

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? **Bendigo Health visitor restrictions were in alignment with each of the versions of Visitor Guidance for Hospitals**
2. Has your organisation received any complaints about visitor restrictions? If so, what were the outcomes of these? **Bendigo Health received multiple complaints about visitor restrictions. This issue has been by far the most challenging for staff, patients and relatives. This led to much disgruntlement and frustration for all. Each complain was dealt with via our usual processes. Where issues requiring decisions to be made to allow visitors for the permitted exceptions were escalated to Chief Nurse or CMO, we managed to ensure access for visitation was granted.**
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)? **The advice was often open to various interpretation and very confusing for staff, patients and relatives in all instances the advice was confusing for relatives and staff alike. Despite publishing advice on the intranet for staff and hospital website for visitors, there were always multiple queries**
4. How many applications for visiting exemptions has your organisation received and how many been approved? **We don't keep actual numbers however I would estimate approximately one to two per week. Reasons vary variable**
5. What staff member of your organisation has assessed applications for exemptions? **Chief Nurse and Chief Medical officer or executive on call**
6. What steps were taken to inform all visitors and their relatives of visiting rules and capacity to apply for an exemption? **Advice was published on the hospital website and information provided at ward level indicating restrictions**
7. What steps were taken to advise staff of the availability of the exemption process when dealing with the public and visitors to patients? **Staff emails, advice on hospital intranet, CEO communications, social media**
8. What was your overall impression of the system, and could it have been improved? **Given Pandemic we all understand why these restrictions needed to be in place. Most of the time most people were understanding of this. We kept reminding staff these were unprecedented times and we need to maintain staff and patient safety. There was a balance to be understood between safety from pandemic and quality and safety care not having access to visitation could have been interpreted as worse than having Covid 19 by some. So in terms of overall impressions, not sure how it could be better other than clearer interpretation and less room for interpretation**