



## **COVID-19 Interim Policy regarding postponement of scheduled RTAC audits in Australia New Zealand.**

The current COVID-19 situation is unprecedented in recent times and the Prime Minister has announced that all elective surgery cases other than Category 1 and urgent Category 2 will be postponed indefinitely, from midnight Wednesday 25 March 2020. The Prime Minister also announced a raft of further physical distancing restrictions and urged all Australians to stay at home unless they had to travel for work or an emergency.

The following policy has been developed by RTAC in consultation with two certifying bodies DNVGL and Global Mark and takes effect immediately. This policy covers all clinics who currently hold accreditation under the RTAC Code of Practice version October 2017 and have a licence due for re-accreditation in 2020.

In response to the above announcement and the likely further tightening of social restrictions for the Australian public, RTAC has decided to suspend the 2020 audit program. At this time all licences will be extended for a period up to 12 months. Audits will recommence in January 2021 assuming that the crisis as determined by medical authorities operating at a federal, state, territory and provincial level have deemed that it is acceptable for normal activities to have resumed. All accreditation options listed in the COVID-19 Interim Policy regarding postponement of scheduled RTAC audits in Australia New Zealand dated 19 March 2020 are now rescinded.

Should the COVID-19 crisis resolve itself more quickly than health authorities are predicting then the audit program may resume earlier than January 2021, however, all units would be given a 3-month notice of such an event.

RTAC would also like to remind all units that the Code of Practice has not been suspended and is still in force, it is the external audits that are being suspended. Units should remain compliant and will be required to demonstrate this compliance over the entire period at their next audit in 2021.

In particular, units should pay attention to RTAC COP Section 2.9 (critical criteria 8) covering the cryostorage of gametes and embryos and Section 1.7.2 covering the closure of a unit even if that closure is only temporary.

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*Chair RTAC*