

NSW Government's management of the COVID-19 pandemic

Hearing – 30/09/2021

Supplementary questions

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QUESTION 1

With the state to begin reopening from 11 October, both workers and employers in regional areas have raised concerns that as a result of limited vaccine supply younger workers are not fully vaccinated, leaving workers facing the prospect of reduced hours or being sacked. Did NSW Health factor in the limited vaccine supply to the regions in formulating the reopening roadmap?

ANSWER

Regional workers have been granted an extended timeframe to get vaccinated against COVID-19. Staff outside of Greater Sydney who have received one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine are permitted to enter certain premises for work until 1 November 2021 when they need to be fully vaccinated or have a medical exemption.

Vaccination requirements and guidelines for workers in regional areas are available at <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/vaccination/requirements-for-workers>.

QUESTION 2

Many vulnerable communities in regional areas such as those living in boarding houses, facing homelessness, living with a disability or local indigenous communities have been left behind as part of the vaccine rollout. What steps is NSW Health taking to lift the vaccination rates among these communities in regional areas like the Hunter?

ANSWER

NSW Health is working with the Australian Government to provide fair and equitable supply and access to all COVID-19 vaccines in regional and rural areas. There are many clinic locations that can be accessed by vulnerable populations including NSW Health and GP vaccination clinics, pharmacies and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services. Information on vaccination locations across NSW is available at <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/vaccination/get-vaccinated>.

NSW Health is working with organisations, including the NSW Department of Communities and Justice, Aboriginal Affairs and Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council, to ensure those who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of experiencing homeless, people living with a disability and Aboriginal communities have increased access to COVID-19 vaccines via mobile outreach vaccination tailored to these vulnerable populations.

Treating covid patients at home

QUESTION 3

To date, how many people have died at home with covid-19?

- a. How many of those who have died at home would you have expected to survive had they received in-hospital treatment?
- b. What proportion of those who died at home did not ring an ambulance?
- c. Of those that did ring an ambulance what was the response time?

ANSWER

NSW Health data indicates that as at 8pm 1 November 2021 there have been 520 deaths associated with COVID-19 during the period of the current outbreak (from 16 June 2021). Of these, 41 people died at home; these deaths have been referred to the State Coroner.

Death at home does not include deaths in an aged care or other facility.

The Agency for Clinical Innovation Guideline *Caring for adults with COVID-19 in the community* sets out the escalation points for patients to be referred for in-hospital care. Currently, patients who meet these criteria, or are at high risk of deterioration based on clinical assessment, are pre-emptively admitted to hospital for closer observations.

To date, no patients have been denied access to higher levels of care or admission to hospital.

Of those people who died in their homes with COVID-19, NSW Ambulance data indicates 26 called an ambulance.

NSW Health does not routinely collect data about people who do not call for an Ambulance.

Of the 26 cases that called an Ambulance:

- 17 cases were responded to in less than 15 minutes.
- Five cases were responded to in between 15 and 30 minutes.
- Four cases had response times exceeding 30 minutes:
 - 15 September 2021 in Darlinghurst, total response time of 34 minutes and 51 seconds.
 - 7 September 2021 in Green Valley, total response time of 36 minutes and 20 seconds.
 - 21 August 2021 in Marayong, total response time of one hour and 11 minutes.
 - 26 August 2021 in Willmot, total response time of one hour and 36 minutes.

QUESTION 4

To date, how many covid patients that would have otherwise been admitted to hospital were treated at home as a result of capacity limits?

ANSWER

The Agency for Clinical Innovation Guideline *Caring for adults with COVID-19 in the community* sets out the escalation points for patients to be referred for in-hospital care. Currently, patients who meet these criteria, or are at high risk of deterioration based on clinical assessment, are pre-emptively admitted to hospital for closer observations.

As at 1 November 2021, no patients have been denied access to higher levels of care or admission to hospital.

QUESTION 5

Are current ambulance response times and staffing adequate to provide acute hospital equivalent care to people whose condition rapidly deteriorates at home in the Hospital in the Home program?

ANSWER

Ambulance response times are reported in the Bureau of Health Information *Healthcare Quarterly*.

The April to June 2021 period reported a median response time for priority 1A cases such as cardiac arrest and not breathing, as 8.3 minutes. NSW Health sets a response time target of 10 minutes for this category.

In responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, significant work has been undertaken to ensure the wellbeing of communities served and the paramedic workforce.

NSW Ambulance has received additional funding to enhance resources and operational capacity. NSW Ambulance continues to review its workforce surge planning to ensure the maintenance of service. Since the Delta strain was identified in the state, NSW Ambulance has fast tracked more than 160 new paramedics to help meet demand. NSW Ambulance on-boarded a further 130 paramedics on 25 September 2021, to support the metropolitan workforce in responding to the pandemic.

