

MANLY

# Health Minister Brad Hazzard's northern beaches COVID-19 warning: 'Don't get complacent'

Health Minister and Wakehurst MP Brad Hazzard has made a plea to northern beaches residents in the “war with COVID-19”, as the hospital raises its readiness level to amber.

Julie Cross, Manly Daily

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 Health Minister Brad Hazzard speaking at a COVID-19 press conference. Picture: NCA NewsWire/David Swift

Health Minister Brad Hazzard has made an impassioned plea to peninsula residents to do “what is necessary to fight this virus”, as Northern Beaches Hospital upgraded its COVID-19 readiness level to amber alert.

The Wakehurst state Liberal MP told the *Manly Daily* that three weeks ago Victoria was seeing around 40 new cases a day but this week there has been a “massive jump of numbers into the 300s and 400s”.

“Victoria’s challenging situation should be a reminder of how bad this COVID-19 can become very quickly,” Mr Hazzard said.



 Paramedics and ED staff at Northern Beaches Hospital with masks on following new rules from NSW Health introduced today. Picture: Supplied.

“On the beaches we are doing well so far. But complacency is the killer.

“I ask our beaches locals to do what is necessary to keep this virus at bay.

“Constant hand hygiene is critical. Keep at least 1.5m away from non-household members and if you have any flu like symptoms, get tested and stay home.”

Mr Hazzard also warned young peninsula residents need to understand they are not immune to the virus.

He said 40 per cent of all cases in NSW have been in the age group 18 to 29.

“Some have been very sick,” he said.

“Others have passed it to parents and grandparents who are very vulnerable.

“There is no room for complacency.



📷 Patient in mask been seen by triage nurse at Northern Beaches Hospital's COVID-19 clinic. Picture: Tim Pascoe

“We are at war with a virus that worldwide in the last few months has affected more than 13 million people and killed more than half a million people,” he said.

“There is no vaccine and no treatment and it will kill many more.”

There have been 161 cases of COVID-19 on the northern beaches, three of which were diagnosed in July and all were from overseas travellers.



📷 Northern Beaches Hospital in Frenchs Forest. Picture: Julian Andrews

The last community transmission was on April 27 in Dee Why.

However, an increase in cases across the state has resulted in all public hospitals raising their warning levels to amber in preparation for possible outbreaks in their areas.

From 8am Friday all staff at Northern Beaches Hospital who work within 1.5m of a patient, including cleaners or caterers, have to wear a mask.



📷 Registered Nurse Grace Heidke (24) from Cromer taking the temperatures of everyone arriving at Northern Beaches Hospital in Frenchs Forest on 23rd April 2020. Patients will now be required to wear masks on arrival too. Picture: Julian Andrews

A patient who arrives at hospital will also be required to wear a mask during admission and in the ward if a staff member is in attendance.

Visitors have been reduced to one per patient.

The Emergency Department is still extremely busy with about 400 patients coming through the doors every day - more than double the usual number pre-COVID.

Of those 400, around 250 to 300 are being swabbed for COVID-19, with the procedure taking around 90 minutes.

A hospital spokeswoman said more than 60 per cent of presentations to the Emergency Department are patients with respiratory symptoms, but that they had not had a confirmed case of influenza for four weeks.

Flu cases across the state are down this year, thanks to the uptake of the flu jab and social distancing.