

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

Pandemic Declaration Accountability
and Oversight Committee



Restrictions on hospital visitation under Pandemic Orders

Questionnaire

Purpose of questionnaire

The Pandemic Declaration Accountability and Oversight Committee, as part of its functions issued under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*, is conducting a review of the Pandemic (Visitors to Hospitals and Care Facilities) Orders (Nos. 1 to 5) and the Pandemic (Public Safety) Order.

The Committee has issued this questionnaire to all Victorian hospitals to understand how the Orders has been implemented and to identify any issues hospitals have experienced related to the Orders.

The Committee notes that as of 11.59 pm 22 April 2022, restrictions on hospital visitation (except for the requirement to wear masks) were revoked. However, the Committee still wishes to understand the experience your organisation has had with the Orders, including the implementation of previous orders. In particular, challenges faced in enforcing the Orders and managing exemption requests.

Please note, this information may be used and published by the Committee as part its reporting.

Response

Please provide a response to the questionnaire by **9 May 2022**.

The completed questionnaire should be sent to: pdaoc@parliament.vic.gov.au.

Questions

1. Has your organisation implemented visitor restrictions that are in excess of the restrictions detailed in the orders? If so, when did this occur and in what circumstances?

The Visitor limitations are as follows and were reiterated on 22/4/2022 to all West Wimmera Health Service campuses.

All sites except the Nhill Hospital are co-located with Residential Aged Care Facilities.

Due to the limited staff pool and the high average age of admitted patients these measures have been deemed proportionate by the Service.

- *You must not visit a WWHS Hospital or Aged Care Facility if you have any respiratory / COVID-19 symptoms, if you are a close contact or have a positive test for COVID-19*
 - *Masks must be worn at all times in both WWHS Hospitals and Aged Care Facilities. A new surgical mask will be provided.*
 - *All Visitors must still check-in when arriving at WWHS Hospitals and Aged Care Facilities, your temperature will be taken and your COVID-19 vaccination status requested.*
 - *If you are not vaccinated you will be required to undergo a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) and it must be negative. You must wear an N95 mask at all times - which will be provided.*
 - *If you are visiting a Residential Aged Care Facility all visitors will undergo a RAT or must show proof or a negative RAT taken on that day.*
 - *5 (five) visitors per day are permitted with a maximum of 2 (two) at any one time.*
 - *If a facility is in lockdown due to a COVID-19 outbreak you will not be permitted to enter.*
 - *Please call ahead of time to the facility to book a visit.*
2. Has your organisation received any complaints about visitor restrictions? If so, what were the outcomes of these?

A total of six complaints were received by the Service between May 2020 and April 2022.

Each complaint was investigated and the restrictions at the time double-checked to ensure that they were in alignment with the Directions.

In general the follow up and explanation with the complainant resulted in a resolution of the concern raised.

3. Have there been instances where your organisation has misinterpreted the restrictions under the orders (e.g., when orders have changed or through confusing language in the content of the orders)?

No specific instances known.

4. How many applications for visiting exemptions has your organisation received and how many been approved?

None received to date.

5. What staff member of your organisation has assessed applications for exemptions?

This is the responsibility of the site Director of Nursing and in their absence the on-call Executive Director.

6. What steps were taken to inform all visitors and their relatives of visiting rules and capacity to apply for an exemption?

- *Social media*
- *Print media*
- *Posters placed at front entrances of facilities*
- *Face to face advice*
- *SMS messaging*

7. What steps were taken to advise staff of the availability of the exemption process when dealing with the public and visitors to patients?

All staff communication was sent out via electronic mail and via staff meetings.

8. What was your overall impression of the system, and could it have been improved?

The overall impression is that the system has worked reasonably effectively and a reasonable balance was struck between maximizing the safety of our care recipients with their quality of life in relation to the negative effect that the visiting restrictions had on them.