NSW Ambulance is working closely with all partners in the health system to provide a coordinated response to the pandemic and to manage the increased demand. More recently, this has included participation in the development of a Health System Flow Centre to enhance coordination of health services across the state, including ambulance, emergency department and intensive care unit capacity.

Hospital Capacity

QUESTION 6

Have you modelled the capacity for regional hospitals to cope with covid outbreaks when regional travel from Sydney is allowed at 80%?

ANSWER

The NSW Ministry of Health conducted COVID-19 scenario testing in 2021 with every Local Health District and Specialty Health Network, including those in regional NSW in line with NSW pandemic escalation plans.

QUESTION 7

Is there a triage plan in place for when hospitals reach capacity and cannot take any further patients?

- a. How will the critically ill patients who receive hospital care be decided?
- b. Will hospital care for critically ill patients be determined by age?

ANSWER

The NSW Ministry of Health conducted COVID-19 scenario testing in 2020 with every Local Health District and Specialty Health Network in line with NSW pandemic escalation plans.

NSW Health intensive capacity planning information is available at

https://www.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-09/Intensive_Care_Capacity.pdf

Mental health wards

QUESTION 8

How many mental health wards and rehabilitation wards have been closed in order to be converted into temporary covid wards?

- a. How many mental health patients have been transferred due to these conversions?
- b. How many mental health patients have had to be discharged due to these conversions?

ANSWER

While some mental health units have made temporary changes to safely support COVID-19 positive patients and maintain infection control safeguards, none of these changes have been permanent. The rapidly changing situation with the health system has required a flexible approach.

- a. NSW Health does not record the number of patients transferred within hospital settings for this purpose
- b. Patients are only discharged as part of a treatment plan, when clinically indicated and with appropriate follow up

Changes to the roadmap

QUESTION 9

Have you modelled the impact on transmission of;

- a. doubling indoor gatherings to 10 people at 70% double vaccination coverage?
- b. Increasing the outdoor gatherings limit to 30 people at 70% double vaccination coverage?
- c. Doubling caps on outdoor weddings and funerals to 100 at 70% double vaccination coverage?
- d. removing office mask mandates at 80% double vaccination coverage?
- e. Increasing the cap from 500 to 3,000 persons at controlled and ticketed outdoor events at 80% double vaccination coverage?
- f. doubling indoor gatherings to 20 people at 70% double vaccination coverage?
- g. Increasing the outdoor gatherings limit to 50 people at 70% double vaccination coverage?
- h. Children returning to school on 25 October, a week earlier than planned?
- i. Removing all indoor mask mandates?

ANSWER

The NSW roadmap for easing COVID-19 restrictions is informed by the Doherty Institute Modelling Report and the four-step National Plan to transition Australia's National COVID-19 Response, agreed by National Cabinet in July 2021. This information is publicly available at:

https://www.doherty.edu.au/uploads/content_doc/DohertyModelling_NationalPlan_and_Addendum_20210810.pdf

and

<https://www.pm.gov.au/sites/default/files/media/national-plan-to-transition-australias-national-covid-19-response-30-july-2021.pdf>

NSW will continue to monitor the situation as restrictions ease and will update its advice as required.

QUESTION 10

Can you provide that modelling?

ANSWER

Please refer to the answer to Question 9.

QUESTION 11

What public health advice supports not wearing masks indoors from 1 December?

ANSWER

From 1 December, people may still choose to wear masks for additional protection in certain settings or based on their individual medical circumstances. Wearing masks indoors provides an additional layer of protection.

NSW will continue to monitor the situation as restrictions ease and will update its advice as required.

Long COVID

QUESTION 12

Of those who have caught covid to date, what number are suffering symptoms of long covid?

ANSWER

While there have been numerous case reports and case series of people experiencing prolonged symptoms following a COVID-19 diagnosis, the expected time to full recovery following COVID-19 infection remains uncertain for some people. There is currently no consensus on a definition for the diagnosis of long COVID to be able to provide definitive case numbers.

In a sample of close to 3,000 laboratory confirmed COVID-19 cases in NSW, about 80 per cent of people recovered within 20 days of infection. At three months from disease onset, eight per cent had not yet fully recovered. These prolonged symptoms can range from very mild to those significantly impacting health and wellbeing.

QUESTION 13

Of those who have caught covid but are vaccinated, what number are suffering symptoms of long covid?

ANSWER

Please refer to the answer to Question 12.

QUESTION 14

Have you modelled the long term impact of chronic disease as a result of covid on our health system?

ANSWER

NSW Health has not yet modelled the long-term impact of chronic disease as a result of COVID-19 on the NSW health system. The spectrum of recovery following COVID-19 infection remains uncertain. There is currently no consensus on a definition for the diagnosis of long COVID to be able to provide definitive case numbers.

In a sample of close to 3,000 laboratory confirmed COVID-19 cases in NSW, while about 80 per cent recover within 20 days of infection, at three months from disease onset, eight per cent had not. These prolonged symptoms can range from very mild to those significantly impacting health and wellbeing.

