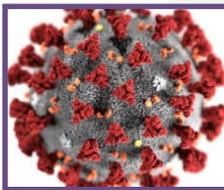


SSBA
Issue 30

NEWSLETTER
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Update on SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19)

The Australian Government Department of Health continues to coordinate the national health sector emergency response to COVID-19, under direction of the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) and its expert standing committees. For up-to-date information, please visit the Department of Health website [here](#).

Situation in Australia

As at 21 August 2020, there has been 24,407 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Australia, including 472 deaths. There has also been over 5.5 million tests conducted with a national cumulative percent positivity of approximately 0.4%.

Situation Worldwide

Across the world there have been more than 22 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 and over 793,000 deaths.

SARS-CoV-2 and the SSBA Regulatory Scheme

The Department of Health has conducted an impact risk assessment with experts from the health, agriculture, gene technology and Australian intelligence sectors to determine whether SARS-CoV-2 should be included on the List of SSBA (the List). This recent assessment recommended that SARS-CoV-2 **should not** be included on the List at this point in time. The SSBA Regulatory Scheme will continue to monitor the risk associated with SARS-CoV-2 as the COVID-19 pandemic evolves, with a view to conducting regular SSBA risk assessments on the agent.

If your facility is handling viable, infectious and pathogenic SARS-CoV-2, it is recommended that accurate records of specimen movements and handling activities are maintained, and that appropriate biosafety and biosecurity precautions are observed. [The Public Health Laboratory Network \(PHLN\) guidance on laboratory testing for SARS-CoV-2](#) provides guidance on testing approaches and specimen handling.

SARS coronavirus (the virus that caused the 2002-03 outbreak) is listed as a Tier 1 SSBA, SARS-CoV-2 is not.

Should the status of SARS-CoV-2 under the SSBA Regulatory Scheme change in future, all stakeholders will be notified and given sufficient lead time to meet any changed requirements.

The Evolving COVID-19 Situation

The evolving COVID-19 pandemic situation has caused significant uncertainty and pressures for the Australian laboratory community. The SSBA Regulatory Scheme will continue to maintain regular contact with the Responsible Officers of each registered facility to understand existing and emerging COVID-19 impacts that may affect operational capability. In addition, registered facilities scheduled to undergo an inspection this calendar year are being actively contacted by SSBA Inspectors to discuss 2020 monitoring and compliance arrangements.

SSBA MAILING LIST
If you need to update your contact details, or know of others that would like to be added to the SSBA mailing list, please email the details to ssba@health.gov.au

FEEDBACK
If you have any questions or would like to provide feedback on the SSBA Regulatory Scheme, please contact us at ssba@health.gov.au
Check out our website at www.health.gov.au/SSBA