



12 January 2021

Dear colleagues,

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- **Planned care reduction**
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Today there are 22069 reported cases of COVID-19 in Queensland.

Staff redeployment

Our virtual ward is caring for the bulk of COVID positive patients in our care, allowing our hospitals to treat the sickest patients. Staff who are currently in isolation who are well enough can be deployed to work in the virtual ward. Nursing, allied health and administration staff are needed. If you have staff who can be deployed to the virtual ward, please let your local EOC know.

Staff who would like to be considered for redeployment to support the COVID response can complete the [expression of interest online](#).

From the Chief Medical Officer: Medical Support to the COVID response is critical. Where it is possible, non-COVID clinical services are being reduced to minimum safe levels to enable our required surge COVID response. Our support is required to step forward and provide clinical services where it is most needed - this includes supporting RMO and registrar rosters when there are shortages, and secondment into priority COVID response services including virtual COVID care at home, emergency departments, COVID hot clinics, COVID wards and ICU. Please lean forward to contribute where your skills can be best used.

Planned care reduction

We are continuing to reduce non-urgent planned care across the health service. This is critical to release staff to be deployed to support emergency and core activity. We will review our approach to planned care at the end of January.

Rapid antigen tests for staff

Staff who are close contacts who require a rapid antigen test may be able to collect one from our staff collection sites at Brighton Health Campus wellness centre or outside Pulse Café at RBWH.

While RATs are in short supply, kits need to be prioritised for staff members who need one to work. Please do not ask for a 'just in case' kit as our priority must be for protecting our workforce.

Staff who are identified as close contacts of a COVID-19 positive person may be able to access a test from our staff only collection sites:

- Brighton Health Campus wellness centre, Monday to Friday 9am – 2pm
- Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital outside Pulse Café, Monday to Friday 9am-4.15pm

If you meet the close contact criteria, you will need to show your ID and complete registration. Please remember to be polite to your colleagues working at these collection points.

Positive RAT results should be reported via the [Queensland Health RAT portal](#).

Our fever clinics also may have some RATs available for members of the community who are close contacts or symptomatic who are unable to get a PCR test.

Metro North staff only COVID testing centres:

- RBWH Education Centre, Monday to Friday, 9am to 4.15pm
- TPCH located in Outpatients B (former Children's Outpatients Department), Monday to Friday, 7am to 2pm
- Caboolture Hospital staff carpark, Monday to Sunday, 7.30am to 5pm

Returning to work

A reminder that asymptomatic staff who are close contacts are able to return to work if they can move out of the household, if they have a negative rapid antigen test 48 hours after separating from the residence. This does not apply to staff who are able to separate from the rest of their household within the same residence.

The risk management plan for each staff member includes the following:

- Separate from the diagnosed case and COVID-19 RAT test negative on day 2 after separation, prior to commencing work
- Must be asymptomatic - this is checked by the Work Unit or Hospital Manager prior to the staff member commencing work each day
- Daily Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) prior to the commencement of each work shift from day of return to work until 7 days since the date the diagnosed case.
- For 14 days post exposure:
 - wear a P2/N95 respirator in clinical areas in accordance with the PPE escalation level; and
 - wear surgical mask in non-clinical areas (e.g. staff only spaces) and travel to and from work.
 - Do not enter shared spaces such as tearooms and do not participate in any staff gatherings in the workplace where masks are likely to be removed.
 - Carefully monitor for symptoms.

The HR hotline is available every day from 8am-5pm on 07 3646 5500 and can provide specific clinical advice about returning to work for those who have questions.

A reminder that staff who are asymptomatic positive cases OR close contacts, and who return a negative RAT result on day 6, **should return to work on day 8**. You will be required to follow additional PPE and testing rules as outlined previously.

Don't forget to tell your line manager if you become unwell or need to isolate as a close contact, as soon as possible, so we can manage our workforce at this busy time.

Current [employee leave entitlements](#) due to COVID-19 response are available on the extranet.

Close contact definition

You are a close contact if you are a **household member** or a **household-like contact** of a diagnosed person:

- A **household member** is a person who ordinarily resides at the same premises or place of accommodation as the diagnosed person, and who are residing at the premises or place of accommodation at the time the diagnosed person receives their positive COVID-19 test result. You do not have to be related to the diagnosed person to be considered a household member.
- A **household-like contact** is a person who has spent more than four hours with the diagnosed person in a house or other place of accommodation, care facility or similar.

Note: a person is not a household-like contact if they are in a separate part of the house, accommodation or care facility that has a separate point of entry and no shared common areas, and if they do not have contact or interaction for more than four hours.

Vaccination boosters

Anyone who had their second dose of COVID vaccine at least four months ago is eligible for your booster. These are available at all of our adult vaccination clinics, as well as some GPs and pharmacies.

If you have had a COVID infection, you can get your booster once your symptoms resolve. You can wait up to six months but there is no benefit in waiting.

While boosters aren't mandatory, the evidence shows that boosters are important to reducing the length and severity of disease. Although Omicron is the dominant strain circulating in the community, we are still seeing people with the more severe Delta strain.

If you haven't yet had a booster, I strongly encourage you to get it as soon as you are eligible.

Masks

A reminder that the [community mask direction](#) is still in place, which includes wearing masks at work indoors. Staff working in non-clinical areas must still wear a mask at work.

All staff should be familiar with the high risk [PPE requirements](#) for your work area, noting that any public health directions must also be followed.

All staff who work in or visit clinical areas, including non-clinical staff, must have a properly fitted face mask. If you don't have at least one mask that has been fit tested, please present to your location [fit testing location](#) for additional mask fitting.

Thank you for your work and please take care of yourselves.

Kind regards,

Louise O'Riordan
Metro North Health Incident Controller

- [Upload evidence of your vaccine](#)
- [Qld Health contact tracing list](#)
- [Register for your vaccine](#)
- [Qld Health general COVID-19 page](#)
- [Metro North COVID-19 extranet](#)
- [COVID vidcast recordings on QHEPS](#)

Metro North Health – overview of cases*

HHS	Patients managed by HHS				Fever clinics		
	Total in-patients			Virtual ward/ HITH/ similar	Deaths**	No. of clinics	Presentations
	98	ICU patients					Yesterday
MN total		0	3	560	4	7	1926
Norfolk Island total ****	Total in-patients			HITH /Home monitored	Total cases including recovered	Deaths	Close Contacts in quarantine
	0	ICU Not ventilated	ICU ventilated				
		0	0	40	47	0	90

As at 12/01/2022

**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.

**** As part of an Intergovernmental Agreement, from 1 January 2022 Metro North Health is providing a number of health support services to Norfolk Island. This includes advice and support to staff on island in terms of managing COVID patients. The numbers in this section of the table refer to COVID patients who remain on Norfolk Island and are receiving direct care by staff on Norfolk Island.