

5 January 2022

Residents urged to prepare as COVID-19 cases escalate

Acting Chief Executive of the Western NSW Local Health District, Mark Spittal, has asked local communities to remain committed to their own COVID-safe measures as the total new cases in a single 24-hour period topped 501.

This is more than double the previous high of cases confirmed in a single day, and the first time that all 22 local government areas in the Local Health District have confirmed cases in a 24-hour period.

“We are following the trend of everywhere else in NSW, with a surge of new cases. We expect those numbers to go back and forth a bit, but remain high, as we move into this phase.

“We know that the Omicron variant moves very quickly, and that while extremely good vaccination rates have slowed the spread, and prevented wide-spread serious illness, high rates of transmission are going to be around for a while.

“This isn’t cause for panic, but it’s an important reminder that everyone needs to have a ‘Plan C’ for how their own household will manage if someone needs to isolate with COVID-19 or while they’re waiting for a test result.

“Our healthcare teams will assist those in most need, either in our hospitals or in their own homes. But the volume of cases, and the relatively mild symptoms experienced by many people, means that we cannot possibly assist everyone and individual households should have a plan.”

Mr Spittal urged every household to consider:

- Vaccination. Make sure everyone’s vaccines are complete, including booster shots where eligible. Vaccine bookings can be made through the Federal Government’s [Vaccine Clinic Finder](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/vaccine-locator) (www.healthdirect.gov.au) website, including for 5 to 11 year olds from 10 January. The majority of Australia’s vaccine program is being delivered through general practitioners and pharmacies, with the Local Health District vaccinating from hubs in Bathurst, Orange and Dubbo along with mobile clinics.
- Know [who needs to be tested](https://www.nsw.gov.au/who-needs-to-be-tested) (www.nsw.gov.au). PCR tests, the type administered in clinics and drive-throughs, are now prioritised for vulnerable groups including:
 - People who have been identified as close contacts by NSW Health or NSW Education and requested to have a test.
 - People who are experiencing symptoms related to COVID-19.
 - People who are household contacts of people with COVID-19, or who have had a high risk exposure to someone with COVID-19.
 - People who have been at an interstate high exposure risk location during a specified period.
- What is your [household plan](#) for how you if someone in the household – or the entire household - needs to self-isolate, including:
 - Where people will sleep, eat and use the bathroom to maintain isolation
 - How to get additional groceries, medicine or other supplies into the household if needed
 - How to make sure that anyone who is regularly cared for or visited by someone in isolation is supported

- Making sure your family doctor and any other support services are aware and able to be utilised effectively.

Mr Spittal said that while hospitalisations were currently low, healthcare workers were under pressure.

“It’s been an exhausting couple of years for your healthcare teams and we want as many as possible to have a break. We also have staff who are having to self-isolate, are unable to work because they’re caring for someone in isolation, or need to be at home for their kids.

Mr Spittal said the WNSWLHD will be adjusting its services over the coming week to prepare for a significant increase in emergency department activity and hospital admissions anticipated later in January. A decision on the planned commencement of non-urgent elective surgery is expected to be made shortly.

“That is not a decision that any LHD takes lightly because it has a real impact on those people who need non-urgent surgery. We know that many people listed for non-urgent surgery have already faced delays as a result of the pandemic.

“Managing the balance between the demands of the pandemic and the needs of those who need care for other conditions is a challenge that no public hospital can avoid and we have to take a sensible approach to how we manage that.”

Mr Spittal said that urgent surgery would continue based on the clinical needs of patients.

“The best thing that everyone can do to help us reduce the impact on those who need healthcare services for any reason is to follow sensible hygiene practices well, such as wearing a mask when indoors and around others, keeping a sensible physical distance, and regular handwashing. None of that is too much to ask or expect of each other.”

For more information on cases and testing by LGA and postcode go to: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/stay-safe/data-and-statistics>

Cases recorded in the WNSWLHD in the 24-hours to 8pm 4 January, 2022 by local government area:

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| ● Bathurst - 49 | ● Gilgandra - 8 |
| ● Blayney - 12 | ● Lachlan - 2 |
| ● Bogan - 2 | ● Mid-Western - 34 |
| ● Bourke - 4 | ● Narromine - 19 |
| ● Brewarrina - 5 | ● Oberon - 1 |
| ● Cabonne - 17 | ● Orange - 83 |
| ● Cobar - 2 | ● Parkes - 18 |
| ● Coonamble - 8 | ● Walgett - 4 |
| ● Cowra - 9 | ● Warren - 15 |
| ● Dubbo - 169 | ● Warrumbungle - 22 |
| ● Forbes - 15 | ● Weddin - 3 |