

# Clinician engagement vital to response

*Twenty-twenty has been a year like no other. As we continue to dig deep to prepare and respond to the challenges of COVID-19, our previous business as usual seems like a world away for most of us.*

This is certainly the case as an emergency physician. Clinical shifts are split between the 'Respiratory ED' donned in personal protective equipment (PPE) seeing patients with COVID-19 symptoms, and the 'normal' ED, seeing acute non-COVID-19 patients. Until we have an effective COVID-19 prevention (e.g. vaccination) and/or treatment strategy, this will be our new business as usual.

My work as Senate Chair is significantly different this year to that pre-COVID. Early in the pandemic, we recognised the importance of clinician engagement and pivoted to focus solely on COVID-19 and Queensland's response.

As Senate Chair, I represent clinicians on numerous key pandemic planning and response groups such as the COVID System Leadership Forum and the COVID-19 Health System Response Working Group, among many others.

In March we introduced a COVID-19 communication for frontline clinicians, making sure our colleagues on the frontline have access to the most relevant information about Queensland Health's response, access to the latest research about the virus – the symptoms and treatments – PPE guidelines and other restriction changes.

Importantly, we regularly shared information about clinician wellbeing during COVID-19. Such huge change brought about from a situation that has no obvious end and that puts our personal health (and that of our families) at risk, is anxiety-provoking and we must look after ourselves and look out for our colleagues.

In addition, the Senate has worked closely with key clinical groups and consumers to produce important guidelines and principle documents. These include:

- ▶ Principles of ethical prescribing for self and others in the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>1</sup>.
- ▶ Guideline for ethical prescribing for self and others in the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>2</sup>.

We also worked with Queensland Health's Care at the End of Life team and Health Consumers Queensland to produce resources that support clinicians to have difficult conversations virtually, instead of face-to-face. You can access these resources here<sup>3</sup>.

The level of clinician interest and engagement in the frontline emails, the development of guidelines and resources was beyond my expectations. Clinicians wanted and needed to be involved.

A pandemic response can only work well with an informed and engaged frontline workforce and we have seen this in Queensland at a local, regional and state level. The desire to work together, across professions, specialities, services, has been incredibly encouraging.



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For now, the Senate will balance contributing to Queensland's response to COVID-19 and the system reform work that is flowing out of the response. Exploring opportunities to continue initiatives that have enabled us to deliver more streamlined and efficient care closer to home for Queenslanders is a vital piece of work. We are also looking forward to our last meeting of the year, 'Adolescent to young adult care' where we will explore barriers, challenges and solutions to providing effective care for this vulnerable cohort of our population.

Clinicians have shown incredible commitment and engagement throughout this pandemic. This response has seen everyone at every level play a role. It has been a privilege to work alongside each and every one of you. Stay safe.

1 [www.health.qld.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0033/953736/ethical-prescribing-principles.pdf](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0033/953736/ethical-prescribing-principles.pdf)

2 [www.health.qld.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0032/953735/ethical-prescribing-guideline.pdf](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0032/953735/ethical-prescribing-guideline.pdf)

3 <https://clinicalexcellence.qld.gov.au/priority-areas/service-improvement/improving-care-end-life-queensland/resources/compassionate>