

COVID-19 Case Study – First confirmed case in an Australian venue

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As the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic continues to spread throughout the world, our aim, as the venue management industry peak body, is to help cut through the noise and provide relevant, timely and useful information, together with key industry developments.

The Perth Concert Hall, with a capacity of over 1500 patrons, was the first venue with a confirmed case of COVID-19.

Brendan Ellmer, General Manager, Perth Concert Hall shares his learnings from the experience.

‘After a busy Perth Festival period and the launch of the WASO Orchestral Season, the venue was dark for the first time in a month.

However, on Sunday, 8 March at 1133hrs, my phone rang with a call from a private number which I did not get to before it went to voicemail. The message left was unclear and did not explain who the organisation was.

The message I received was “Hello, this is Anastasia from the MCDC can you call me urgently on xxxxxxx about a health issue at your venue.”

I actually thought it was a scam call! I rang back several times and eventually got through at 1138hrs.

At this point, I was informed the person calling was a Doctor from the Metropolitan Communicable Disease Control (MCDC). She informed me a patron who had attended a WASO concert the night before, had tested positive for the COVID-19 virus and requested I provide her with the names and telephone numbers of all other patrons seated in and around the area where the infected patron had been seated. I asked when they were going to go public with this information and was told that at 1245hrs there a Health Department Press Conference was being held. I took the Doctor’s mobile number, wrote down the information she had given me and began calling our Management Team together to arrange to meet onsite to put in place our Response Plan and start informing relevant stakeholders.

The sequence of events was as follows:

- On arrival at 1245hrs ticketing staff assembled the patron list in an Excel document and sent it back to the MCDC
- At the same time, the venue enacted our Response Plan and tweaked the prepared communications
- A list of hirer and promoters who had booked the venue until the end of July was prepared so that an information email could be sent to them, direct from the venue
- An email received from MCDC with letters was forwarded to all staff who had been working the concert (*please see links below*)
- Cleaning guidelines were sourced from the MCDC who put us in touch with the Health Department direct (via phone). It actually transpired that there were no specific guidelines

for cleaning venues in terms of COVID-19, so the Health Department provided amended Hotel Accommodation guidelines for use.

The guidelines stated that:

1. Cleaners were to clean their hands with alcohol wash pre and post clean
2. Disposable rubber gloves were to be worn
3. Standard detergent and disinfectant was to be used
4. The cleaning focus was for all tactile areas (particularly door handles and rails) and the area the patron had been seated in
5. Masks were not required unless patron was in the vicinity 15 minutes or less prior to the clean

Communications were sent out in the following order:

1. Staff and stakeholders
2. Patrons
3. Media

We did not respond to the Media at this point as we did not want our message altered or manipulated.

At 1330hrs the Cleaning Contractors were briefed and cleaning commenced.

At around 1400hrs (via a phone call), we contacted the MCDC to find out if there were any other areas the patron had been to. The MCDC did not know the answer so enquired further. When the answer came back that the patron had been moving in and around most areas of the venue, it was clear to both parties the MCDC would require the details of all patrons, staff and performers from that night. The following information was therefore assembled and sent to the MCDC:

- All patrons
- All Front of House and Back of House Staff
- Catering Staff
- Security Staff
- Ticketing Staff
- St John Event Health Officers
- Pre-Concert presenter
- Orchestra members - many of whom had been in the Foyers post show

Given the speed with which the information was required we were very happy with the outcome of our actions and the few learning that came out of it for us were:

- Make sure your emergency number is up to date and the person has their phone on at all times – I responded in five minutes – with the venue dark at the time of call it could easily have been missed
- Note all information down immediately – the caller was not using venue specific terms and was obviously quite stressed and under pressure themselves
- Find out where the patron had been in the venue apart from where they had been seated i.e. bars, lifts, bathrooms etc.
- Having a Communications Plan before the event saved an enormous amount of time and stress!

- Ensure that your organisation has all of their Contact Lists for various staff members up to date at all times!

One more thing that might really help venues...

St John would not release names and numbers of staff so they had to contact MCDC direct.

We have now set that up with St John so they know (and how) to immediately provide this info to MCDC when requested.'

As Brendan suggests, having a Communication Plan in place saved time, stress and possibly lives. Without the fast actions and concerted efforts of the Perth Concert Hall's Management Team, the outcome could have been a different story.

As currently stands, many venues are restricted to gatherings of all non-essential and static events of more than 500 people, to help delay the spread of COVID-19, whilst some smaller meetings and events may continue to be held.

So how can you prepare for a confirmed case at your venue?

- Keep Communication Plans updated
- Employee contact lists are up to date
- Review and update Contingency Plans
- Communicate and offer support and guidance for those affected by a confirmed case
- Keep informed with developments

Many of you will be implementing and updating your resources and responses now, for those venues who have not, now is the time to do so.

Attachment 1 - Casual Contact Letter

Attachment 2 - Casual Contact Fact Sheet

You can find further information on our website: <https://www.perthconcerthall.com.au/>



Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)

Information for casual (*low risk*) contacts of a confirmed case

Dear **Contact**

You may have been in contact with a person that has been diagnosed with Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) on 7/03/2020. Although it is very unlikely that you will develop COVID-19, this letter provides important information and tells you what you need to do if you develop symptoms.

What is 2019-nCoV?

