



Guidance for the Public Health Management of COVID-19 on Vessels in Western Australia

1. Scope and purpose

This document outlines responsibilities and guidance for the public health management of COVID-19 on vessels in Western Australia (WA), including for:

- cruise operators, and
- the Communicable Disease Control Directorate (CDCD) and Public Health Units (PHUs) within WA Health.

2. Background

International maritime vessels are subject to biosecurity requirements under the Commonwealth *Biosecurity Act 2015*.

The cruise industry should be guided by the *Eastern Seaboard and Western Australian Cruise Protocols*, which outlines Governments' expectations for cruise lines operating in Australia.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 Human Biosecurity Officers (HBOs)

Select WA Health Public Health Physicians (PHPs) are designated as Human Biosecurity Officers (HBOs) under the Commonwealth *Biosecurity Act 2015*. HBOs perform risk assessments when requested by a Biosecurity Officer from the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), on international vessels (or international flights) where a risk of a Listed Human Disease (LHD), inclusive of COVID-19, has been identified onboard. After hours, the on-call PHP from CDCD performs the HBO role on a state-wide basis.

HBOs provide advice to DAFF's Biosecurity Officers about whether to grant pratique to a vessel. This occurs for a vessel arriving into a First Port of Entry in Australia; thereafter the vessel is managed as a domestic vessel within Australian waters.

The communication pathway for LHD between DAFF and WA Health is outlined in [Appendix A](#).

3.2 WA Health (CDCD and PHUs)

3.2.1 International commercial vessels

Suspect and confirmed cases and outbreaks of COVID-19 on these vessels are managed by vessel operators in accordance with the vessel's COVID-19 plans. Public health advice may be provided to vessels in WA waters on request as follows:

- For vessels at metropolitan ports: by CDCD PHPs (see [Appendix B](#) for contact details).
- For vessels at regional ports: by regional PHP/PHU (see [Appendix B](#)).
- For vessels at Indian Ocean Territory (IOT) ports: by the Kimberley PHP/PHU (see [Appendix B](#)).

3.2.2 International and domestic cruise vessels

Public health advice will be provided by CDCD (see [Appendix B](#) for contact details), as required, for cruise vessels traversing through metropolitan ports, regional ports, and IOT ports. CDCD will inform the regional PHU of the vessel's status and any advice provided.

3.3 Cruise vessel operators

Cruise vessel operators should submit a completed '[Cruise vessel reporting template for acute respiratory and gastrointestinal infection](#)' at least **24 hours** prior to entering WA waters (**or on the Friday prior to entering on a weekend or Monday**), and **daily by 2pm (AWST)** while remaining in WA.

If a vessel moves into a higher outbreak threshold in accordance with the *Eastern Seaboard and Western Australian Cruise Protocols*, **the cruise operator** should notify WA Health via **telephone and email as soon as possible**.

Refer to [Appendix B](#) for WA Health contact details.

4. Management of COVID-19 onboard cruise vessels

Vessels should refer to the *Eastern Seaboard and Western Australian Cruise Protocols* for on-board public health management protocols. Cruise vessel operators should contact CDCD for further advice, if required.

4.1 Measures for cruise vessel shore excursions

As per the *Eastern Seaboard and Western Australian Cruise Protocols* guidance for shore excursions, cruise lines should develop COVID-safe protocols or plans for each shore excursion.

WA Health's expectations for shore excursions include the following measures to mitigate the risk of transmission of COVID-19 onshore.

4.1.1 Disembarking passengers and crew

- Passengers and crew who disembark in WA for the purpose of shore visits should follow WA Public Health advice in place, which can be found on the [HealthyWA webpage](#).

4.1.2 COVID-19 cases

- Passengers and crew who test positive for COVID-19 should not undertake shore excursions.
- Cases should remain on the vessel and be managed according to the *Eastern Seaboard and Western Australian Cruise Protocols*.

4.1.3 Close contacts

- Close contacts should be managed according to the *Eastern Seaboard and Western Australian Cruise Protocols*.
- Close contacts can undertake shore excursions if they are asymptomatic and abide by the following conditions:
 - test negative using a self-administered rapid antigen test on the day of the shore visit,
 - wear a mask at all times when outside the cabin, including when outdoors.
- Close contacts who are symptomatic should not undertake a shore excursion, even if their rapid antigen test is negative.

4.1.4 Pre-disembarkation testing

- Pre-disembarkation testing by rapid antigen test for those who are not a close contact is not routinely required.
- Under some circumstances, CDCD may request a negative rapid antigen test prior to disembarkation for shore excursions in keeping with the *Eastern Seaboard and Western Australian Cruise Protocols*.

4.2 Communications

4.2.1 To local communities

- Cruise vessel operators are responsible for ensuring that the necessary approvals are in place for any shore excursions to local communities, including rural, remote and Aboriginal communities, and should follow any local restrictions in place.
- Cruise vessel operators are responsible for notifying third-party tour operators and excursion/transport providers of the COVID-19 status onboard while in WA, including changes in outbreak thresholds as outlined in the *Eastern Seaboard and Western Australian Cruise Protocols*, to enable operators to implement COVID-safe measures.

