

## Novel coronavirus (COVID-19) sector update

17 March 2020

Colleagues,

We wish to update you on the evolving situation in Queensland regarding the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

The critical role your organisation plays in keeping our vulnerable children and young people, women, men and families safe in our communities is recognised, as is the impact of any potential outbreak of COVID-19 for your staff and clients.

The planning we are undertaking is about supporting a national effort to contain and slow the spread of COVID-19. Each one of us has a vital role to play in this effort, and we ask for your continued support to work together during this challenging time.

Thank you to those who have been in contact to date and provided advice of your planning and concerns. We are working through the matters which have been raised, and in addition to these updates, we are developing a Frequently Asked Questions information resource to assist with planning and response management.

### Business Continuity Plans

We are working closely with other Queensland Government agencies to ensure our Business Continuity Plans are ready and we are prepared for any potential impacts to service delivery. It is important you maintain continuity of your service delivery to your clients as outlined in your contracts. Many of our children and young people, women, men and families are already experiencing a range of hardships and vulnerabilities and it is essential that we continue to provide a strong level of support while reinforcing our care of staff.

If the contracted obligations of your organisation are impacted by COVID-19, please contact your contract manager in writing promptly, and advise how service delivery has been affected and what strategies you are implementing to minimise the impact. We will work with you to manage an agreed way forward. Any changes to contracts and deliverables will need to be discussed with your contract manager and take into account any health directions where someone connected to your service is confirmed to have contracted COVID19, or is self-isolating on medical advice.

For organisations delivering services to children in care, directly or indirectly, please seek medical advice as appropriate if you become aware a child or an associated household member is exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, and contact your Child Safety Officer or Child Safety After Hours, as soon as possible.

We are partnering with our peak bodies to ensure we are alerted to early concerns and you receive the latest information. Our Regional Directors are also in the process of convening local place-based approaches with you in preparation for any emerging incidents.

As previously advised, to assist your organisation to review and update your Business Continuity Plan, please refer to resources provided by [Queensland Council of Social Services](#) (QCOSS) or the [Community Services Industry Alliance](#) (CSIA).

You will find FAQs, information resources on good hygiene practices and translated resources on the [Queensland Health website](#).

### **Non-essential travel**

Our department has now ceased all non-essential travel, with the exception of essential client-related travel, until further notice. However, the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP) is now limiting all travel to remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, until further notice. I encourage you to comply with local protocols for travelling to remote communities. Please also consider deferring or cancelling any non-essential meetings with vulnerable groups such as Elders groups, and moving to teleconference where possible.

### **Mass gatherings**

As you would be aware, the Australian Government announced that all organised, non-essential mass gatherings of more than 500 people must be cancelled from 16 March 2020.

While there are no requirements to limit organised events of less than 500 people, our duty of care is about containment and slowing the spread of COVID-19. We are reviewing arrangements for all department and grant-funded events and will keep you updated with information on this.

### **Available support**

Important sources of information:

- [Queensland Health](#) for all the latest information on COVID-19 in Queensland.
- [Department of Education \(PDF\)](#) resource for supporting children and young people.
- [Australian Government Department of Health](#) for the latest information and fact sheets for the public, health professionals, industry, parents, schools and universities.
- [Australian Government novel coronavirus resources](#) including fact sheets, and guidelines for the general public, health professionals and industry about novel coronavirus.
- [Smartraveller](#) for the latest information and advice for safe travel overseas.
- The [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) is closely monitoring this event and is in active communication with counterparts in China. In line with standard protocols for any public health event, an incident management system has been activated across the 3 levels of WHO (country office, regional office and headquarters) and the organisation is prepared to mount a broader response, if needed.

In the meantime, please look after yourself, your family and your colleagues.