerable people. Therefore, no visitors allowed in our hospitals, aged care, disability accommodation and corrective services and youth detention, until one am on 22nd January. However, there can always be exceptions like end of life circumstances or any other particular needs. You can contact the managers of those places.