

## **Protecting Older Australians: COVID-19 update 11 September 2020**

Today's newsletter contains information on three new Australian Government measures to protect healthcare workers from COVID-19.

Yesterday was 'R U OK?' Day and we are urging providers to check in on their staff and colleagues. This is particularly important, given the challenging environments many of you and your teams have worked in over recent months. We have included a reminder about the counselling support available to aged care workers in Victoria whose work arrangements have been altered.

There is also information on the short term home support available to older Australians on leave from residential aged care. We thank you for your hard work to protect older Australians and encourage you to share this newsletter with your colleagues and workforce.

Anyone living in an aged care facility, their family or representative who needs support should contact the Older Person's Advocacy Network on 1800 700 600.

### **Additional measures to protect healthcare workers**

The Australian Government is implementing three new measures to increase protection and reduce the number of healthcare workers being infected with COVID-19. With so much evidence emerging so quickly, these measures will help all states and territories learn from what has occurred in Victoria and new information from around the world.

The new measures include:

- Partnership between the Infection Control Expert Group and the National COVID-19 Evidence Taskforce, to review the latest evidence on infection prevention and control during COVID-19.
- Expansion of national surveillance of healthcare worker infection, to ensure we have a better understanding of COVID-19 among healthcare workers at the state and territory level.
- A new network of 'COVID-NET' epidemiologists, available on request by state and territory public health units, to assist investigating healthcare worker outbreaks and analyse data at a national level.

[Read the full statement.](#)

### **'R U OK?' day – checking on staff and colleagues**

During these stressful and challenging times it is vital that we look after ourselves and reach out to check on our fellow care workers. We should all be doing this regularly, however with yesterday being 'R U OK?' Day please make sure you are checking in with all your colleagues.

For help to know what to say after 'R U OK?' and useful resources visit the [R U OK? website.](#)

### **Counselling for Victorian aged care workers**

The Federal Government, Industry, Peak Bodies and Unions are working together to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 infections in residential aged care facilities.

A reminder that support is available for aged care workers whose regular working arrangements have changed as a result of the application of single site arrangements as set out in the Guiding Principles. These workers can get free counselling services from Converge International.

Converge International will deliver up to five free counselling sessions per person. Services include employee and manager support, career guidance, financial counselling and family support. These services are available till 10 November 2020.

Phone 1800 687 327 (free call) or visit [Converge International](#) to book an appointment. Please state that you are from the 'VIC Residential Aged Care Workforce' when booking. In addition, a Support Hub is available for Victorian aged care providers using the Principles. [The Guiding Principles Support Hub](#) by ACSA and LASA is available by phoning 1800 491 793 (free call).

### **Short-term Home Support for residents on leave**

A national model of emergency support is now available for up to eight weeks through the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) for residents of aged care homes who temporarily transition to the community.

The Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) can provide information to residents and their families on their eligibility for home support services, their risks and responsibilities and things to consider before returning a loved one to the community.

This program is not designed to provide ongoing support. If a resident wants to remain permanently in the community they will need to relinquish their position in residential aged care and contact My Aged Care for a formal assessment for a Home Care Package. More information can be found in the [fact sheet](#).