



**26 October 2020**

Dear colleagues,

I hope everyone stayed safe and dry over the weekend of wild weather and footy fever! I am back in the IC saddle after a 6-week absence (including 2 weeks' leave).

Over the past few weeks the number of interstate arrivals to Brisbane has been slowing slightly which has allowed us to stabilise our processes to support people in hotel quarantine. This has included us moving to hosting clinical governance for our support program within Community and Oral Health & Public Health, and working with Queensland Health and other key Government and non-Government stakeholders to streamline multiple processes. We have also welcomed Mater Health as a valued peer in the hotel quarantine support process.

I anticipate that hotel quarantine support will be a role that we will play for quite some time. We look forward to supporting increased international arrivals in line with the recent National Cabinet decision to lift international passenger caps meaning that Queensland will accept up to 1150 arrivals per week.

#### **Aerosol generating procedures / behaviours**

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Infection Control Expert Group (ICEG) has consistently recognised the potential for transmission of SARS-CoV-2 via aerosols in specific circumstances. ICEG advice regarding aerosol generating procedures performed on COVID-19 cases was first published very early in 2020. By mid-year, the potential for transmission in the context of certain behaviours, such as shouting, emerged with acknowledgment that there may be a high risk under certain conditions, such as poorly ventilated indoor crowded environments. I commend you to key Australian documents such as [Guidance on the use of personal protective equipment \(PPE\) in hospitals during the COVID-19 outbreak](#). These documents are regularly updated as new information emerges.

We continue to work within our HHS to mature our plans and procedures for ensuring we are prepared to act across all 'response tiers' during this pandemic. Current work includes development of our respiratory protection program and development of a framework for aerosol generating behaviour management. I encourage you to stay up to date with all things COVID by visiting our Metro North COVID-19 [website](#).

Don't forget, the most effective individual measures to prevent the spread of SARS-CoV-2 continue to be **good hand and respiratory hygiene, physical distancing, staying home and getting tested if you are unwell**, and **wearing a mask if you are in an area with significant community transmission**, particularly when it is difficult to practise physical distancing. Together, these measures minimise the risk of transmission of SARS-CoV-2.

### Christmas decorations and wellbeing

Christmas is rapidly approaching and there have been questions about decorations. As we're currently in Tier 0, there are no specific additional restrictions on Christmas decorations, but I encourage you to be attentive to standard infection control and health and safety protocols when choosing and placing decorations at work. This advice may change if we have an increase in cases in the coming months.

COVID-19 has had a huge impact on our community and across Metro North we've seen an increase in emergency department and other acute presentations seeking mental health support in the past three months. Please remember that we are all experiencing varying degrees of increased stress and anxiety and please be kind to each other and to yourselves. As Christmas approaches, the restrictions around travel and financial/emotional stress many are experiencing, it's especially important to keep an eye on each other and reach out if you need support or someone to talk to. Our peer responders, RUOKers and employee assistance program are all available to help. You can find details on the staff COVID [wellbeing site](#).

Kind regards,  
Dr Liz Rushbook  
Metro North Incident Controller

### Current MN Response Tier Activated – Tier 0

#### Metro North HHS – overview of cases\*

HHS	Patients being managed by HHS						FEVER Clinics			
	Total In-patients			Virtual Ward / HITH / or similar	Deaths **	Total cases managed by HHS (including recovered) ***	# of clinics	Presentations		
	ICU Pts		ICU-NOT Ventilated					ICU- Ventilated	Last 24hrs	TOTAL ^
	ICU-NOT Ventilated	ICU- Ventilated								
MN TOTAL	1	0	0	1	3	347	5	217	100885	

\*With effect 26 October 2020, 1000

\*\*Metro North has three recorded deaths (one person a return traveller into NSW, who passed away in NSW)

\*\*\* These numbers reflect the cases being managed by Metro North.