The findings from ongoing research studies demonstrate the seriousness of COVID-19 infection. The NSW Government's response to COVID-19 is based on local and international expert health advice. The response is scalable and flexible to the evolving situation. These studies will help to inform future projections of Australian health system needs.

QUESTION 15

Have you modelled the number of individuals expected to experience long term heart problems related to covid?

ANSWER

NSW Health has not yet modelled the number of individuals expected to experience long term heart problems related to COVID-19 infection.

In a sample of close to 3,000 laboratory confirmed COVID-19 cases in NSW, while about 80 per cent recover within 20 days of infection, at three months from disease onset, eight per cent had not. These prolonged symptoms can range from very mild to those significantly impacting health and wellbeing.

The support required by COVID patients depends on the spectrum of symptoms persisting, with some people able to be monitored by their general practitioner while others may require referral to specialist NSW Health services for additional input and management.

The findings from ongoing research studies demonstrate the seriousness of COVID-19 infection. These studies will help to inform future projections of Australian health system needs.

QUESTION 16

Have you modelled the number of individuals expected to experience long term lung problems related to covid?

ANSWER

NSW Health has not yet modelled the number of individuals expected to experience long term lung problems related to COVID-19 infection.

In a sample of close to 3,000 laboratory confirmed COVID-19 cases in NSW, while about 80 per cent recover within 20 days of infection, at three months from disease onset, eight per cent had not. These prolonged symptoms can range from very mild to those significantly impacting health and wellbeing.

The support required by COVID patients depends on the spectrum of symptoms persisting, with some people able to be monitored by their general practitioner while others may require referral to specialist NSW Health services for additional input and management.

The findings from ongoing research studies demonstrate the seriousness of COVID-19 infection. These studies will help to inform future projections of Australian health system needs.

Vulnerable groups

QUESTION 17

To date, what is the vaccination rate for those in supported housing?

ANSWER

The Australian Government publishes reports on the vaccination rates for people with a disability living in shared accommodation, available at:

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/covid-19-vaccination-daily-rollout-update>

QUESTION 18

To date, what is the vaccination rate for those with a disability?

ANSWER

The Australian Government publishes reports on the vaccination rates for people with a disability, available at:

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/covid-19-vaccination-daily-rollout-update>

QUESTION 19

To date, what is the vaccination rate for Aboriginal and First Nations peoples?

ANSWER

The Australian Government publishes weekly reports on the vaccination rates for Aboriginal people, available at:

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/covid-19-vaccination-geographic-vaccination-rates-sa4-indigenous-population>

QUESTION 20

What advice are you providing to cancer patients and other immunocompromised people as well as people living with disability to do from 1 December?

- a. To date, what is the rate of vaccination for this group?
- b. Has the vaccination rate of this group factored into the plan to open up?

ANSWER

NSW is providing a third dose of COVID-19 vaccine to people who are severely immunocompromised to maximise their immune response, in line with advice from ATAGI.

By 17 October 2021, 80 per cent of people aged 16 and over in NSW were fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Achieving high vaccination coverage in the community is a way to protect the most vulnerable members of the community, including those who cannot be vaccinated against COVID-19 because they are too young, have severe allergies, underlying health conditions, or are undergoing medical treatment.

QUESTION 21

What is the plan to protect patients in active treatment that impacts the immune system such as chemotherapy or bone marrow transplants? (i.e. Chemo, bone marrow transplants)

ANSWER

Please refer to the answer to Question 20.

QUESTION 22

What impact will the end of mask mandates for inside apartment complexes have on immunocompromised individuals?

ANSWER

By 1 December 2021, significantly more than 80 per cent of people aged 16 and over in NSW will be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Achieving high vaccination coverage in the community is a way to protect the most vulnerable members of the community, including those who cannot be vaccinated against COVID-19 because they are too young, have severe allergies, underlying health conditions, or are undergoing medical treatment. Immunocompromised people or people who are at risk of severe disease despite vaccination may still choose to wear masks as an additional protective measure in certain settings.

NSW will continue to monitor the situation as restrictions ease and will update its advice as required.

QUESTION 23

Is there any provision for immune compromised people to work from home, if there are covid cases in their locality?

ANSWER

Employees with immunocompromised conditions should discuss their working arrangements with their employer and primary care provider. Employers are required to take reasonable steps to keep

their premises safe and minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission under work health and safety obligations.

Schools

QUESTION 24

To date, how many CO2 monitors have been installed in classrooms?

ANSWER

This is a matter for the Department of Education.

QUESTION 25

What level of CO2 in a classroom is considered dangerous with respect to covid-19 transmission?

ANSWER

The US Centres for Disease Control recommends CO2 readings below 800 parts per million (ppm) as a benchmark for good ventilation.

