

## **Nuclear Connections Across Oceania COVID-19 policy for in-person conference participants**

*Last updated: 10 October 2022*

The government in Aotearoa New Zealand has recently updated their [COVID-19 policies](#). Under these new policies, organisations are now responsible for setting their own COVID-19 policies and culture to keep each other healthy, particularly those more vulnerable to the effects of the virus.

*Nuclear Connections Across Oceania* has been designed to bring people from across Oceania together to have critical discussions about, and take collaborative action to address, pressing topics such as nuclear imperialism, nuclear colonialism and climate change. As conference organisers, we have a responsibility to create a conference environment and culture that fosters connection, while also keeping all of our in-person participants as safe and healthy as possible.

We will have a number of Elders joining our conference in person, and we also want to create an inclusive conference environment and culture where immunocompromised and disabled guests feel cared for and welcomed. We will also have a number of guests who will be travelling from throughout Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally, and not everyone will have the same financial resources available to easily afford to stay in Ōtepoti Dunedin for a mandatory COVID-19 isolation period ([currently seven days](#)). In addition, we are planning to engage in culturally relevant connection-promoting events, such as kava sharing, and we need to ensure we are caring for each other as we build relationships through such activities.

Given the circumstances, we have drawn from recommendations made by [the University of Otago](#), [Te Pūnaha Matatini](#) and others to create a COVID-19 policy intended to keep our in-person conference participants as safe and healthy as possible.

Below we will outline our COVID-19 policy for in person participation based on four interventions shown to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and other viruses: (1) stay home if feeling unwell; (2) good indoor ventilation; (3) daily Rapid Antigen Test (RATs); and (4) indoor masking.

### *1. Stay at home if feeling unwell.*

If you feel unwell in any way (even if you test negative for COVID-19), please stay at home or in your accommodation and join the conference online (we will provide Zoom links to all registered guests, even if you registered to join us in person). This will be one of the most essential aspects of keeping others at the conference healthy. Speakers who feel ill can email or call the organising team and we will be able to easily transfer your presentation online. Recordings of most conference presentations will be available on our conference webpage, so you will be able to access them even if you are too unwell to join online.

**What in-person conference participants need to do:** stay at home if you feel unwell, even if you test negative for COVID-19.

## 2. *Good indoor ventilation*

Our in person conference at the University of Otago will take place at Saint Margaret's College, with the main conference events being held in the [Valentine Common Room](#). The room has windows that open to the outside, and we plan to keep them open throughout the conference to promote ventilation in the room.

**What in-person conference participants need to do:** please support conference organisers in keeping the room well ventilated (e.g., please do not close windows or doors if they are open; or please discuss the issue with conference organisers before taking action so we can ensure the CO2 levels are safe enough to change the room's ventilation). If you are someone who easily feels cold, please bring an extra layer so you can stay warm with the windows or doors open.

## 3. *Daily Rapid Antigen Test (RATs)*

It is estimated that up to 40% of people with COVID-19 will be asymptomatic. This means that a person might have COVID-19 and be infectious, but not be aware of it. Rapid Antigen Test (RATs) are important tools to ensure asymptomatic people do not accidentally infect others.

To keep everyone at our conference as healthy and safe as possible, we are asking all in-conference participants to take a RAT before each day of the conference. We will offer free RATs to all in-person conference participants, and it is also easy to access free RATs online ([for those living in or visiting Aotearoa New Zealand](#)) and at the airport (RATs are provided for [free at the airport](#) for incoming international travellers).

Ideally conference participants will do their RAT *before* leaving their home or accommodation. It will also be possible to take a RAT at the conference venue, but those who test positive will be asked to return to their home or accommodation and join the conference online if they test positive.

We recommend all conference participants watch the [short one minute video](#) made by Australian ear, nose, and throat surgeon Dr Eric Levi showing the best way to take a nasal swab, throat swab or a combined throat and nasal swab.

**What in-person conference participants need to do:** Watch the one minute video on [how to swab your nose and throat](#). Take a daily RAT test (swabbing your nose, throat or both) before each day of the conference (both on 25 and 26 November). If possible, please do your RAT *before* arriving at the conference venue each day to avoid being sent home if the result is positive.

#### 4. *Wear a mask when indoors*

Wearing a mask is important because it not only lowers the chance that the masker will contract COVID-19, but also reduces the chance that they will spread the virus to those around them. While one-way masking might lessen the chance of spreading the virus, it is not as effective as two-way masking. Thus, we are asking that all of our in-person conference participants wear a mask at all times when in indoor spaces.

Masks can be removed when eating and drinking, though we do recommend people eat and drink outside (if weather permits) or in areas with good ventilation. Speakers will be permitted to remove their masks when presenting. However, since speaking and singing spread virus particles much more than breathing or eating, speakers may choose to keep their masks on.

Masks will be freely available to all in-person conference attendees. We will have many surgical masks available, as well as a limited supply of N95/P2 masks. As with RATs, N95 and P2 masks are freely available to people living in and visiting Aotearoa New Zealand. See [this page](#) for more information.

**What in-person conference participants need to do:** Wear a mask at all times when in indoor spaces, unless eating, drinking or presenting.