The virus that causes COVID-19 is new. Symptoms range from mild illness to pneumonia and can include fever, flu-like symptoms (cough, sore throat and fatigue) and shortness of breath. Some people will recover easily while others may get sicker very quickly. It is thought that symptoms will develop within 14 days of exposure to a confirmed case. Most of the symptoms can be treated with supportive medical care.

What is a casual (*low risk*) contact?

Casual contacts include people who have had brief (less than 15 minutes) face-to-face contact with a confirmed case or who have shared an enclosed space (e.g. the same room) with the case for less than two hours while the case has symptoms. Examples include being in the same waiting room, school or office, or people on an aircraft seated far away from the case.

How is the virus spread?

The virus is most likely to spread through direct contact, coughing and sneezing, and touching objects or surfaces that were contaminated by a person with the infection. The best way to prevent the spread of the virus is for infected people to avoid contact with others, wash their hands often with soap and water, and cough and sneeze into their elbow. There is some evidence that a person can spread the infection the day before they develop symptoms as well as while they have symptoms.

Should I wear a face mask?

Face masks are not recommended if you do not have symptoms. If you are ill, and need to have contact with others, you should put on a mask to help prevent spreading the infection.

Do I need to stay home from work or school?

You do not need to stay home if you are well. However, you should monitor your health until **21/03/2020**. If you develop any symptoms, follow the advice below.

What if I develop symptoms?

- Isolate yourself at your home away from other people and use a face mask if you have one. Do **not** go to work, school, or public places like shops
- If you need to see a doctor or hospital, call ahead to tell them that you are a contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19
- Use a private car for transport and put on a mask if you have one
- On arrival at the clinic or hospital, notify staff that you are a contact of COVID-19. If you do not have a mask, please call from outside the facility so that a mask can be given to you before entering
- If you are experiencing severe symptoms, such as shortness of breath, call 000 and request an ambulance. Inform the call centre and ambulance officers that you are a contact of a COVID-19 case

More information is available at <https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov>.
For further information, you can contact MCDC on 9222 8588 (office hours) or 9328 0553 (after hours).

Metropolitan Communicable Disease Control team

Date 8/03/2020

Metropolitan Communicable Disease Control
PO Box 332, Northbridge WA 6865
Tel: (08) 9222 8588 Fax: (08) 9222 8599



Novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

There is currently an outbreak of novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) in mainland China.

Information for casual contacts of a confirmed case

This information sheet provides advice to people who have had casual contact with someone who is infected with coronavirus.

A casual contact is someone who has been in the same general area as someone who has tested positive for the coronavirus while infectious.

You are a casual contact if:

- You have had less than 15 minutes face-to-face contact with a symptomatic confirmed case in any setting; or
- You have shared a closed space with a symptomatic person for less than two hours.

Casual contacts do not need to be excluded from work or school while well. You must closely monitor your health and if you experience any symptoms you are advised to isolate yourself and contact your usual doctor, who will liaise with public health authorities to care for you.

Public health authorities may need to contact you for contact tracing purposes.

What are the symptoms of coronavirus?

Symptoms include (but are not limited to) fever, cough, sore throat, fatigue and shortness of breath.

How is the virus spread?

The virus is most likely to spread from person to person through:

- direct contact with a person while they are infected;
- contact with droplets when a person with a confirmed infection coughs or sneezes; or
- touching objects or surfaces (such as door handles or tables) that were contaminated by droplets from secretions coughed or sneezed from a person with a confirmed infection, and then touching your mouth or face.

How can I help prevent the spread of coronavirus?

Practising good hand hygiene is the best defence against most viruses. You should:

- wash your hands often with soap and water before and after eating as well as after going to the toilet;
- avoid contact with others (including touching, kissing, hugging, and other intimate contact); and
- cough and sneeze into a tissue and dispose of it after use, or use your elbow if a tissue is not available.

What do I do if I develop symptoms?

If you develop mild symptoms:

- isolate yourself from other people;
- put on a face mask if you have one;
- call a doctor or hospital and tell them you have had casual contact with a case of coronavirus and have now developed symptoms; and
- when you get to the doctor's clinic or hospital, tell them again that you have had casual contact with a case of coronavirus.

If you have serious symptoms such as difficulty breathing:

- call **000** and ask for an ambulance; and
- tell the ambulance officers that you have had casual contact with a case of coronavirus.

Your doctor will test you for coronavirus and provide advice on managing it. Your doctor will liaise with public health authorities to determine if you need to remain in self-isolation while your symptoms resolve.

Should I wear a surgical mask?

Surgical masks in the community are only helpful in preventing coronavirus spreading to others from people who develop symptoms as a result of infection with the virus. If you are a casual contact and subsequently become ill, you should put on a surgical mask to prevent spreading infections to others. You will be given a surgical mask by your doctor when you are initially assessed. If you remain well, you are not required to wear a surgical mask as there is little evidence supporting the widespread use of surgical masks in healthy people to prevent transmission in public.

Where can I get more information?

For the latest advice, information and resources, go to the Australian Government Department of Health website at www.health.gov.au. You will find information on novel coronavirus symptoms and preventing the spread.

Call the National Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080. The line operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you require translating or interpreting services, call 131 450.

The telephone number of your state or territory public health agency is available on the coronavirus page at www.health.gov.au/state-territory-contacts.

If you have concerns about your health, speak to your doctor.