QUESTION 26

What strategies are in place for when ventilation is inadequate?

ANSWER

This is a matter for the Department of Education.

QUESTION 27

Are there any plans to reduce class sizes?

ANSWER

This is a matter for the Department of Education.

QUESTION 28

To date, How many HEPA air filters have been;

- installed in classrooms?
- ordered for classrooms?
- Planned for classrooms?

ANSWER

This is a matter for the Department of Education.

QUESTION 29

Will NSW Health review the monitoring of schools CO2 levels to confirm whether existing ventilation needs to be improved?

ANSWER

NSW Health will collaborate with the Department of Education as required.

QUESTION 30

How will ventilation be achieved on days when bushfire smoke makes opening windows unsafe?

ANSWER

This is a matter for the Department of Education.

QUESTION 31

What plans are in place to protect children who are clinically vulnerable?

ANSWER

COVID-19 vaccinations are available to children aged 12 years and over. Achieving high vaccination coverage in the community is a way to protect the most vulnerable members of the community, including those who cannot be vaccinated against COVID-19 because they are too young, have severe allergies, underlying health conditions, or are undergoing medical treatment.

NSW Health provides advice to the NSW Department of Education on COVID-19 safety measures in schools.

Contact Tracing System**QUESTION 32**

The Doherty modelling was based on 'optimal' amounts of TTIQ but NSW health has decided to remove requirements for close contacts to isolate until tested. Why has this decision been made?

ANSWER

People identified as a close contact of a COVID-19 case must get tested and self-isolate. This information is publicly available in the NSW Health fact sheet for close contacts of COVID-19 at: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/advice-for-contacts.aspx>

QUESTION 33

How long will NSW Health continue to publish locations of close and casual contacts?

ANSWER

NSW Health is continuing to evolve and adapt contact tracing processes, including mechanisms to notify people who may have been exposed to COVID-19 in venues such as restaurants or gyms.

NSW will continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation and will update its advice as required.

QUESTION 34

Will the regions stop publishing locations once they've been opened up to metro residents?

ANSWER

Please refer to the answer to Question 33.

QUESTION 35

Will contact tracing be retained in areas with patchy vaccination rates?

ANSWER

Contact tracing will continue in NSW for some time. However, it will look different as NSW Health adapts approaches to optimise disease control as the pandemic evolves. NSW will continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation and will update its approach to contact tracing as required.

QUESTION 36

Will Public Health Units continue to map all the exposure sites?

ANSWER

NSW will continue to monitor and collect data about the COVID-19 situation. This includes monitoring data about exposure sites and alerting people who may be at risk.

Vaccination coverage

QUESTION 37

Is the high vaccination rate in the western suburbs distorting the true vaccination coverage across NSW?

ANSWER

There are publicly available and up-to-date data on vaccination rates per postcode and Local Government Area from the NSW Government and the Australian Department of Health. This information can be accessed via the links below:

- <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/find-the-facts-about-covid-19#map-of-nsw-vaccinations-by-home-postcode-and-lga>
- <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/australias-covid-19-vaccine-rollout>

QUESTION 38

Have you modelled the impacts of reduced vaccine efficacy?

ANSWER

Studies on the level and duration of COVID-19 vaccine effectiveness are ongoing. The ATAGI continually reviews evidence about COVID-19 vaccine effectiveness and has recommended a

booster dose for the general population aged 18 years and over, from six months after the second dose, to mitigate against waning immunity.

QUESTION 39

When do you expect vaccine efficacy to begin to decrease for the first cohort that received the vaccine?

a. Are there plans to ensure the availability of booster shots by this time?

ANSWER

Please see the answer to Question 38.

QUESTION 40

When do you expect vaccine efficacy to begin to decrease for the majority of the population?

a. Are there plans to ensure the availability of booster shots by this time?

ANSWER

Please see the answer to Question 38.

QUESTION 41

Have you modelled the impact of different cohorts having different vaccine dose intervals on the decrease in efficacy?

ANSWER

Information about vaccine efficacy is publicly available in the ATAGI clinical guidance on the use of COVID-19 vaccine in Australia on the Australian Government Department of Health website.

QUESTION 42

When will vaccine status be available on the Service NSW app?

ANSWER

The public can now add their COVID-19 digital certificate to the Service NSW app to prove their vaccination status when checking in to a venue. Additional information can be found on the Service NSW website using the following link: <https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/covid-19-digital-certificate>

QUESTION 43

How many mobile vaccination clinics are in service in NSW to increase the opportunities for vaccination?

ANSWER

NSW Health has over 230 locations planned for mobile vaccination clinics in October 2021.

Air quality and COVID

QUESTION 44

When does the NSW Government expect to adopt the World Health Organization's Global Air Quality Guidelines to improve health and reduce the risk of Covid?

ANSWER

This is a matter for the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.

