



COVID-SAFE PLAN: **ELECTORATE OFFICES**

EFFECTIVE SEPTEMBER 2022
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1. BACKGROUND

The Queensland Legislative Assembly is comprised of 93 Members of Parliament, representing electorates throughout Queensland.

While Parliament House in Brisbane is the ceremonial home of the Queensland Parliament, the Parliamentary Service provides each Member with physical office accommodation and staffing resources located in each of the 93 electorates. In the case of some larger electorates, a second office is also provided.

Members' electorate offices serve a range of functions including:

- Delivering a modern physical workplace for Members and electorate staff;
- Providing a 'shopfront' for Members to engage with individual constituents and local organisations and community groups; and
- In certain cases, providing a valuable resource as a venue for local organisations to meet.

In addition to the operation of electorate offices, individual Members also conduct various activities in the broader electorates, such as outdoor events, constituent meet and greet events at local cafes, hosting information stalls at school fetes, establishing 'pop up offices' at shopping centres or regional locations to meet constituents.

In response to public health authority advice regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and internal risk assessments, on 16 March 2020 the Honourable Curtis Pitt MP, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland, approved a response plan including a range of measures designed to protect Members, electorate staff and the general public that visit electorate offices.

In July 2020, the Speaker approved the *COVID-Safe Plan: Parliament House* to guide the safe reopening of public access to parliamentary events and activities.

This **COVID-Safe Plan: Queensland Electorate Offices** establishes a range of COVID-Safe protocols to guide the safe operation of electorate offices' both as a traditional workplace, and also as a public meeting space for Members, staff and constituents.

2. CONDITIONS OF ENTRY

Members' electorate offices will operate in accordance with this **COVID-Safe Plan: Queensland Electorate Offices** for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic or as otherwise instructed by public health officials.

2.1 Physical distancing

Physical distancing of 1.5 metres will apply to the extent possible. Specific strategies include:

- Use of floor decals and signage to identify appropriate distancing and queueing requirements in public entrance waiting areas.
- Review of shared work areas arrangements to include rostered absences and/or additional cleaning and hygiene regimes.

- Review of meeting room furniture lay-outs to encourage recommended physical distancing.

2.2 Electorate Office Signage

External signage shall be displayed at each office entry advising that persons displaying symptoms of COVID-19 are not to enter the office.

2.3 Hygiene

Any surfaces which may be frequently touched by public visitors (e.g. counter tops, chairs, doors, and tables) should be cleaned regularly (e.g. after each meeting concludes).

All visitors will be requested to apply hand sanitiser on entry to the office. Where electorate offices cannot access suitable supplies, the Parliamentary Service will assist to arrange.

Hygiene awareness signage has been displayed outside public entrances to all electorate offices.

3. SERVICE PROTOCOLS

Where possible, electorate staff will interact with public visitors via the existing security counter and physical barriers and screens to reduce risks.

Any food or beverages offered to public visitors or staff must be individual servings only. Shared food (e.g. platters and buffet meals) are not permitted.

All utensils, cups, saucers, etc. must be washed after each use.

4. EMPLOYEE PRACTICES

On 15 July 2022 the Clerk of the Parliament issued a *General Directive to Officers and Employees No. 1/22 COVID-19* (Clerk's Directive). The purpose of the *Clerk's Directive* is to:

- remove the mandatory COVID-19 vaccination requirements for existing and prospective Electorate Office employees that was contained in General Directive to Officers and Employees No. 1/22;
- continue to encourage employees to be vaccinated against COVID-19, keep their vaccination current by recommended boosters and upload their vaccination status in Human Resource Services records; and
- ensures the availability and supply of Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT tests) to all employees.

4.1 RAT tests

All electorate offices will be supplied with RAT tests, each staff member will be provided two RAT tests to take home. These RAT tests are provided to staff to diagnose COVID-19 quickly at home, before attending the workplace and thereby reducing spread. This affects the likelihood of transmission in the workplace.

RAT tests supplied are for the use of staff only.

4.1.1 Use of RAT tests

If a staff member has any of the common symptoms of COVID-19 they are expected to use the RAT test(s) supplied before coming to the workplace. Staff may also choose to undertake a PCR test and await the results.

