

RESPONSE TO PETITION

Petition No. 12 of 2022 House of Assembly

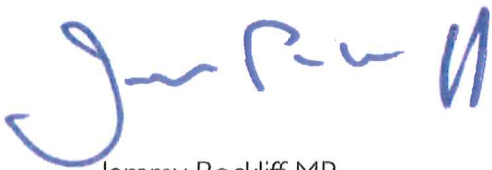
The petitioners ask the House to:

1. Reinstate masking requirements in all medical settings.
2. Reinstate masking requirements in services and facilities for vulnerable people, including, aged care homes; disability support services and childcare centres.
3. Create a Vaccines Plus education campaign, to demonstrate that COVID is airborne and the benefits of masking and clean air to reduce transmission.

GOVERNMENT POSITION:

- COVID-19 response arrangements have changed incrementally to maintain a response that is proportionate to the risk of COVID-19 in the community.
- Public Health continues to provide expert advice on the risk of COVID-19 in the community and recommends measures that individuals and businesses can undertake to keep themselves safe, proportionate to the level of risk.
- While there are no longer any legal requirements under the Tasmanian *Public Health Act 1997* for individuals to wear masks, Public Health continues to recommend that people wear masks in indoor public spaces where adequate physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Some workplaces and high-risk settings may still require workers and visitors to wear masks to support the safety of co-workers, staff, patrons and visitors. These requirements will be determined by the individual setting based on workplace risk assessments.
- Most health care facilities, residential aged care facilities and organisations providing care to vulnerable people or people with a disability have policies requiring staff and visitors to wear masks.
- Our health services have established a COVID-19 Escalation Management Plan for each region, as our key framework for guiding COVID-19 management in our major hospitals and related facilities.
- The Escalation Management Plans describe trigger points and actions for Level One through to Level Four and guide the operational response to ensure demand can continue to be met in our hospitals.

- Our hospital leadership teams constantly review the impact of COVID on service delivery and relevant actions to respond.
- Along with other actions, escalation increases correspond with increases in mask wearing requirements for staff and visitors.
- The Department of Health continues to provide public information in the weekly COVID-19 Surveillance Report available at www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au/facts/tasmanian-statistics/weekly-report. This report provides indicators of trends in COVID-19 transmission in Tasmania, in contrast to daily reporting, which typically sees daily fluctuations that may or may not be indicative of trends. The frequency of reporting provides a 7-day summary to monitor and compare the epidemiological trends in infectious disease over time, commensurate with the approach undertaken with other communicable diseases reported to the National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System (NNDSS).
- In addition to the Weekly Surveillance Report, the Department of Health continues to publish an assessment of the COVID-19 risk level in Tasmania at www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au/keeping-yourself-safe/managing-COVID-risk. This page provides a risk rating, along with recommendations on behaviors that organisations and individuals can take to manage the risk to themselves and the community. The page also provides tailored recommendations for individuals who may be more vulnerable to severe illness if they test positive to COVID-19, including advice on where vulnerable members of the community can access testing and other support measures including COVID@homeplus, reinforcing public health advice about remaining up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations, staying home if unwell with COVID-19 or flu like symptoms, and continuing to practice COVID-safe behaviours.
- Staying up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations and booster doses is a key component to reducing severe outcomes from a COVID-19 infection. The Department of Health continues to reinforce the value of COVID-19 vaccination.



Jeremy Rockliff MP
Premier
Minister for Health

Date: 21-11-22