

MESSAGE FROM THE COVID-19 HEALTH INCIDENT CONTROLLER

Metro North Hospital and Health Service

Dr Elizabeth Rushbrook



5 July 2021

Good afternoon colleagues,

Most of you would have heard that the lockdown will be removed from the Brisbane City Council and Moreton Bay Local Government Areas (LGA) today, July 3 at 18.00.

While the lockdown has been lifted this evening, Metro North Health remains at a Tier One response as detailed in our pandemic response plan. This is because we are managing a number of outbreak responses within our local community, including response in one of our major hospitals and ongoing major contact tracing efforts. We can't be complacent given the high risk that the current COVID-19 *delta* variant (and other variants of concern) poses and the number across our community.

The next few days and weeks will remain challenging and we will continue to ask staff to remain vigilant and to ensure effective infection control procedures are in place to reduce the risks.

Continue to use PPE and wear masks

Although the lockdown finishes at 6.00 pm, there remains gathering restrictions and mask wearing when outside our home/car in place for at least the next two weeks.

In addition to the requirement for all of us to wear face masks, our Local Government Area's (LGA) remain declared 'medium' risk for PPE escalation. This means that all staff who are providing routine clinical care in any setting where physical distancing cannot be maintained (e.g. outpatient appointment, ward rounds, handover meetings, 1:1 cares, care in the home) must wear a **surgical mask** and **protective eyewear**.

Care in higher risk settings will require additional precautions as the circumstance dictates - including P2/N95 respirator, gown and gloves.

Continue to use the *Check In Qld* app

Staff, patients and visitors are now being asked to use the [Check In Qld app](#) regularly. Our request of staff is to use the *Check In Qld* app so as to simplify contact tracing should there be a transmission event in our hospital or community setting.

This means you need to use the *Check In Qld* app to sign in when you start work and if you work in a designated COVID ward or travelling between health sites or other private premises. Put simply, the more you check in, the better chance we have to identify if you have been to an exposure site/venue.

Checking of exposure sites should be routine

Updates continue to be posted by our great contract tracing team of exposure sites and I encourage to regularly checking and make this task an important part of your routine tasks by accessing the [contact tracing exposure sites](#).

A number of new sites have been highlighted over the last few days including:

- West End
- South Brisbane
- Brisbane City
- Various shops in Westfield Shopping Centre North Lakes
- Griffin
- Brisbane Airport
- Various sites on the Sunshine Coast.

As we continue to be vigilant, please ensure maintain physical distancing, practicing good hand hygiene and wear masks.

Additional staff member tests positive

We have confirmed today a second positive case of COVID-19 within our Health Service community. As was notified in today's press conference, a part time staff member has been confirmed as a case. She worked at The Prince Charles Hospital for one day while unknowingly infectious. When she noticed symptoms, she promptly got tested. The staff member, who had been vaccinated with first dose, is now in isolation.

Our Public Health Unit and the hospital team are working quickly to identify all close contacts and to support all those have been in contact with the staff member. We have identified the close contacts from a very specific area of the main medical imaging department, and there is surrounding areas on the ground floor (in the medical imaging department and walkway from the front entrance of the hospital) that are determined to be low risk venue/site. The instructions for **low-risk venues** are for you to get tested, but you do not need to isolate unless you have symptoms of COVID-19.

You would appreciate that quarantine of the close contacts will have an operational impact on the medical imaging department and there will be plans put in place to ensure that hospital operations can continue to be delivered safely and effectively. We will continue to keep you informed in relation to this response.

This is a timely reminder for any unvaccinated staff to please get vaccinated, as well as ensuring physical distancing, hand hygiene, correct mask-wearing and staying home if you are unwell.

Get tested if you have symptoms of COVID-19 no matter how mild, and isolate until you have a negative result.

Work from home arrangements

On Monday, 5 July the Metro North Health Chief Executive has recommended that **all non-essential staff** from the RBWH or The Prince Charles Hospital (this does not include the Chermide Community Health Centre on the TPCH campus) should consider working from home if this is appropriate and staff are set up to do so. This decision is to allow us to concentrate on essential health service work over the coming days while we work to manage the outbreak.

Notwithstanding, all **non-essential staff** would need to be prepared to come into the workplace and be re-allocated to other duties if required to support the operational work areas who are under great pressure at the moment.

Obviously, not all staff will be able to work from home, however if any **non-essential staff** are able to work from home they should seek approval from their immediate supervisor. This arrangement will be in place until close of business, Wednesday, 7 July.

Screening of patients and visitors

While visitor restrictions remain in place, as a priority, I would like to highlight that in our Tier 1 response, all staff and patients who are entering any of our hospitals or community facilities should be actively asked and screened for flu like symptoms before they enter.

Additional update

Each and every day we are seeing more people coming forward to get vaccinated through Metro North and private sector clinics, and we are watching the number of people vaccinated across our community increase. Just over 30% of the general population in our catchment have received at least one vaccine. This is encouraging, but we are not done yet!!!!

I am greatly encouraged to see the great work of staff across our hospitals, hotel quarantine, public health, fit testing, vaccination and assessment clinics, airport testing and behind the scenes. Together we are taking positive and significant steps to reduce the risk to our community and our loved ones.

I am in awe of you, the strong, compassionate, dedicated and unwavering staff across Metro North Health and Queensland Health.

Thank you.

Kind regards,

Dr Liz Rushbrook
Metro North Incident Controller

Metro North Health – 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	Yesterday	TOTAL^
	ICU-NOT Ventilated	ICU-Ventilated								
MN	18	1	0	0	4	620	5	1288	199182	
TOTAL										
Vaccinations delivered by Metro North Health										
2/7/21	3526			Total delivered	145,580					

*As at 03/07/2021 at 1000

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

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