

Hello there to you All,

I hope you are keeping well in these times, following guidelines and staying safe. We are all trying to do our utmost to act in everyone's best interest in maintaining service delivery in a safe environment wherever we can. Importantly please bear with us as things can change from day to day. I won't take up any further space here as Catherine Balfour-Ogilvy (who has taken on a key COVID-19 role for us) has brought together a very informative update to help you all through these times. I would just like to reiterate a key point from this update: **It is vital that we all put practices in place to reduce transmission of COVID-19.**

Craig Stanbridge, CEO.

SERVICE UPDATE

Continuing from our previous Edition (March), we would like to share the new plans in place to deliver services to those most at need. It has been an extremely busy month, with many changes occurring in our regions and they continue, so at the outset we would like to state that this information is correct at time of printing.

Before we talk about plans, we would like to reiterate that you are able to put your services on hold if that is your choice. We know that this is a short-term arrangement and we encourage you to take the advice of those you trust or talk to your GP in relation to service delivery.

Back to our plans. We have utilised contractor feedback and our notes to better understand:

- Those who may be impacted by hygiene including social distancing,
- Those who may be impacted if services are put on hold.

Also, we have asked our contractors to provide us with information about their:

- Access to Personal Protective Equipment including gloves and hand sanitiser,
- Ability to deliver additional services if required.

We did this to identify who may be most impacted by the possible affects the coronavirus (COVID- 19). Our Operations Team will review the information with a view of developing ways to deliver services to those people most at risk of changes to services delivery. As a reminder, it remains extremely important that you keep us up to date with your health status and change in need.

People have asked, [will we stop providing services like domestic assistance](#) (house cleaning) as it may be a non-essential service. The answer to this is, not at this stage. However, that can change. We may be directed by the Government (our funding body) to deliver certain services. We may not. Putting aside Government direction, it is our job as a funded service provider to ensure that the transmission of COVID- 19 is reduced. Therefore, if the risk of transmission increases and you have not put your services on hold, we will review your individual circumstances with you and work out the best way forward.

On this, the approach to supporting those who receive services through Home Care Package will be different. This program is supported by a signed care plan, as part of the Home Care Package Agreement. Generally, people receiving services through this program have more complex needs and these may be prioritised.

As all providers struggle to access [Personal Protective Equipment](#), we have accessed a range of supply options to support our contractors. This has been challenging as this equipment is extremely limited and will be distributed on priority. This priority is based on a range of things including the delivery of services to someone with a positive diagnosis of COVID- 19. As an update, we haven't had anyone – customer, contractor or employee who has tested positive for COVID- 19.

Our entire workforce has completed specialised [COVID- 19 training](#). Workforce includes employees and contractors. This training has provided us all with a better understanding of how the virus presents (symptoms) and how it is transmitted and how our practice can reduce the spread. **It is vital that we all put practices in place to reduce transmission as risks are identified.**

TOP TIPS

Social distancing is a must when looking to flatten the curve of this virus. Many group activities have ceased, and the message is clear, **we should only leave our home for the essentials**. The Government has implemented many strategies to help people practice social distancing. This section outlines a few of those strategies including some that our customers are currently using, and that our contractors have suggested.

Telehealth - If you need to see a health professional and you're 70+ or 50+ (Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people) or have a chronic health condition or are immunocompromised or have been exposed to COVID- 19, you can get bulk billed consultations by video conference or telephone with a GP; Specialist: Allied mental health professional or Nurse Practitioner. Your surgery/ clinic will be able to confirm your eligibility.

Church - If you are a regular church goer, one of our customers has suggested tuning into Songs of Praise on ABC Television. Sunday mornings, usually at 11.30am.

Shopping - Contractors are encouraging people to contact their local supermarket and check if they can set up an account for shopping. Contractors are very happy to collect shopping on the way to your home. In some towns, you may be able to access online shopping. Online shopping can be organised and ordered by your family and both Coles and Woolworths have a Priority Assistance program designed to provide support for older and/ or vulnerable people.

Give a bear hug to your grandchildren - A suggestion from a contractor 'An elderly friend stated how she was going to miss her great grandchildren. I suggested they could still come by and chat through the window. This then got me thinking that if she had a bear or soft toy to hug and get her Great Grandchildren to do the same with their bear on the other side of the window, then it was like giving each other a hug'.

Phone roster - Many customers are part of a phone roster, a way to keep in touch with others. It works like this - five friends are on the list and each day or every second day one of those friends calls the other four.

Register for Telecross REDi COVID- 19 service - Register to receive a free daily phone call from a Red Cross volunteer who will enquire after your health, how you are managing supplies and reiterate any Government advice. Call 1800 188 071 or you can register online @ <https://register.redcross.org.au/>

Coronavirus (COVID- 19) App - Launched last week, 'The feature enables us to talk to Australians in terms of basic health advice, updates on the measures that are being put in place by State and Federal Governments' (Scott Morrison). Head to your App store and download the App on your mobile device. Also, you can get nifty information from WhatsApp. Here are the links:

Apple: <https://apps.apple.com/au/app/coronavirus-australia/id1503846231>

Android: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=au.gov.health.covid19>

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

- Coronavirus (COVID- 19) Health Information Line. **1800 020 080**. If you are seeking information on coronavirus (COVID- 19), this line operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you require translating or interpreting services, call **131 450**
- Country Home Services. **1300 773 202**. Call us to update your health status.
- Mental Health Supports. Call Beyond blue. **1300 22 4636** or Lifeline **13 11 14** for 24 hour, 7 day a week support.

IMPORTANT SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The Department of Health remains the best source of information. The 24-hour news channel (ABC) broadcasts Australian Government advice and directives. Contractors have asked us to point out that it is extremely important that you access good advice from reliable sources.



Phone: 1300 773 202

www.countryhomeservices.org.au

Email: admin@countryhomeservices.org.au

The funding for these services is supported by the Australian Government Department of Health. Visit the Department's website (www.health.gov.au) for more information.