4.2.2 To health facilities

- The regional PHU or CDCD should consider the need to alert local health facilities if there is a significant outbreak on board a vessel. The CDCD and regional PHU should notify each other if an alert to a health service is provided.

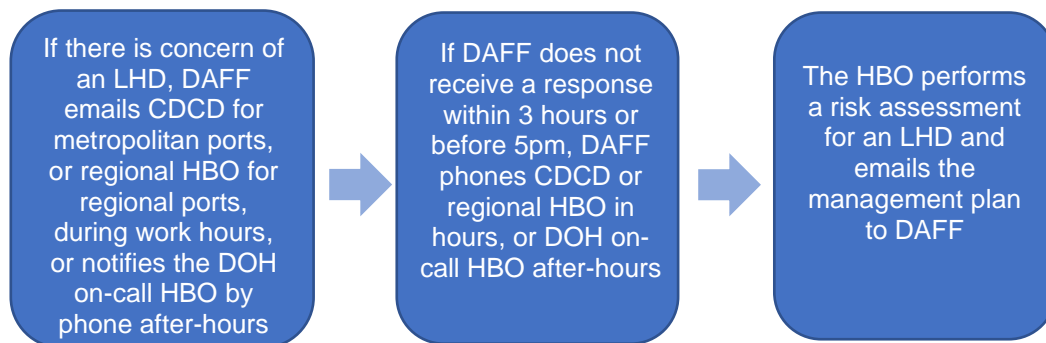
5. Related procedures and documents

- [Eastern Seaboard and Western Australian Cruise Protocols](#)
- [Cruise vessel reporting template for acute respiratory and gastrointestinal infection](#)
- [CDNA National Guidelines for Cruising in Australia](#)
- [COVID-19 \(coronavirus\) \(healthywa.wa.gov.au\)](https://healthywa.wa.gov.au)

Appendix A - communication pathway for international vessels with concern of a Listed Human Disease

This flow chart is to be used for international vessels where the DAFF has identified passengers or crew members as having a possible LHD. It is not to be used for crew members with non-infectious diseases (physical injury, mental health concerns, chronic conditions).

Communication pathway



Glossary of terms

CDCD	Communicable Disease Control Directorate
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
DOH	Department of Health
HBO	Human Biosecurity Officer
LHD	Listed Human Disease

Appendix B – WA Health (CDCD and PHU) contact details

<p>INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC CRUISE VESSELS – ALL REGIONS (office hours: Monday – Friday 08:00 – 17:00, excluding public holidays)</p> <p>Communicable Disease Control Directorate (08) 9222 2131 DoH_CDCDOnCall@health.wa.gov.au</p>	
<p>INTERNATIONAL COMMERCIAL VESSELS (office hours: Monday – Friday 08:00 – 17:00, excluding public holidays)</p>	
Fremantle Port	<p>Communicable Disease Control Directorate (08) 9222 2131 DoH_CDCDOnCall@health.wa.gov.au</p>
Geraldton Seaport	<p>Midwest Population Health Unit (08) 9956 1985 WACHSMidwestCommunicableDiseaseControl@health.wa.gov.au</p>
Esperance Seaport	<p>Goldfields Population Health Unit (08) 9080 8200 WACHSGoldfieldsCommunicableDiseaseControl@health.wa.gov.au</p>
Albany Seaport	<p>Great Southern Population Health Unit (08) 9842 7500 WACHSGreatsouthernCommunicableDiseaseControl@health.wa.gov.au</p>
Port Hedland Seaport, Dampier Seaport, Port Lambert Seaport, Barrow Island, Port of Wheatstone	<p>Pilbara Population Health Unit (08) 9174 1660 WACHSPilbaraCommunicableDiseaseControl@Health.wa.gov.au</p>
Bunbury Seaport, Busselton Seaport	<p>South West Population Health Unit (08) 9781 2359 WACHSSouthwestCommunicableDiseaseControl@health.wa.gov.au</p>
Broome Seaport, Derby Seaport, Wyndham Seaport, Yampi Sound	<p>Kimberley Population Health Unit (08) 9194 1630 WACHSKimberleyCommunicableDiseaseControl@health.wa.gov.au</p>
Indian Ocean Territories (IOT) - Christmas Island, Cocos Island	<p>Kimberley Population Health Unit (08) 9194 1630 WACHSKimberleyCommunicableDiseaseControl@health.wa.gov.au</p>
<p>AFTER HOURS – ALL REGIONS AND ALL VESSELS (17:00 – 08:00 Monday – Friday, and 24 hours on weekends and public holidays)</p> <p>Call the WA Department of Health on-call duty officer on (08) 9328 0553 and ask for the Public Health Physician</p>	

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