Preparedness for Increasing Hospitalisations

QUESTION 45

How many people are currently hospitalised due to COVID?

ANSWER

Daily COVID-19 data reports, including people hospitalised due to COVID-19 in NSW, are available at <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/stats-nsw.aspx>

QUESTION 46

Of these how many are in ICU?

ANSWER

Daily COVID-19 data reports, including people admitted to ICU due to COVID-19 in NSW, are available at <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/stats-nsw.aspx>

QUESTION 47

How many are on ventilators?

ANSWER

Daily COVID-19 data reports, including people admitted to ICU due to COVID-19 requiring ventilation in NSW, are available at <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/stats-nsw.aspx>

QUESTION 48

How many extra ICU beds and ventilators have now been made ready for potentially increasing cases requiring hospitalisations?

ANSWER

The NSW public health system is highly integrated, and local health districts work together daily to ensure the optimal delivery of healthcare services occurs across the state.

There is currently sufficient ICU capacity in NSW public hospitals, with more than 500 beds available throughout the system.

As part of its comprehensive planning for the pandemic response, NSW Health has the capacity to surge to 1,550 ICU beds if required. There are ventilators available for these ICU beds.

Information about NSW's ICU and demand modelling is available at https://www.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-09/Intensive_Care_Capacity.pdf

QUESTION 49

Are you confident you will be able to staff these extra beds?

ANSWER

As part of the comprehensive planning for its pandemic response, NSW Health can significantly increase ICU beds if required.

All local health districts and specialty health networks have developed workforce surge plans to ensure there is sufficient capacity across NSW to manage both non COVID-19 patients and patients with COVID-19.

Local health districts have identified nurses in the workforce who have pre-existing critical care experience and re-oriented them to the intensive care environment. In addition, other nurses have been upskilled to work in the intensive care environment if required.

The Australian Government, through the Australian College of Nursing, has supported nurses to undertake online critical care education modules.

The Australian College of Critical Care Nursing provides online education modules to support nurses to upskill in critical care. These modules are freely available to nurses across Australia.

These strategies and other local initiatives support nurses to be able to step into the ICU environment as needed.

QUESTION 50

Do you have a breakdown as to what ICU's are currently being used to treat COVID patients?

ANSWER

The following ICUs are currently being used to manage COVID-19 patients in October 2021 :

- Central Coast: Gosford
- Hunter New England: Calvary Mater, John Hunter
- Illawarra Shoalhaven: Wollongong
- Mid North Coast: Port Macquarie
- Nepean Blue Mountains: Nepean
- Northern NSW: Lismore Base
- Northern Sydney: Hornsby Ku-ring-gai, Northern Beaches, Royal North Shore, Ryde
- South Eastern Sydney: Prince of Wales, St George, Sutherland
- South Western Sydney: Campbelltown, Liverpool
- Southern NSW: Goulburn
- St Vincent's Health Network: St Vincent's Hospital
- Sydney: Royal Prince Alfred, Concord

- Western NSW: Dubbo
- Western Sydney: Blacktown, Westmead

QUESTION 51

How many NSW Health staff are currently in isolation as close contacts from their exposure to COVID patients?

ANSWER

As of 27 October a total of 300 NSW Health staff were in isolation due to being a close contact, casual contact or awaiting a negative covid test result. Of these 300 staff, 107 were in isolation due to a potential workplace exposure, with the remaining 193 in isolation due to a potential exposure event that occurred outside of the workplace.

QUESTION 52

Have you abandoned nurse to patient ratios in non-COVID ICU's?

ANSWER

Nursing staffing in intensive care units continues to be based on the professional judgement of local managers taking into account the number and acuity of the individual patients, geographical layout of the unit and a range of local factors affecting workload. Patients requiring ventilation, or who are unstable or critically ill, are generally staffed with the accepted practice of one registered nurse per patient. ICUs also have patients who are clinically assessed as requiring one registered nurse per two patients.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly increased the demand on intensive care services, and on workforce requirements. When demand for intensive care services escalates, standard intensive care workforce models will need to adapt to team-based models to ensure ICU expertise is available to a larger number of patients.

QUESTION 53

Are you aware of reports from nurses increasing sedative doses to knock patients out as a way to manage overworked staff?

ANSWER

No.

QUESTION 54

Can you inform the committee how many overseas nurses you have recruited to support staff who are under enormous strain on the frontline?

ANSWER

There is no shortage of nurses within NSW. Recruitment of overseas doctors is important to supplement the local workforce but the major source of workforce is those already based in NSW and Australia.

Between January and August 2021 NSW recruited at least 150 doctors from overseas.

QUESTION 55

Of these where are they employed or going to be employed?

ANSWER

This information is not held centrally.

QUESTION 56

What discussions have taken place with the Commonwealth to fast track the credentialing of overseas nurses?

ANSWER

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia is responsible for the assessment of overseas nurses for professional registration in Australia. NSW Health is advised by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency that most applications can be assessed based on the information submitted.

