

# SCHOOL RAPID ANTIGEN TESTING

Qualitative  
research – PHASE 2

Prepared for the  
Queensland Department of Premier and Cabinet  
28 January 2022

 ADIA  
AUSTRALIAN DATA AND INSIGHTS ASSOCIATION  
TRUST MARK MEMBER

 PRIVACY  
QUALITY  
ETHICS

 ISO 20252  
Experts  
CERTIFIED

 ISO 9001  
Experts  
CERTIFIED

 Ipsos

# RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND DESIGN

# 1

# RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

## School rapid antigen testing research

Fast-turnaround qualitative research was commissioned to:

- Understand how parents were feeling about their children returning to school
- Understanding their reactions to two different scenarios for returning to school.
- Identify their preferred scenario.

The two scenarios tested were:

Option 1: Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT tests) would be available at all Queensland schools and Early Learning Centres for students, teachers or school staff who become symptomatic while at school or an Early Learning Centre. They'd also be available for parents to collect a test from the School Administration or Early Learning Centre if their child becomes symptomatic at home?

Option 2: This would be for students to stay home when sick with COVID-19 symptoms and undertake a RAT test or PCR test through local testing and fever clinics. They would then be required to follow Queensland Health advice if they are a positive case or a close contact of a positive case.



# RESEARCH DESIGN

## Qualitative research

- Telephone in-depth interviews
  - n=14 interviews with parents (across Early Learning, primary and high school).
  - each lasting around 10 minutes.
  - broad representation by age, gender, location and school type and sector (early childhood, primary and high school, and public, independent and catholic schools).
  - sample involved both mobile and landline, but all interviews were achieved through mobile phone number .
  - conducted on 28th January 2022.

We have also included one chart from the regular tracking we do for DPC around COVID and the Government's reponse



# KEY FINDINGS

# 2

# FEELINGS ABOUT RETURN TO SCHOOL

## Little concern expressed regarding return to school

- **The vast majority of parents expressed a clear desire for their children to be back at school (from both an education and social interaction point of view)**
  - Most parents we interviewed expressed ‘no concern’ or ‘not too concerned’
  - Among these parents, feelings ranged from believing the start of the school year should not have been delayed; to faith in their schools and ELC’s and the procedures they have in place; some were essential workers so kids were already back; and a lament that the kids had not had the chance to be double vaccinated by now.
  - One or two did however express uncertainty about vaccination for younger children and were unsure about the current advice regarding this.
  - Among the small minority who expressed some concerns, the concerns included children catching Covid; the impact on young children of teachers/educators wearing masks and the loss of facial cues; and the low level of vaccination among children.

*Not at all. Not sure why it was delayed in the first place.*

*Nice if they had the opportunity to be fully vaxxed before beginning but not enough time.*

*No concerns, I cant take more time off work, eldest are immunised and youngest is soon to be.*

*No I'm not too concerned. Just not sure still about what the situation is with vaccinations with COVID going on. Just a lot of mixed information about whether or not children should be getting vaccinated or not.*

*I think the sooner the better to start social interactions and obviously education, I don't think there needs to be huge stress on curriculum to fit it in or extra load. I think it should just absorb and still have social emotional wellbeing as a priority. Obviously a concern of them catching covid and there are mandates necessary then we just need clarity.*

*Yes I do imagine being that 7 year old, he is going to be staring at someone wearing a mask all day. I think for children his age, body language and things like that are something they pick up on that is really important... I have considered taking him out of school because of how the government has gone about all these changes with corona virus i think it is absolutely disgusting.... are going to be forcing children into getting it to get an education is something that is worrying. There is a lot of parents myself included that are considering taking them out of school to protect them from what the government is doing.*

# OPTION 1 WAS PREFERRED BY 8 OF OUR 14 PARENTS

## ■ 8 of 14 expressed a preference for Option 1 (vs 5 for Option 2 and one who wanted no testing for kids)

- Those choosing Option 1 see it as a better way to manage the virus in schools and keep kids in schools, as they can get tested before they go to school. Concerns about the time wastage involved in PCR testing (access and results) in Option 2 and the extent to which people would comply with organising their own RAT or Test were also expressed.
- The clear benefit of Option 1 was the ease and immediacy of access through schools and the immediacy of results allowing instant access to school, all of which means kids spend more time in school and parents have less issues with their work.
- *“Just I feel like its going to be more practical with work. Every time they get a runny nose I'm not going to be able to take time off work every 5 minutes.”*
- Those preferring this option also wanted permission to be sought from parents and didn't want it to become daily or too regular. One questioned who would be administering the tests.
- Those against expressed concern at the impact of regular testing on young children; felt it was incongruous with current contact tracing; believing people should be responsible and keep kids home if unwell; and concern that RAT test will show positive if kids have had COVID sometime ago.

