



COVID-19 update 132 – 22/08/2020

There's been a lot of great work done today across Metro North adapting to changes announced this morning by the Chief Health Officer (CHO). As you will have heard, we are now operating under a new [Hospital Visitors Direction](#), and a new [Movement and Gathering Direction](#) in South East Queensland.

In addition, there are requirements regarding [Residential Aged Care Facilities](#) (RACF). Our strong recommendation is that you familiarise yourselves with these as they will affect how we work and live in South East Queensland. The aged care population, people with disabilities and our hospitalised patients are particularly vulnerable, and these stringent precautions are designed to ensure that we protect our compromised Queenslanders.

All of these changes have been necessary following an increase in COVID cases detected in South East Queensland, related to the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre and the possibility that there may be community spread.

PPE in Emergency Departments and other clinical areas

PPE is to be worn in all of our Emergency Departments. All staff working in Emergency Departments are required to wear PPE. If you are working in an Emergency Department in our hospital and health service please follow the PPE guidelines outlined by your facility. If you work in other areas of our hospital and health service and you wish to wear a mask, you are most welcome to do so. Masks will be provided in all clinical areas. We have sufficient supplies of PPE in Metro North, and while we don't wish to use them unnecessarily, where you believe there is a requirement to do so, masks are available for your use and protection.

Metro North has made a decision that staff who move between facilities should wear a mask when attending to patients in Metro North. We have discussed the issue of movement more broadly and feel that this is the best way to keep patients and staff safe. If this changes we will advise.

Visitor restrictions

We expect these new visitor restrictions will dramatically reduce the number of people entering our hospitals and facilities. These restrictions were introduced at short notice today, and I'd like to thank everyone who explained the changes to patients and visitors with compassion and understanding. It will be a challenging time for our patients and their loved ones, but we do know that we are doing our utmost to protect the patients in our catchment and the staff in our employ. It is also imperative that we have knowledge of people who come to our facilities and therefore we are working on the best possible way to attain this information. Thank you everyone who today managed the paper-based approach to this, and we hope to have an "app" which will assist with this in the coming days.

Tier two response

Today Metro North also moved to a Tier Two response under our COVID-19 Response Plan.

This means our Metro North EOC and facility EOCs are now operating on a seven-day basis and meeting each day to monitor and adapt further as we may need to. What this means is that senior, appropriately trained staff in the management of a pandemic response are available to assist with any difficult questions and manage local issues. Together the Metro North EOC and the facility EOCs are working to ensure that we have a consistent approach to the clinical management of patients in our care, and providing information to keep you abreast of changes and directives and as much as possible to make sure that your life is a little less stressful.

While we are on a Tier Two response, we are not yet cancelling any elective procedures, and there have been no changes to current arrangements around vulnerable staff at this point. That may change over the coming days/weeks, and we will work with you to ensure that we meet the needs of you, our staff and at the same times manage the issues around service provision.

We are preparing for a surge in presentations to our Fever Clinics in the next few days. This is inevitable as messages go out through mainstream and social media. We will ensure that we monitor the situation closely and ensure that we are able to meet the demand that additional workload/presentations may pose.

Vidcasts

As things are starting to change and evolve quickly once again, we've now arranged for daily Vidcasts to be broadcast where staff can ask questions and stay informed of the latest developments.

Tomorrow, Shaun Drummond, Chief Executive, Jackie Hanson, Chief Operating Officer and myself as Incident Commander will be available to answer questions you may have and provide you with the latest updates.

We look forward to chatting at 11am tomorrow. You can access the session on Teams [here](#). We hope you can join us.

So until tomorrow, please look after yourself and know that we are here to assist in anyway we can. Our aim is to keep you informed, safe and confident in the knowledge that we as the Incident Commanders, EOCs, your Executive Teams and the Metro North Executive are working as fast, diligently and productively as we can to look after everyone who works, is cared for or visits our hospital and health service.

Thank you for everything you do. It is a challenge, we understand that, but you are doing an amazing job, keep up the good work. Together, we have totally got this!!!!

Regards,
Alanna Geary
Metro North Incident Commander