



COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

Metro North Hospital and Health Service *Putting people first*



Message from the Executive Director

MEDICAL SERVICES

Dr Elizabeth Rushbrook

COVID-19 (coronavirus) update – 23 March 2020

Dear colleagues,

As the impact of COVID-19 continues to evolve, I would like to update you on the following topics:

- Changes to visitor information
- Use of electronic signatures
- Ongoing social distancing measures
- Closure of Queensland borders

Changes to visitor information

To help reduce the spread of COVID-19, we are taking extra precautions when it comes to patient visits.

To help keep our patients, their families, and you safe, we have advised that there is to be only one person visiting the hospital or facility, per patient at any one time. This does not permit groups to come in and rotate one-on-one with the patient, this means that there is to be only one visitor on-site at a time. The methods for implementing this will vary by Clinical area and Directorate, with the key principle being that, in order to minimise the risk to patients and staff – social distancing in hospitals is important.

We understand there might be exceptions to this rule in specific circumstances such as end of life care. In these instances, Directorates are able to exercise local discretion. When implementing this change, Directorates may also revise visiting hours and other local arrangements for movements of personnel in and out of hospitals. If you or someone you know wants to visit a loved one, please call beforehand to confirm if visiting hours have changed.

These measures are being put in place to make sure that vulnerable members of our communities, hospitals and facilities are kept healthy and safe.

Use of electronic signatures

The Government has recommended that in light of the current COVID-19 health pandemic, we should enable social distancing where possible by enabling arrangements such as working from home, where sensible to do so. Use of electronic signatures for internal use of day-to-day business is supported, however there are some exemptions that you need to be aware of – particularly certain legal documents. In all cases, electronic signatures should be exercised only in a pdf document, and delegates need to ensure they have enacted appropriate security measures for storage of their digital signature. Information can be found on [QHEPS](#) about proper use of electronic signatures.

Ongoing social distancing measures

As I'm sure you all know, today saw the closure of all pubs, clubs, cinemas, casinos, indoor places of worship, gyms and indoor sporting venues. Cafes and restaurants are still able to operate but are now only able to offer takeaway and delivery services. There are

exemptions in place for hospitals from this requirement, but we do require to have strict social distancing mechanisms in place. Please remember that these measures are being implemented to keep us, our families and our community safe.

As social distancing rules continue to escalate, I'd like to remind you that the "Employment Arrangements in the Event of a Health Pandemic" directive that has now been applied to health service employees. You will find 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.

Closure of Queensland borders

Queensland will close its borders from midnight, Wednesday, as the State Government moves to stop the spread of the virus. This means that anyone travelling into Queensland will be required to self-quarantine for 14 days regardless if they're sick or not.

I'd like you to know that we all play a vital role in preventing the spread of the virus. We owe it to our community to take social distancing seriously. These measures will help ensure that we limit the spread and control the load that will be placed on our healthcare system.

I remind you once again to regularly and thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water and to cover your coughs and sneezes. Practice social distancing in all aspects of your life – but don't forget to find innovative ways to continue to connect. Above all, spare a smile for someone each and every day (or every hour if you can manage it) – you never know who might smile back 😊.

The impact of COVID-19 on our community continues to grow, but so does our preparedness. Thank you to everyone who continues to show incredible dedication to the Metro North community and to our patients.

Kind regards,

Dr Liz Rushbrook

Metro North Health Incident Controller