

**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](mailto:pdaoc@parliament.vic.gov.au).

# Restrictions on hospital visitation under Pandemic Orders - Questionnaire

Questions	Responses from Jessie McPherson Private Hospital
<p>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?</p>	<p>Jessie McPherson Private Hospital is located at the Monash Medical Centre campus - Monash Health, and adopts all Monash Health COVID guidelines.</p> <p>In partnership with Monash Health (the organisation) the decision to maintain strict visiting restrictions post the change in April 2022 was enforced, due to geographic location and increase in COVID cases presentation to Monash Health Campuses.</p> <p><u>Process:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Front entrance staff ask screening questions for any visitors to the campus.</li> <li>• All visitors to the site are required to check in using the Victorian Government QR Code Service.</li> <li>• Verbal visitor screening is in addition to visitor restrictions that are in place.</li> <li>• Guidance for staff and visitors is reinforced that if they feel unwell or display any COVID-19 symptoms, staff and visitors should not attend work /the site, get tested, and isolate until a negative result is returned.</li> </ul>
<p>2. Has your organisation received any complaints about visitor restrictions? If so, what were the outcomes of these?</p>	<p>Jessie McPherson Private Hospital has received formal complaints, both verbally and in writing, requiring telephone and /or written responses.</p> <p>Many complaints are escalated to the Jessie McPherson Nursing Coordinators on duty to support de-escalation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each request was reviewed on an individual basis – with a view to balancing risk with compassionate care</li> <li>• Often visitors were allowed to “seek exemptions to the restrictions” based on the “emotional impact” at the visitors / patient request, expressing how they were feeling in relation to not seeing their family/friends in hospital.</li> <li>• Staff were able to clearly explain the process and reasoning for restrictions and family members were mostly accepting of the fact.</li> </ul>

Questions	Responses from Jessie McPherson Private Hospital
<p>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)?</p>	<p>Yes, due to the rules changing frequently; ward staff at times unable to keep up with changes; especially late in the week (ie on Fridays).</p> <p>In addition, the rules were open to interpretation; so there were often misunderstandings from one day to the next.</p>
<p>4. How many applications for visiting exemptions has your organisation received and how many been approved?</p>	<p>An example on file for the first three month period in early 2022:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From January 2022 to 31 March 2022 approximately 60 exemptions for visitation or carer's certificates processed.</li> <li>• As the restrictions eased slightly, more visitors may have entered without a formal process.</li> </ul>
<p>5. What staff member of your organisation has assessed applications for exemptions?</p>	<p>During the strictest of restrictions, the visiting exemptions required the Jessie McPherson Private Hospital Director Clinical Services' endorsement during hours; and a decision of the Nursing Coordinator afterhours. As the restrictions changed (more flexibility) and lessened, this has now become a role of the Nurse Unit Manager / Associate Nursing Unit Managers of the wards in partnership with the Hospital Nursing Coordinator.</p>
<p>6. What steps were taken to inform all visitors and their relatives of visiting rules and capacity to apply for an exemption?</p>	<p><u>Communications:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Visitor Restrictions placed on Jessie McPherson Private Hospital Website page <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Jessie McPherson Private Hospital Website page updated with revised Visitor Restrictions as/when necessary</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Jessie McPherson Private Hospital Visitor Restrictions Posters/Flyers placed within wards and in Hospital Reception areas. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Updated with revised Visitor Restrictions as necessary</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>The current restrictions are discussed with family members when they call to enquire. The front entry screening staff and Reception staff were also heavily involved in educating people about the changes.</p>
<p>7. What steps were taken to advise staff of the availability of the exemption process when dealing with the public and visitors to patients?</p>	<p>Hospital Staff informed via email communication from Jessie McPherson Private Hospital CEO communications re Visiting Restrictions updates and changes.</p> <p>The Nursing Coordinators, Preadmission nurses and staff were verbally handed-over the processes for the exemptions. The message of the endorsement process was reinforced. Staff were informed that any requests were to be discussed and approved - during hours by the Director Clinical Services and a decision of the Nursing Coordinator afterhours.</p>

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Responses from Jessie McPherson Private Hospital</b>
<p>8. What was your overall impression of the system, and could it have been improved?</p>	<p>During “Lockdown” the messaging was clear; however, once the State commenced “reopening”, the message become blurred.</p> <p>Various Health Services’ interpretation of the “rules” were different and caused undue stress, and as a result hospitals were compared against each other for their response to the same orders.</p> <p>Therefore improvements could have been made by stating more clearly the exemption purposes as the criteria to eliminate the ambiguity to ensure consistency.</p> <p>More media coverage as to the purposes of the restrictions, not just stating it's because of COVID; more aligned and focusing on aiming to protect your family and those around them who are very vulnerable while they are sick in hospital.</p>