This business process has continued and many overseas nurses have gained registration during the pandemic. A small number of applicants are required to attend a face-to-face testing centre in South Australia for further assessment.

Face to face assessments have been intermittently suspended during the pandemic in response to public health orders and border restrictions, however some assessment sessions have been run in the past 18 months and will continue once borders are opened.

QUESTION 57

Please outline the new ICU guidelines prepared by NSW Health including guidelines for doctors on how to triage

ANSWER

Information about NSW Health's ICU capacity and guidelines during COVID-19 is available at <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/communities-of-practice/Pages/adult-icu-paediatric-icu.aspx>

Usual decision making led by senior ICU clinicians is currently in place, guiding admissions to intensive care.

Hotspot locations

QUESTION 58

It was announced recently that additional one-off amount of around 6000 vaccines will be made available to the Illawarra Shoalhaven Health District. Will additional vaccines be made available and if so when?

ANSWER

On 20 September 2021, an additional 17,500 doses of the Pfizer vaccine were available at the Wollongong Mass Vaccination Centre.

A further 5,800 doses of the Pfizer vaccine were received in late September 2021.

QUESTION 59

How many people in Western NSW currently have COVID?

ANSWER

As of 11 October 2021, there were 235 people in COVID Care in the Community program in the Western NSW Local Health District.

QUESTION 60

How many of these are in hospital?

ANSWER

As of 11 October 2021, there were 11 people with COVID-19 in hospital in the Western NSW Local Health District.

QUESTION 61 & 62

People of regional and rural NSW have raised concerns that they may go back into lockdown as they haven't had an opportunity to get fully vaccinated.

Are you aware of these concerns and what is the Government doing to address it?

ANSWER

Achieving high vaccination coverage in the community is expected to substantially reduce the need for large-scale lockdowns across the state. NSW will continue to monitor the situation as restrictions ease and will update its advice as required.

NSW Health has a large footprint of COVID-19 vaccination clinics across the state, including in regional and rural areas, and is working with the Australian Government and local communities to vaccinate as many people as possible, as quickly as possible. This has included opening walk-in vaccination clinics, implementing door-to-door vaccination programs, pop-up vaccination clinics, mobile vaccination teams, and collaborating with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services to increase vaccine access and uptake in regional and rural areas.

QUESTION 63

Given some parts of regional NSW have substantially lower vaccination number what measures will be put in place to try and increase these rates as we prepare to ease restrictions and travel across NSW from 80% vax rate?

ANSWER

NSW Health is working with the Australian Government to provide fair and equitable supply and access to all COVID-19 vaccines in regional and rural areas, via various delivery points (including NSW Health and GP vaccination clinics, pharmacies and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services).

Information about getting vaccinated in regional and rural NSW is available at <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/vaccination/get-vaccinated/regional-clinics>.

NSW Health held a Super Saturday event for walk-in first or second dose Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine appointments on 16 October 2021, including 10 clinics in regional centres across NSW.

School Returning

QUESTION 64

What advice did you provide to the Government on bringing the return to school date forward to the 25 October 2021?

ANSWER

NSW Health has provided advice on COVID-19 transmission risks in schools and educational settings, and on the range of safety measures that can be implemented to minimise transmission.

QUESTION 65

Have you provided any advice to the Government on the need for purifiers in schools?

ANSWER

NSW Health has provided advice to the NSW Department of Education on COVID-19 safety measures to minimise the transmission of COVID-19 in schools and other educational settings. The Department of Education has sought expert advice in relation to ventilation in schools.

QUESTION 66

Can you explain why Victoria has announced 51000 air purifiers and NSW has none?

ANSWER

This is a matter for the Department of Education.

QUESTION 67

What advice have you given the NSW Department of Education about casual and close contacts once face-to-face learning resumes?

ANSWER

NSW Health has worked with the NSW Department of Education to develop tailored guidance to manage COVID-19 risk in educational settings. This guidance includes information about identifying and managing casual and close contacts.

Pregnant Health Workers

QUESTION 68

How many nurses have had a maternity leave request denied because they were unvaccinated since the 1 July 2021? Broken down by LHD

ANSWER

Zero.

QUESTION 69

How many pregnant nurses have been put on leave without pay since the 30 September 2021? Broken down by LHD.

ANSWER

This information is not available centrally, nor would pregnancy status be known or a factor in such leave.

QUESTION 70

How many allied health workers have had a maternity leave request denied because they were unvaccinated since the 1 July 2021? Broken down by LHD.

ANSWER

Zero.

QUESTION 71

How many hospital cleaners have had a maternity leave request denied because they were unvaccinated since the 1 July 2021? Broken down by LHD.

ANSWER

Zero.

QUESTION 72

How many pregnant allied health workers have been put on leave without pay since the 30 September 2021?

