

Message from the Medical Superintendent of NIHRACS

COVID 19 Drive-in Testing Unit Norfolk Island

30 March 2020

Norfolk Island Health and Residential Aged Care Service (NIHRACS) has decided to increase testing for COVID-19 on Norfolk Island. This is in line with guidelines set by NSW Health and the Public Health Unit in Sydney. We are also taking into account the remoteness of our geographic position and the fact that we have a large older patient demographic and people with chronic disease. Our remoteness limits access to tertiary medical care and puts limitations on our healthcare service on Norfolk, we are more vulnerable to an outbreak that overwhelms our services, which we don't want to result in mortality of our residents.

A drive-in testing unit allows us to access more of the public for testing. Currently our nursing staff is stretched due to the number of tests being taken in people's homes by a visiting nurse. A drive-in unit allows us to test low risk, mildly unwell people without them entering our medical facility and posing a risk to other patients and staff.

The drive-in testing unit will be available on the grounds of the Norfolk Island Hospital daily from 3pm to 4pm daily. Patients should call the GP clinic on 22091 prior to this time where they will have a telephone consultation with a doctor. The doctor will decide whether they should be swabbed for COVID-19. If that is the decision they will be advised to come to the drive-in unit between 3pm and 4pm that day. The unit will be manned by NIHRACS staff and they will be protected by PPE (gloves, gown, mask, goggles). The person's throat and nose will be swabbed and this will be sent for testing. They will be advised to stay in self-isolation until advised by a doctor of a negative test result. At present we expect to have some delays in receiving results due to the increased number of tests being processed in Sydney and the reduction in flights from Norfolk.

People will **NOT** be tested at the drive-in unit if:

1. They are in self-isolation already. People in self-isolation already, they should stay at home and call the GP clinic for advice if they become unwell. **Do not** drive to the mobile test unit, the doctor or nurse who talks to you on the phone may advise that we send out a nurse to do a swab at your home or you may be asked to come in to the hospital isolation area. You must wait for our instructions.
2. They are contacts of someone who is unwell but **not unwell** themselves. Call the GP clinic for advice and do not drive to the drive-in unit.
3. They are **not unwell**. Symptoms of COVID 19 include fever cough, sore throat, fatigue, shortness of breath, muscle pain and less frequently vomiting and diarrhoea. If unsure follow the link below for advice.

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/healthdirect-coronavirus-covid-19-symptom-checker>

PLEASE NOTE: If you are very unwell particularly with shortness of breath you should either call the GP clinic or hospital immediately on 22091 or call an ambulance on 000.