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## **COVID-safe model for the conduct of Additional Budget Estimates February/March 2022 (as of 22 February 2022)**

### **Background**

This document outlines the model for the conduct of Additional Budget Estimates hearings from Monday 28 February to Wednesday 16 March 2022. The document was prepared based on the previous protocol adopted for supplementary Estimates in October/November 2021 together with the most recent health advice from HIBBS. Should circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 outbreak change the model will be updated.

### **Model for the conduct of Additional Budget Estimates in person with various health measures in place**

At the current time, Additional Budget Estimates will proceed from Monday 28 February to Wednesday 16 March 2022 with members, witnesses, advisers, the media and the secretariat/Hansard attending hearings at Parliament House in person (unless members or witnesses request to attend via webex), but with members of the public excluded (but able to follow proceedings online).

The following health measures will be put in place for the conduct of hearings according to this model.

### **Attendance**

- The strong preference as far as practicable is for all Members to be fully vaccinated along with all other participants, with the strong recommendation to be boosted with a third dose of an approved vaccine.
- The definition of fully vaccinated, as aligned with the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI), is at least 7 days after receiving the 2nd vaccine dose.
- No more than 13 Council Members are permitted to access the parliamentary precinct, who are either unvaccinated or partially vaccinated being defined as having only received a single dose, or less than 7 days after receiving the second dose.
- All witnesses (excepting ministers to whom the rule in the dot points above applies), advisers, media and staff attending budget estimates hearings **must** be double vaccinated, with the strong recommendation to be boosted with a third dose of an approved vaccine.
- Members are responsible for ensuring that their staff are aware of entry requirements and safety provisions in this plan.
- The public **may not** attend budget estimates hearings, although the proceedings will be live broadcast.
- Staff who are identified as vulnerable persons, including staff with compromised immune systems, should not attend hearings.

- Members and witnesses who are in COVID isolation or vulnerable may participate remotely in a “basic hybrid” model via webex. Members and witnesses should alert staff of the secretariat as soon as possible if they need to attend a hearing remotely.

### **Restrictions and procedures on entry to Parliament House**

- Anyone with the mildest symptoms such as fever, cough, shortness of breath or sore throat should NOT attend Parliament House at any time, and should seek medical advice and assistance. Anyone who becomes symptomatic during proceedings must immediately seek medical advice and assistance. For common symptoms of COVID-19 as defined by NSW Ministry of Health, see <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/stay-safe/testing/symptoms#toc-symptoms-of-covid-19>
- Daily health screening must be undertaken by everyone entering the parliamentary precinct in order to attend an estimates hearing (tests are voluntary for other people entering the precinct but not attending an estimates hearing). Daily health screening must be undertaken in a COVID-safe manner upon arrival at Parliament House. Screening by a suitably qualified health practitioner is to include:
  - COVID-19 symptom check and declaration.
  - Voluntary declaration of vaccination status on request.
  - Body temperature check (<37.5°C).
  - Rapid COVID antigen test, for screening purposes only (not to be confused with NSW Health Rapid PCR Testing). As indicated, these tests are mandatory for all persons attending budget estimates hearings in person.
- Members, witnesses, advisers, media and staff attending budget estimates hearings may not move through the building until the full testing regime is completed (including waiting for rapid antigen test results).
- Any person with a declared or detected COVID symptom or positive COVID Antigen Test must be removed from the screening area to a designated isolation room.

### **Room density**

- Members, witnesses, advisers, media and staff are to observe physical distancing of >1.5m in the hearings rooms at all times.
- Entry and exit to the hearing rooms is to be conducted in a structured and ordered manner to enable physical distancing at all times.
- All seating within respective committee hearing rooms is to be allocated to specific individuals, with compliance to assigned seating at all times when participating in proceedings.
- The following room density limits will apply for additional estimates hearings:
  - Macquarie Room (188 sq m)
    - a maximum of 29 persons at the table
    - a maximum of 94 persons in the room.
  - Jubilee Room (150 sq m)
    - a maximum of 30 persons at the table
    - a maximum of 75 persons in the room
  - Preston Stanley Room (128 sq m)

- a maximum of 30 persons at the table
  - a maximum of 64 persons in the room.
- Room capacity limits will be strictly enforced by COVID marshalls.
- Members, witnesses and their advisers are to be allocated designated seats and once seated in a hearing room must minimise their movement from their place for the duration of a hearing.
- Members and witnesses who are in COVID isolation or vulnerable may participate remotely in a “basic hybrid” model via webex.

### **Masks**

- Masks are recommended to be worn when physical distancing of 1.5m is not possible.
- N95 masks are recommended for use, with mask change stations positioned throughout the parliamentary precinct.

### **Hygiene**

- Hands are to be sanitised on a regular basis, prior to entry hearing rooms, and immediately upon exit, at established hand sanitising stations at entry and exit points.
- Hand sanitiser is to be provided throughout the hearing rooms, including at entry and exit points, and at each allocated seat, with regular use by members, witnesses, advisers and staff.
- Members and staff are to be seated a minimum of 1.5m from each other, with desks and microphones to be sanitised once a seat is permanently vacated during or after a hearing.
- Drinking water or other beverages for consumption are to be carried and consumed only from single use disposable containers. Reusable jugs, glasses, or cups are not permitted.
- Catering will not be provided in hearings. Café Quorum and the Public café will provide a full service.

### **Ventilation**

- The ventilation systems of hearing rooms is to be set to maximum fresh air intake and reasonable air exchange per hour (ideally 100% fresh air intake with an air exchange rate of 8 air changes an hour).
- Doors of the hearing room are to remain closed for the duration of each hearing.
- Hearing room ventilation systems are to operate up to 2 hours prior to a hearing, 2 hours after, and during session breaks.