



Director-General's COVID-19 UPDATE

Deidre Mulkerin | Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women

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Dear colleagues

Sunday, as well as being Father's Day, marks the start of Child Protection Week. While this year's Child Protection Week will look a bit different due to COVID-19, the message of 'Putting children first' is as relevant as ever.

We so often talk about being partners in keeping children and families safe. With all the uncertainty and difficulties families are dealing with this year, this partnership has never been more important. No one sector of the community, or one component of the child and family support system for that matter, can tackle child and family safety and wellbeing alone. It takes government, non-government organisations and communities working together to achieve our purpose of providing a place in which children and young people are cared for, protected, safe and able to reach their full potential.

Some of these partnerships were recognised earlier today at the Child Protection Week Awards. I was fortunate to attend and present the Community Youth Response initiative with the Professional (Government) Award. Well done!!

One of our funded service providers — NPA Family and Community Services (NPAFACS) — was acknowledged with the Regional Program Award. This organisation serves five communities of the Northern Peninsula area in Far North Queensland, on the doorstep of the Torres Strait. Their client services program was recognised for its community campaigning and activities that motivate and build family and community capacity to raise secure and connected children. Congratulations NPAFACS.

You can find out more about all the outstanding award winners on the [Child Protection Week website](#). I hope you can find time during Child Protection Week to acknowledge your own organisation's contribution to keeping children and families safe by holding a small workplace event (of course, taking into account all necessary health precautions).

No Card, No Start now in effect

I'm sure you've heard of the No Card, No Start law. This new legislation that came into effect on Monday is designed to strengthen and streamline the Blue Card system, and keep Queensland children safe. If your organisation provides services to children, including DFV services who may work directly with children, the changes will apply to you.

No Card, No Start stipulates that people cannot work with children or young people until their Blue Card application has been approved. This means new employees can no longer start work while awaiting the outcome of their blue card application.

The rules around expiring cards have also changed. If you don't ensure your staff, carers or volunteers renew by the expiry date, they cannot work or care for children or young people.

A comprehensive description of all the changes and what they mean for organisations and individuals is available on the [Queensland government website](#).

Focus on residential care

We recognise that keeping young people and staff in residential care services safe and well during a potential COVID-19 outbreak poses unique challenges. The non-family based care strategic implementation group (SIG) met last week to continue to discuss how we can best prepare services to respond to a COVID-19 outbreak. The meeting included representatives from PeakCare, CSIA, service providers, the Fair Work Commission, the Services Union, Queensland Health, and the department, which allowed for all perspectives to be included.

The meeting heard about the innovative Individual Flexibility Agreements negotiated to support residential care staff and employees. An outcome of the meeting was that PeakCare will survey residential care service providers to identify how prepared they are for any potential outbreak. We will also work with PeakCare to update COVID-19 response guidelines.

COVID-19 funding boost for DFV services

As anticipated, we are seeing an increase in demand for domestic and family violence support services as a consequence of the greater pressure families are under due to COVID-19. The Queensland and Australian governments have allocated more than \$13 million in one-off COVID-related funding to support funded organisations to meet this demand. This includes \$7.5 million provided by the Queensland Government for domestic and family violence counselling and support, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family violence services; accommodation support services; perpetrator intervention programs; sexual assault services; women's health and wellbeing support services; DVConnect telephone support; and an awareness-raising campaign.

Through the Commonwealth Government Tranche 1 funding, the Australian Government has provided \$4.995 million for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Services; Family and Child Connect services; accommodation support services; services targeting women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; and a tenancy support project. A further \$950,000 in Commonwealth Government Contingency funds has been allocated for workers based in police stations; enhancements to DFV integrated service responses in six locations; and grants to two small unfunded organisations to support women establish new homes after leaving violent relationships.

The use of a further \$5.965 million from Commonwealth Tranche 2A is expected to be announced shortly.

COVID-19 information online

Just a reminder that the Queensland Government issues a COVID-19 update for stakeholders Monday to Friday (except public holidays). Visit the Queensland COVID-19 [website](#) to subscribe to the update. We also updating the COVID-19 page for service providers on our [website](#) as new information becomes available.

Thank you for your continuing support and efforts to keep Queensland children and families safe.

Warm regards

Deidre Mulkerin

Director-General

Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women