*This is a much more feasible idea, we pick up and drop off.*

*I think that's a great idea. Hard to access RAT tests at the moment.*

*I think this is a good plan, easier access will be good.*

*I don't have a problem with it if they want to make them available .... Also as long as they get permission, they are not doing it on children without asking their parents permission.*

*Like opposed on a scale of one to zero, it is minus one thousand. Unnecessary. To me a 7 year old shoving something up his nose and throat over and over ... it makes me so angry and upset to even talk about.*


*If she is sick I keep her at home. They can ring me if she gets sick at school don't need to shove that down her throat.*

*Complete waste of time, my wife she is teacher, if I get COVID I'm sleeping next to her she is not classed as a close contact and still has to go to work. They are not tracing, not any of that stuff. It's a complete waste of time now to be honest. If you are sick, you are sick, and you stay at home. If you are better in a couple of days you go to school.*

*Personally I think it's a waste of time. Well, if you have had COVID, so you've been positive to COVID and you take a RAT test it can still show you are COVID positive for up to eight weeks. So let's assume that a percentage of the children over the holidays have had COVID. Every time you give them a RAT test that is going to show they have COVID so what is the school going to do, send them home?*

# OPTION 2 WAS PREFERRED BY 5 OF OUR 14 PARENTS

- While many expressed general acceptance of Option 2, when asked to choose only 5 chose this option.
- Interestingly, when we delved into the discussion around preferences, **we found that 2 of these 5 expressed a clear intention not to test their children at all.** So they saw this option as a way out of putting their children through testing..
  - *“I just think it's really disturbing for a child to have to be shoving things up their nose and performing these kind of procedures just to able to go to school. It's terrifying.”*
  - *“Stay at home and let her get better, not giving her a test for the flu. I know what she has got and when she has got it. I am not going to put her through a test that tells me its only her asthma playing up. The doctors you tell them to test it, it's playing up because you have asthma and they send you for a COVID test. They have had it all their lives. I know what they have got and when I am not going to subject them to a test that reveals nothing. They are going to say they have got COVID when I know full well it is asthma.”*
- For those that chose this option it was preferred as it talked to personal responsibility and fits with what people know and currently do, although as mentioned above not all intend to do the right thing. There was comfort in the familiarity of this option.
- For those not wanting this option the key concerns were in relation to whether everyone would do the right thing, how well the system works, and the time and hassle involved in organising testing, and in the case of PCR testing the time taken to get tested then get results.



*I think this is the better way than having them not returning, COVID doesn't seem to be going anytime soon. Caution but not overly.*

*No issues, I think at the end of the day, the parent needs to be responsible for their children. If kids are showing symptoms they should be taking them to get tested. But we also know there are parents out there who like to find the line and send their kids to school hoping they don't get caught.*

*PCRs are taking too long.*

*Long and arduous, lines are huge to get tested, me and my partner both work... then long waits for results.*

*I know quite a few people that have tested positive to COVID and the government has not been informed of it, so the family does not have to isolate. It's fairly common now to have COVID. It's ridiculous trying to get a PCR test. Where I am living if you don't start queuing up at 3 in the morning you wont be successful at getting tested.*



# MAJORITY OF PARENTS IN FAVOUR OF RAT TESTING

We asked parents in our latest tracking wave about their reaction undertaking twice weekly RAT testing of their children in the first month of school, assuming the tests are free?

	%
It's good / I'm in favour / a good idea / much needed / supportive	38%
Unnecessary / an overkill / not comfortable with this / ridiculous	17%
Would keep school community safe / keep infections out of our schools / minimise risk of transmission	11%
Not answered	10%
Concerns is the availability test kits / currently in short supply	7%
Don't know / not sure	5%
Too much stress on children / impractical / inconvenient / end up hating school	5%
Depends on where tests are carried out / at school best option for accountability	4%
Only if showing symptoms / if already symptomatic	4%
First I've heard of this / news to me	4%
Other mentions	3%
Have no school aged children	3%
As long as it's free	3%
Don't like the idea / against this / don't agree with this	3%
Nothing	3%
A bit hesitant / maybe / only if necessary	3%
Children are the safest demographic / more resilient / let kids go back to a normal life	2%
Concerns about accuracy of test results	2%
Would keep families safe / protect families / provides peace of mind	2%
It's a simple process	2%
Waste of money / resources / time / money better spent elsewhere	1%
My child / children are home schooled / distance educated so no need	1%
Not going to happen / will never happen	1%
Would prefer the availability of a booster shot	0%

51% of responses were clear expressions of positivity towards the idea

An additional 18% of responses expressed conditional positivity towards the idea

Base: n=126 Queensland Parents/Carers of children aged 5-17 years

# SUMMARY

# 8

# SUMMARY

- On balance, parents accept that testing is a necessary step to enhance community safety and reduce transmission during a period of high COVID cases, although some are very reluctant to put their child through any kind of testing.
- While the numbers appear to be split in terms of preferred option, 8 for Option 1 vs 5 for Option 2, 2 of the 5 for Option 2 chose this option as it gives them the ability to ignore testing.
- The other key thing to note is that the majority of discussion was around testing when symptoms are evident. Parents were not thinking about those who may be asymptomatic and their potential impact at schools. This would seem to be a key benefit of Option 1, that if communicated well, could improve and strengthen acceptance of it, i.e. This approach gives is the chance of finding asymptomatic students before they can unknowingly spread the virus.

