



Dear Colleagues,

Our COVID-19 response continues to rapidly evolve. I want to give you an update on what we're doing to prepare.

Creating capacity

As part of the coordinated surge planning for COVID-19, all elective surgeries except category 1 and urgent category 2 have been cancelled.

This is in line with announcements from Queensland Health and the Prime Minister.

These changes will help increase our capacity for emergency care and limit non-essential physical contact which is critical in helping us manage the risk to both patients and staff.

Patients will be referred back to the care of their GP who will escalate any urgent care through a Queensland Health virtual clinical escalation centre.

Additionally, late last week we stopped accepting new non-urgent outpatient referrals and have started rescheduling or converting existing appointments to telehealth or phone consultations.

In the past two weeks we have been reviewing and restructuring our services. We started the week with an additional 115 inpatient beds available to flex up for our COVID-19 response. By the end of next week we will have more than 270 inpatient beds available.

Across our intensive care units we are expanding our usual capacity of 49 beds and will have 93 beds capacity within the next two weeks to treat critically ill patients. Currently our ICUs have 60 beds available.

This is on top of our community beds in our COVID-19 virtual ward. This week we are expanding our virtual bed capacity to 800, which is expected to double in the next two weeks to 1600. These beds will be used for patients with mild symptoms who can be treated in their own homes under nursing and medical supervision. We have also expanded our community home based care to accommodate an additional 80 patients.

Additionally, we are working on ensuring there is adequate PPE for those who need it and I'll updated you next week in detail.

Communicating with you

Keeping you informed of the latest updates is vital to ensuring we are all prepared and ready to deal with this changing health landscape. Each week there will be a series of messages and opportunities to engage via video with myself and representatives from Infection Control, Infectious Diseases and HR so you can get the information you need and ask questions of experts.

We have also created a weekly [COVID-19 staff update](#) while our regular monthly newsletters are on hold.

Our planned communication schedule for the next two weeks looks like this:

Monday 30 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly 'match report' CE message • Vidcast with Shaun Drummond and Jackie Hanson, 2.30-3pm • Daily message from Dr Liz Rushbrook, Health Incident Controller
Tuesday 31 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vidcast with Infection Control nurse Janice Geary, 1-2pm • Metro North consumer session with Shaun Drummond, Colleen Jen, John Piispanen and Alex Chaudhuri, 2.15-3pm • Daily message from Dr Liz Rushbrook, Health

	Incident Controller
Wednesday 1 April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly message from Jackie Hanson • Vidcast with Infectious Diseases Dr Alex Chaudhuri, 2.30-3.30pm • Daily message from Dr Liz Rushbrook, Health Incident Controller
Thursday 2 April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vidcast with ED HR Sarah Bench, 12.30-1.30pm • Daily message from Dr Liz Rushbrook, Health Incident Controller
Friday 3 April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly CE update message • Weekly COVID-19 staff newsletter • Vidcast with Shaun Drummond • Daily message from Dr Liz Rushbrook, Health Incident Controller
Saturday 4 April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily message from Dr Liz Rushbrook, Health Incident Controller
Sunday 5 April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily message from Dr Liz Rushbrook, Health Incident Controller
Monday 6 April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly 'match report' CE message • Vidcast with Shaun Drummond, 2.30-3pm • Daily message from Dr Liz Rushbrook, Health Incident Controller
Tuesday 7 April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vidcast with Infection Control nurse • Daily message from Dr Liz Rushbrook, Health Incident Controller
Wednesday 8 April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vidcast with Infectious Diseases doctor • Daily message from Dr Liz Rushbrook, Health Incident Controller
Thursday 9 April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vidcast with HR Manager Col Smyth • Daily message from Dr Liz Rushbrook, Health Incident Controller
Friday 10 April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly CE update message • Weekly COVID-19 staff newsletter • Vidcast with Shaun Drummond • Daily message from Dr Liz Rushbrook, Health Incident Controller
Saturday 11 April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily message from Dr Liz Rushbrook, Health Incident Controller
Sunday 12 April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily message from Dr Liz Rushbrook, Health Incident Controller

I will send any urgent updates outside of this schedule if needed. Information about how to join in the video sessions will be sent out next week.

Additionally, our HR hotline is available for specific questions about your individual situation or, if you are a manager, your team. Please contact them on 3647 2819 or by email

MetroNorthHR@health.qld.gov.au.

Our Metro North COVID page online will continue to be updated as new information becomes available. This page is now available to staff working from home as well and is your single

point of truth for what's happening in Metro North and how we are responding.

Events

We have postponed or cancelled all non-essential events including #NextCare Health Conference, Metro North Research Excellence Awards, and many training and networking events. New dates for major events will be shared once the situation is clearer.

There is still some mandatory training happening but please talk to your line manager about what this means for you.

On a lighter note, Ned has been warning me that social distancing is not an excuse to hide in my computer room, play games and avoid spending time with her. Our teenager Sam has put his Xbox in our second lounge and put up a sign saying 'corona quarantine zone, no mother allowed'. Luckily, I have a pass to go in and play on the Xbox with him.

Sam has also tried to convince us that showering everyday could harm his good bacteria that is protecting him from infection. My response was to ask for a 1000-word essay citing the appropriate clinical evidence; he decided showering was easier.

Thank you for all the messages after my recent surgery. I am recovering well and appreciate all the well wishes.

Stay safe and thank you for everything you're doing to look after each other, our patients and our community.

Regards,
Shaun