

14 October 2021

Member briefing – Navigating COVID Peak

The Victorian Healthcare Association (VHA), as part of its ongoing COVID-19 advocacy for public health services, is hosting a forum for members on ‘Navigating COVID Peak’ to better understand the pressure members are currently facing and to identify initiatives that will support the health response over coming months.

Context

Victoria is currently ‘opening up’ the state in line with the national plan for reopening, while continuing to respond to the COVID-19 virus and its impact. Modelling has suggested that the state will face a growth in demand on its health sector, with anticipated peaks in late October and December.

This expected demand is coming at a time of great pressure on the health system, which is already providing testing, vaccination and COVID-19 care, on top of delivery of business-as-usual services. Demand is already at record levels due to delayed care stemming from the pandemic. Services have indicated that they and their staff are under stress, which will be exacerbated by the expected increase in COVID-19 cases and hospitalisations in the coming months.

Member contributions to the forum are critical to inform advocacy efforts for a whole-of-system approach to addressing current demand and predicted surge pressures in the immediate future.

‘Navigating COVID Peak’ forum

To help support the sector’s response to the expected increase in demand, the VHA is hosting a member forum to discuss Victoria’s health system preparedness on **28 October 2021 (1.30-3.30pm)**. The session will include a presentation and Q&A session with Adam Horsburgh, CEO at Austin Health, who is on secondment as the Deputy Controller for Health Service Operations at the Department of Health.

The ‘Navigating COVID Peak’ forum will focus on system preparedness – how the Victorian public health system can be supported to manage the expected increase in demand stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, including from the easing of restrictions, and its impacts.

Through the forum, the VHA will seek member experiences and ideas and feedback on solutions, which will help to inform our policy and advocacy efforts on behalf of the sector.

Services are encouraged to have senior leaders attend, to ensure that whole-of-organisation perspectives are represented and heard.

Ahead of the forum, the VHA has reviewed how other countries have attempted to prepare their health sectors for increased demand, as well as the outcomes of those efforts. Several key themes were identified that could inform Victoria’s next steps. [Click here to read the deep-dive article and case studies.](#)

Key questions

To support the efficiency and value of the forum, the VHA is asking to attendees to prepare by considering the issues below. Attendees should consider:

- **The current situation at your service**
 - How your service is responding to increased demand and pressure, with a focus on care and quality, staff and patients

- **Preparations for increased demand**
 - This includes consideration of the steps that your service has taken to prepare for the increased demand, as well as how capable you feel to manage that increased demand.
 - Current assessment of your service’s preparedness against Safer Care Victoria’s [COVID-19 Hospital Preparedness Assessment Tool](#)
- **Limitations on your service’s response**
 - Are there any issues which are inhibiting your response to the pandemic?
 - Outlining barriers to meeting surge capacity such as:
 - Workforce wellbeing
 - Workforce availability
 - Infrastructure
- **Ideas to support your service**
 - Consider what support your services needs to bolster your pandemic preparedness, identifying potential solutions or ideas that you would want to see implemented to support the sector’s preparedness?

As the situation in Victoria is evolving quickly, the questions posed at the forum may be adjusted to meet the current context, however these high-level themes are unlikely to change. Considering these questions ahead of the forum will enable attendees to participate as effectively as possible.

Next steps

Members should ensure senior representatives, preferably CEOs and board chairs, are registered to attend the forum. [Members can click here to register for the forum.](#) Attendees should ensure that they have considered the above questions before attending the forum.

The information from this forum will be critical to informing an upcoming white paper on system preparedness, and for ongoing advocacy efforts.



For further information contact

Juan Paolo Legaspi
Manager, Policy and Advocacy

JuanPaolo.Legaspi@vha.org.au

03 9094 7777