



Metro North Hospital and Health Service *Putting people first*

Message from the Executive Director

MEDICAL SERVICES

Dr Elizabeth Rushbrook

RESPECT • INTEGRITY • COMPASSION • HIGH PERFORMANCE • TEAMWORK

VALUES IN ACTION

COVID-19 (coronavirus) update – 21 March 2020

Dear colleagues,

A special thank you to those of you who are working through the weekend to provide ongoing care for our community and respond to COVID-19. Today, I would like to address the following topics:

- Isolation vs. quarantine
Leave provisions

Isolation vs. quarantine

There is still a lack of clarity in the community about the difference between self-isolation and self-quarantine. As healthcare professionals, it is our responsibility to help educate our community, therefore I want to take this opportunity to clarify these terms.

Self-quarantine is used to restrict the movement of a well person who may have been exposed to COVID-19 for the period of time when they could become unwell (14 days in the case of COVID-19). When people return from overseas or have close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case, they must go into self-quarantine for 14 days. People in self-quarantine can remain at their own home, even when there are other household members – however, people in self-quarantine should stay away from others in the home, such as stay in a room away from others, sleep in a separate bedroom and use a separate bathroom. People in self-quarantine should not accept visitors. Vulnerable people, like those over the age of 60 or those with chronic disease should stay somewhere else.

Self-isolation is used to separate ill people from those who are healthy. People who test positive to COVID-19 must go into self-isolation immediately and remain in self-isolation until they have been declared recovered from COVID-19. They should strictly avoid contact with other members of their household, preferably by living alone, or only with other positive cases. If people in self-isolation do need to move around, such as attend a hospital upon the direction of their doctor, they should wear a mask, avoid contact with others, and move quickly through common areas.

It is important to note that most confirmed COVID-19 cases won't feel particularly unwell while they are in self-isolation. They may want to go out and continue living their normal lives, however, I wanted to reiterate that just because they feel okay it doesn't mean they won't spread the virus. In fact, if a confirmed case leaves self-isolation it is almost certain they will spread COVID-19 to others. Please remember that this virus can cause very serious illness, even death, particularly for older and vulnerable people in our community, therefore it is essential we stop the spread.

Leave provisions

Yesterday I spoke about the "Employment Arrangements in the Event of a Health Pandemic" directive that has now been applied to health service employees. You can now view the updated Fact Sheets and Frequently Asked Questions Document on the HR section of the [Metro North QHEPS page](#). For additional questions please contact the

Metro North HR team directly on 3647 2819 or by email at MetroNorthHR@health.qld.gov.au.

At this time of intense preparation, I wish to assure you that you are all doing a great job. It is important for us to remain calm, stay positive and know that our health system is agile and ready to respond. We have sound strategies and processes in place and a team of dedicated and experienced health professionals ready to deal with anything that comes our way.

I am delighted that you are on my team!!!

Kind regards,

Dr Liz Rushbrook

Metro North Health Incident Controller