It is an obligation on all staff members to minimise the risk to their co-workers by not attending the workplace if they have any COVID-19 symptoms without first being tested.

RAT tests will be replaced on use and reporting.

4.2 Obligations of staff if COVID-19 positive or a close contact

It is an obligation on each staff member to ensure that if they test positive for COVID-19 they follow Health Directives regarding COVID-19 in place at the time of diagnosis.

It is an obligation on each staff member to ensure that if they are deemed a close contact they follow Health Directives or guidelines regarding COVID-19 in place for close contacts in place at the time

If a staff member is diagnosed with COVID-19 or is deemed a close contact, they need to inform their Member and Human Resource Services.

4.3 Wearing of Face Masks

In accordance with the *Management of Diagnosed Cases of COVID-19 and Close Contacts Direction (No. 5)*:

- Part 1B details that a diagnosed person must, for 5 full days from the end of isolation wear a face mask covering the person's nose and mouth at all times outside the home unless an exemption applies to them;
- Part 2 details that a close contact to a diagnosed person must during the 5 full days from the COVID-19 test date wear a face mask covering the person's nose and mouth at all times outside the home, including outdoors when unable to be physically distant from persons other than household members.

4.4 General staff practices

Vulnerable employees will perform alternative duties where necessary to avoid direct contact with external visitors.

Appropriate work from home arrangements and necessary IT systems have been developed in the event of further outbreaks.

Various video conferencing tools are in use for meetings and other non-essential face-to-face gatherings where practical.

Employees working on-site, in the workplace, will be required to:

- Maintain appropriate physical distancing in public areas, work stations, meeting rooms, and toilets.
- Eating in communal staff kitchens and tea rooms by employees at the same time should only occur if appropriate physical distancing and hygiene measures (e.g. cleaning food preparation areas/sinks after each use) can be maintained.
- Stay home when sick and seek medical treatment and/or COVID-19 testing as necessary (i.e. in accordance with general directives from the Chief Health Officer and/or the Clerk of the Parliament.
- Practice good hygiene by frequently cleaning their hands and practicing cough and sneeze etiquette.

Signage (digital, printed and floor decals) has been provided at each office location, instructing employees to observe 1.5 metres physical distancing in all locations, at all times, wherever possible.

Commercial grade alcohol-based hand sanitiser will be available in strategic common use areas and all work areas.

Regular CEO communication is disseminated to all employees via email, and dedicated Coronavirus staff resources are published on the Parliament's intranet site.

Free, confidential counselling services are available for parliamentary employees, volunteers and their immediate family.

These requirements apply to Members, permanent and casual electorate staff, and approved volunteers.

4.5 Managing egress and emergency evacuation

Each electorate office has a formal Emergency Evacuation Plan and Evacuation Procedures that comply with the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*.

Emergency exits and evacuation points described in the Emergency Evacuation Plan and Evacuation Procedures are not impacted by this COVID-Safe Plan.

5. COVID-19 OUTBREAK MANAGEMENT

All electorate office staff are required to report illness with flu-like symptoms to their Member and Parliament House Human Resource Services.

Employees are required to stay home when sick and seek medical treatment and/or COVID-19 testing as necessary.

All employees have been provided with two RAT tests to take home.

All employees have been provided with advice and procedures regarding self-quarantining obligations in the event that employees come into direct contact with a person exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms or a person instructed to take a COVID-19 test.

COVID-19 outbreak management processes and controls for each scenario have been developed in accordance with Queensland Health guidelines and Workplace Health and Safety Queensland.

6. LEGISLATION AND DIRECTIONS

The **COVID-Safe Plan: Queensland Electorate Offices** is based on the:

- *Parliamentary Service Act 1988* (Qld);
- *General Directive to Officers and Employees No. 1/22 COVID-19 (the 'Clerk's Directive')*;
- *Management of Diagnosed Cases of COVID-19 and Close Contacts Direction (No. 5)*.

As a "live" and dynamic document, this *COVID-Safe Plan* will be updated regularly in response to best practice advice, relevant legislation and public health directions.