ANSWER

This information is not available centrally, nor would pregnancy status be known or a factor in such leave.

QUESTION 73

How many hospital cleaners have been put on leave without pay since the 30 September 2021?

ANSWER

Based on the data received on 18 October 2021, for the pay period covering 30 September 2021 onwards there are 28 full-time equivalent (FTE) cleaners on unpaid leave. There are many different reasons that an employee may be on unpaid leave.

QUESTION 74

How many nurses have been put on leave without pay since the 30 September 2021?

ANSWER

Based on the data received on 18 October 2021, for the pay period covering 30 September 2021 onwards there are 389 full-time equivalent nurses and midwives on unpaid leave. There are many different reasons that an employee may be on unpaid leave.

Resources

QUESTION 75

What is the number (and LHD breakdown) of clinical staff currently in isolation due to workplace exposure incidents?

ANSWER

As of 27 October 2021 a total of 107 NSW Health staff were in isolation due to a potential workplace exposure.

QUESTION 76

What is the number of Workers Compensation claims lodged as a result of COVID exposures?

ANSWER

As of 8 October 2021, 66 workers compensation claims had been lodged as a result of COVID diagnosis.

QUESTION 77

What is the total number (FTE/headcount) of ICU/Critical Care trained nurses in NSW (LHD breakdown)?

ANSWER

As of 30 June 2021 there were 4,121.95 full-time equivalent ICU/Critical care nurses in NSW.

QUESTION 78

What is total number of clinical staff 'upskilled' since early 2020 to perform critical care/ICU roles, if required/to surge?

ANSWER

	Profession	Headcount
Local Training and upskilling	Nursing	2,327
	Physiotherapy	148
	Social Work	45
	Speech Pathology	58
	Diet	50

	OT	9
	Pharmacy	15
	Radiographer (CT)	63
	Radiographer (x-ray)	59
HETI 2 day training	Physio ICU training	388
Total		3,162

Local training included, but was not limited to, specific education, shadowing, case management reviews, clinical handover and rotational experience.

In response to COVID-19, Local Health Districts and Specialty Networks (LHD/Ns) have coordinated the upskilling of registered nurses, providing them with the necessary clinical skills to support the ICU surge workforce. LHD/Ns have reported that 2,327 nurses refreshed their ICU nursing skills between March 2020 and October 2020. In addition, LHD/Ns have continued to upskill nursing staff since October 2020.

QUESTION 79

What the number of temporary and permanent vacancies per LHD at June 1 and at 1 October 2021 today?

ANSWER

This information is not held centrally.

Special Health Accommodation

QUESTION 80

What is the number of commercial arrangements with Meriton Group, for the purposes of NSW Health-led Special Health Accommodation sites across Greater Sydney?

ANSWER

There are four arrangements between Meriton Group and Sydney Local Health District (SLHD) for NSW Health-led Special Health Accommodation (SHA). In addition, there is one between NSW Treasury and Meriton Group for a Coward St property which is currently being jointly used by the State Health Emergency Operations Centre and SLHD which includes a SHA service for close contacts unable to safely self-isolate and frontline workers who are COVID-19 positive.

QUESTION 81

What is the number of commercial arrangements for other NSW Health-led Special Health Accommodation sites across all areas outside of Greater Sydney?

ANSWER

Each local health district is responsible for their own commercial arrangements if Special Health Accommodation (SHA) is required for close contacts unable to safely self-isolate at home or

COVID-19 positive persons who do not require an inpatient hospital admission but unable to safely self-isolate. There are currently 20 SHA facilities outside Greater Sydney.

Private Hospital support

QUESTION 82

What is the number of clinical staff 'on loan/being borrowed' by Private Hospital sector?

ANSWER

Minimal NSW Health clinical staff are on loan to the private hospital sector. NSW Health is aware of one Specialty Health Network that sent four staff to a private hospital over a three day period to support with an exposure event. NSW Health is not aware of other Local Health Districts or Specialty Health Networks that have sent staff to a private hospital.

QUESTION 83

What is the number of ICU-trained clinical staff 'on loan/being borrowed' by Private Hospital sector?

ANSWER

No NSW Health ICU-trained clinical staff are on loan/being borrowed by the private hospital sector.

PPE/Fit testing

QUESTION 84

What is the current stock levels of 'light blue' scrubs available across NSW Health?

ANSWER

As of 15 October 2021, there are 980,912 light blue theatre scrubs available across NSW Health. This includes stock held by HealthShare NSW Linen Services, and stock which is in circulation by NSW Health.

QUESTION 85

What is the current stock levels of N95 respirator masks available across NSW Health?

ANSWER

Fluid resistant masks are categorised as P2/N95 and are not split out into separate counts. As of 13 October 2021, there are:

- 32,595,150 Non Fluid Resistant masks (KN95/FFP); and
- 18,966,355 Fluid Resistant masks (P2/N95).

