

CORONAVIRUS — COLLIE

12. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the very recent reports in the media that a positive case of COVID has been detected in Collie.

- (1) Can the minister confirm whether this is in fact true?
- (2) If so, when was the minister first made aware of this?
- (3) What advice can the minister provide the house on this very concerning matter?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

- (1)–(3) I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question and understand the anxiety and concern that such reports may trigger for a number of people.

I can confirm that we have had what is called an equivocal positive in a gentleman in Collie. He had travelled from Poland and quarantined for 14 days in Melbourne. I am not sure whether it was a usual test or whether he became symptomatic, but a follow-up test produced an equivocal result. In these cases, we make sure that we can get a clear line of sight of the outcome of the test results, so he will be tested again to determine whether he is in fact a positive or what is called a historical case. Our strong suspicion at this stage is that his is a historical case, which means that he is shedding particles of the virus. That can, from time to time, trigger a positive result in the usual testing process. We will go back and test him again. He is isolating and all his close contacts are also isolating until we get a clearer signal in terms of his test outcome. Ultimately, we will determine this through a serology test. Members are all familiar with the PCR test that detects elements, or the presence, of the disease itself. A serology test tests for antibodies, which is the defining characteristic that we would see in someone who is considered a historical case and is actually shedding the disease rather than continuing to incubate or host the disease. That is our very strong suspicion at this stage. We are taking this very cautiously to make sure that we are prepared for any outcome in this particular case.

Further to the Leader of the Opposition's question, I heard about this this afternoon. Of course, the Department of Health had already swung into action to make sure that we had taken steps, which also included liaising with his employer to make sure that they were aware of any consequences for them. Of course, at this stage we understand that the risk is extremely low, or remote. From that perspective, I think we can all take great comfort in the immediate and precautious work that the department has undertaken.