



Enquiries to: Office of the Chief Health Officer
Queensland Health
File Ref: C-ECTF-22/17202

Queensland Health

Dear Primary Care Providers

As you may be aware, on 31 October 2022 at 11:59pm, the declared public health emergency for COVID-19 for the State of Queensland expires. This marks a transition point for the COVID-19 response, which has been almost three years in the making. The dedication, effort, and resilience demonstrated across the primary care sector throughout the pandemic has been extraordinary. While COVID-19 will continue to be with us for some time, it is important that it is managed in the same way as any notifiable condition. Clinicians are experienced in applying infection prevention and control procedures and transitioning COVID-19 within these existing mechanisms is critical to support the move away from the emergency.

To support the end of the emergency, the below outlines Queensland Health's approach to the transitional arrangements for the ongoing management of COVID-19 in the community and by industry, including primary care.

Community messaging

Queensland Health has developed a COVID-19 Community Traffic Light, which provides advice for the community on measures they should consider following when the community risk of COVID-19 is at green (baseline), amber (tier 1), or red (tier 2). The measures reflect Queensland's adoption of the National Community Protection Framework, developed by the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee.

Queensland Health will set the current level based on consideration of a broad range of epidemiological and other COVID-19 risk factors.

The initial level of the COVID-19 Community Traffic Light will be green (baseline).

Advice on the up-to-date status of the level is available at: <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/covid-19/traffic-lights>. It will also be published across Queensland Health's social media.

Infection prevention and control manual

Queensland Health has developed a COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control Manual for acute and non-acute healthcare settings (Manual). The Manual outlines recommended minimum requirements for managing patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 and other acute respiratory illnesses in healthcare settings.

Appendix 6 of the Manual provides a framework for deciding whether to escalate or de-escalate the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) in community healthcare, corrections, and hospitals. This resource may be used by primary care to decide on appropriate PPE levels. It is likely that PPE levels will align with the corresponding COVID-19 Community Traffic Light level. For example, at green (baseline) in the community, primary care may wish to adopt a low-level approach to PPE use (e.g. standard and transmission-based precautions). Primary care can adopt higher levels of PPE where this is appropriate for their individual circumstances.

The Manual is available at: <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/clinical-practice/guidelines-procedures/novel-coronavirus-qld-clinicians/personal-protective-equipment-ppe>.

Revocation of face mask requirements

All public health directions currently in force will be revoked from 6:00pm on 31 October 2022, including the *Public Health Face Mask Requirement Direction (No. 6)*. The formal revocation of this Direction enables primary care to make their own decisions about infection prevention and control measures.

At green, the COVID-19 Community Traffic Light recommends that the community wears a mask if required by the venue, healthcare provider, or household. This messaging is reiterated on Queensland Health's website as it is our expectation that the community will respect the reasonable request of the venue, healthcare provider, or household when implementing their own COVID-19 measures.

Legislative changes

On 26 October 2022, the Public Health and Other Legislation (COVID-19 Management) Bill was passed. This Bill amends the *Public Health Act 2005* to give the Chief Health Officer limited powers to make public health directions about isolation and quarantine for up to 7 days; mask wearing; and employee vaccination. These powers will be in place from 1 November 2022 to 31 October 2023.

The Chief Health Officer expects that these powers will be rarely, if ever, used as the above frameworks (traffic lights and Manual) should support the community and health system manage the risks of COVID-19. These ongoing powers are an important protective measure if the COVID-19 situation significantly worsens in Queensland or nationally.

I trust the above information is of assistance as we continue to manage COVID-19. Please be assured that Queensland Health will continue to support sectors with up-to-date information on the management of COVID-19 as and when appropriate.

Yours sincerely



Dr John Gerrard
Queensland Chief Health Officer
31 October 2022