This includes available stock across OneLink, Service Centre Westmead and Whole of Government Warehouses.

QUESTION 86

What is the current stock levels of P2 respirator masks available across NSW Health?

ANSWER

See answer to Question 85.

QUESTION 87

What is the current stock levels of halo masks available across NSW Health?

ANSWER

NSW Health has purchased more than 500 HALO reusable respirators to support the NSW Government's COVID-19 response efforts, and for other uses in several NSW hospitals.

QUESTION 88

What is the number of clinical staff fit tested, per LHD?

ANSWER

More than 100,000 fit tests have been provided to NSW Health staff within clinical areas.

The following data provides for all staff who have been fit tested working in clinical areas not just clinical staff. This data also includes staff who have been identified for re-fit testing and therefore includes some duplication.

Local Health Districts: as of 10 October 2021

• Central Coast Local Health District	6,115
• Hunter New England Local Health District	4,468
• Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District	4,911
• Murrumbidgee Local Health District	1,029
• Mid North Coast Local Health District	1,511
• Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District	5,461
• Northern NSW Local Health District	1,926
• Northern Sydney Local Health District	5,920
• South Eastern Sydney Local Health District	9,890
• Southern NSW Local Health District	2,731
• South Western Sydney Local Health District	9,081
• Western NSW Local Health District	4,011
• Western Sydney Local Health District	13,008

Specialty Health Networks and NSW Ambulance: as of 10 October 2021

• NSW Ambulance	4,047
• Justice Health Forensic Mental Health Network	695
• Sydney Children's Health Network	3,443
• St Vincent's Health Network	4,449

Data for the following Local Health Districts is current to the dates specified.

• Far West Local Health District	476	(23 August 2021)
• Sydney Local Health District	11,618	(12 September 2021)
• South Western Sydney Local Health District	9,081	(12 August 2021)

QUESTION 89

What is the number of PortaCount machines to facilitate fit testing, per LHD?

ANSWER

As of 13 October 2021, the number of PortaCount machines by LHD is:

Local Health District (LHD)	Number of Machines
Central Coast LHD	7
Far West LHD	3
Hunter New England LHD	21
Illawarra Shoalhaven LHD	6
Nepean Blue Mountains LHD	5
Northern NSW LHD	2
Northern Sydney LHD	6
South Eastern Sydney LHD	11
Southern NSW LHD	4
Western NSW LHD	2
Western Sydney LHD	4
Grand Total	71

QR Codes

QUESTION 90

What advice have you provided the Government on the removal of QR codes from the 1 December 2021?

ANSWER

QR codes are expected to remain in place in NSW for some time. NSW will continue to monitor and collect data about the COVID-19 situation and will update its advice on QR codes as required.

Test, Trace and Isolate

QUESTION 91

Can you outline the process of test, trace and isolate at the following vaccination rates:

- i. 70%
- ii. 80%
- iii. 90%

ANSWER

Regardless of vaccination coverage rates, people identified as a close contact of a COVID-19 case must get tested and self-isolate. NSW will continue to monitor the situation as restrictions ease and will update its advice on testing, tracing and isolating as required.

More information is publicly available in the NSW Health fact sheet for close contacts of COVID-19 at:

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/advice-for-contacts.aspx>

Vaccine rollout

QUESTION 92

With the state to begin reopening from 11 October, both workers and employers in regional areas have raised concerns that as a result of limited vaccine supply younger workers are not fully vaccinated, leaving workers facing the prospect of reduced hours or being sacked. Did NSW Health factor in the limited vaccine supply to the regions in formulating the reopening roadmap?

ANSWER

See response to Question 1.

QUESTION 93

MP's office have been flooded with calls from residents aged over 60 with pre-existing medical conditions but have been unable to access the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine. When will these vaccines be available to these residents so they can also return to their daily lives, rather than being punished for the Government botched vaccine rollout?

ANSWER

All COVID-19 vaccines approved by the Therapeutic Goods Association have been evaluated for safety and efficacy.

Everyone in Australia aged 12 years and over can get a free, safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine from over 3,000 vaccine providers in NSW including NSW Health clinics, general practitioners, community pharmacies and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations.

- People aged 12 years and over can make a booking for the Comirnaty™ (Pfizer) or Spikevax (Moderna) COVID-19 vaccine
- People aged 18 and over can make a booking for the Vaxzevria (AstraZeneca), Comirnaty™ (Pfizer) or Spikevax (Moderna) COVID-19 vaccine

Information about NSW's COVID-19 vaccination program is available at <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/vaccination/get-vaccinated>

QUESTION 94

Many vulnerable communities in regional areas such as those living in boarding houses, facing homelessness, living with a disability or local indigenous communities have been left behind as part of the vaccine rollout. What steps is NSW Health taking to lift the vaccination rates among these communities in regional areas like the Hunter?

ANSWER

See response to Question 2.