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C-ECTF-24/872

Queensland Health

Dr Maria Boulton
President
AMA Queensland

Dr Brett Dale
Chief Executive Officer
AMA Queensland

Email: [REDACTED]

Dear Dr Boulton and Dr Dale

Thank you for your letter dated 14 November 2023, bringing to my attention the concerns raised by doctors regarding rising COVID-19 cases and the adequacy of COVID-19 infection control measures within Queensland Health hospitals.

As you may be aware, on 20 October 2023, Australia's Chief Medical Officer declared COVID-19 is no longer a Communicable Disease Incident of National Significance (CDINS). This declaration is supported by the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC).

COVID-19 requires continued monitoring, along with other respiratory pathogens of public health significance, such as influenza.

It is expected that there will be continuing waves of infection. Response activities must be balanced and proportionate. Hospital Infection Control Departments are well placed to manage the response at a local level.

Queensland Health Hospitals have comprehensive clinical guidelines regarding COVID-19 and other respiratory infections. These guidelines provide expert advice on infection prevention and control, as well as recommendations for staff who may have been exposed to or diagnosed with COVID-19. The hospitals are well equipped to handle such situations and provide their employees with the required personal protective equipment as necessary.

The goal of COVID-19 vaccination remains the prevention of severe illness from COVID-19. As you may be aware, the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) recommend individuals aged 65 years and above should receive a booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine and individuals aged 75 years and above should receive an additional vaccine dose if six months have passed since their last dose in 2023.

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Based on data extracted on 15 January 2024:

311 people are currently in hospital with COVID-19

- 75 per cent of people in hospital with COVID-19 are aged 65+ years

5,997 people aged 65+ years have been diagnosed with COVID-19 since 1 December 2023

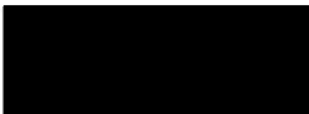
- 34 per cent have been hospitalised
 - most (59 per cent) of these hospitalised people had not had a booster dose within the previous 12 months
 - median time since last dose or infection for those 65+ years hospitalised with COVID-19 since 1 December 2023 is 15 months
 - 3 out of every 4 hospitalised cases since 1 December 2023 have been more than 8 months since their last dose.

Queensland Health will continue to advise the public and private health sector about any increased risk to public health from communicable diseases including COVID-19. The publication of protocols and guidelines for the management of acute respiratory infection, including COVID-19, in healthcare settings will continue to be available.

Please be assured that Queensland Health will continue to support all our stakeholders with up-to-date information on the management of respiratory pathogens, including COVID-19.

Thank you for your ongoing efforts to support the clinicians represented by the AMAQ and the people of Queensland.

Yours sincerely



Dr John Gerrard
Queensland Chief Health Officer
18 January 2024