

Friday, 7 January 2022

## **COVID-19 Update - Please wear masks!**

Local health services and local government are meeting regularly to discuss the impact of Omicron, with expectations that local case numbers will continue to rise.

### **Testing- please help keep our community and health workforce safe- wear a mask.**

As of today, a positive Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) will no longer require confirmation via a PCR test.

Therefore community members are encouraged to utilise Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT) to ascertain whether they have COVID or not. However, we do recognise that RAT tests are not readily available at present.

For those people who are unable to access RAT tests, they can consider utilising the below PCR service. PCR Testing is free and is available Monday – Friday at the NDCH Clinic in Kerang.

To be eligible for a PCR test at the NDCH Clinic in Kerang, community members will need to be:

- Symptomatic
- Directed by Health Officials i.e. asymptomatic household contact unable to access RAT

In addition, people who are required to use Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT) (e.g. asymptomatic household contacts) but who cannot access a Rapid Antigen Test, can get a PCR.

“Please be patient, we have been inundated with calls, and our team are doing their best to manage. We are reaching capacity each day, and our Reception and Nursing team are working extremely hard.” NDCH CEO Mandy Hutchinson said.

“We ask that all businesses continue to be vigilant with supporting their customers to wear masks, sanitise their hands and QR code in. The last thing we need is our healthcare staff being exposed to COVID when they are out shopping locally. We need our health workforce to remain healthy so they can care for patients and continue to do their roles in managing COVID. Masks worn correctly and Vaccinations, including Boosters, are our best protection.”

### **What to do if you are positive:**

From midday Friday 7 January 2022, persons with a positive RAT test will be able to register their result via an online portal with the DoH at <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/report>

Alternatively they can call the COVID hotline number 1800 675 398 and register via the phone.

People who receive a positive PCR test will be informed of the next steps individually.

Once registered, the person will be triaged by a survey (link emailed via online registration or survey completed over the phone with callers). The survey will categorise the person into priorities. People will then be supported according to their needs, either through a self-care model, or with calls from a Health Service Virtual Home Monitoring team.

### **Managing at home with COVID**

## Media Release:

“With a highly vaccinated population, most COVID-positive people are unlikely to get severely unwell or require hospitalisation and will be able to manage their symptoms at home – where clinically safe and appropriate to do so. The best protection we have as we manage COVID-19, even at our local level, is to follow the advice of the Department of Health,” Cohuna District Hospital CEO, Bernadette Loughnane said. “Our social media platforms are regularly updated, and see the below links for further guidance.” Please note Urgent Care Centre’s at Cohuna, Boort and Kerang are business as usual.

### Key contacts:

- Nurse on Call 1300 60 60 24
- Coronavirus helpline 1800 020 080 or Victoria 1800 675 398
- Managing COVID at home checklist, including ‘Symptoms to watch out for and when to get help’: <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/managing-covid-19-home>

### **Boosters and Vaccinations**

Kerang District Health CEO Kellie Byron-Gray said the response of the community and local services continues to impress. “This is how we do things in rural areas,” she said. “Everyone pulls together and helps each other out. With high vaccination rates in our community we are encouraging residents to get their booster shots when they become eligible. This will reduce the impact on the health system and ultimately support our capacity to care for patients who need acute care. We also encourage anyone to get vaccinated who may not have done so to date.”

Booster shots for people who received their last COVID-19 Vaccination 4 months ago, are available from local pharmacies and GP clinics. Local services are also exploring opportunities to bring community Booster and Children Vaccination Clinics to the community. Please keep up to date via our social media pages.

### **Your wellbeing**

We ask that you continue to be kind to each other and to our front line workers, nurses, doctors, police, supermarket staff and receptionists, to name a few, who are all working hard to support our community.

Boort District Health Director of Clinical Services, Donna Doyle says: “We need to expect that COVID-19 will impact our communities, our neighbours, work colleagues and possibly our loved ones. When it does, we are encouraging everyone in our community to take a ‘no blame’ approach. The Omicron strain spreads easily which is why measures like wearing masks, social distancing, avoiding poorly ventilated or crowded spaces and hand hygiene continue to be in place to slow it down, however blaming others only adds to the pressures being felt by our community. We ask that you show each other empathy, support and care. Be kind to yourself and others, stay safe and be informed by reliable sources.”

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