

## **CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) INFORMATION** Issued 20 March 2020

### **1. Preventing the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19)**

As the situation is changing rapidly, it is important to follow reliable information sources to ensure that you are helping prevent and/or slowing down the spread of the coronavirus.

[Australian Government Department of Health](#)

### **2. General advice - protecting workforce (employees and volunteers) and the community you work with**

- Safeguarding your volunteers
- Volunteers are considered as 'workers' under Work Health and Safety (WHS) Laws and as such should be afforded the same considerations as a paid employee.

[COVID-19 Information for Employers – click here](#)

[COVID-19 Safe Work Australia Advice – click here](#)

- Support self-care and strong communication for volunteers
  - Ensure volunteers feel supported to make decisions in their best interests around whether to continue to volunteer or not.
- It is recommended that you advise/speak with your volunteers about different ways of volunteering, for example continuing to volunteer remotely if applicable.
  - If the organisation decides to suspend volunteer activities, commit to staying in regular contact with volunteers to keep them updated on latest developments
  - You may have some volunteers that also require support, try to establish mechanisms where they can continue to have the social connection they may have received through volunteering.
- **Share the latest information from trusted authorities:**
  - Use all your communication channels to provide clear information from trusted sources. Utilise posters and emails to promote hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.

[Australian Government Department of Health](#)

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- Promote social distance:
  - Encourage staff and volunteers to keep a social distance of 1.5 metres from one another. Promote handshake free meetings – people can wave and verbally greet each other instead. Hold virtual meetings when possible.
- **When should volunteers not deliver services:**
  - When they have travelled or have been in contact with someone who has travelled overseas recently
  - If they have been in close contact with someone infected with COVID-19
  - If they are unwell or have an acute respiratory infection (cold/flu, sinus etc)

Or if your organisation's policies stipulates parameters relating to volunteering during this pandemic.

You can assess the risk of infection to your staff, volunteers and clients by using the [Self-Assessment Tool – COVID-19 Fact Sheet](#) provided by the Tasmanian Government.

- **Set strict expectations on unwell staff and volunteers:**
  - Communicate clearly the need for all unwell staff to stay at home. If a team member who is unwell comes into the office, ensure that they go home and seek medical attention if needed.
- **Offer handwashing facilities:**
  - Handwashing facilities should be available and well supplied. Provide soap, hand sanitiser, tissues and cleaning products around your buildings for staff, volunteers, clients and visitors.
- **Schedule cleaning regimes:**
  - Frequently clean key areas including keyboards, desks and door handles.
- **Support your team working from home:**
  - It may be possible for your staff and volunteers to voluntarily work from home. This may also become required, particularly if impacted if school closures come into effect. Consideration should be given to the infrastructure, equipment and processes needed to allow your team to work remotely. These could include secure, remote access to your files, video conferencing and telephone facilities and guidance on working from home safely.
- **Protect vulnerable groups:**
  - If your organisation works with people with weakened immune systems, older people, those with disabilities or those with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease, it's important that you plan to limit their risk to being exposed.
  - Consider time off for vulnerable volunteers and those who are understandably concerned about their health.



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*Leading volunteering in South Australia  
and the Northern Territory*

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- **Cancel or postpone any public events or mass gatherings:**
  - As per Federal Government instructions, all gatherings of more than 500 people should not go ahead. You should also consider the viability of your smaller events, including training, as you do not want to put anyone at unnecessary risk. You may find it more suitable to postpone your event to a later date.
- **Hold meetings via video or tele conferencing:**
  - Utilise video or tele conferencing for internal and external meetings, including board and committee meetings.
- **Review travel risks and arrangements:**
  - Consider if travel is necessary. Maintain updated and clear advice for staff and volunteers travelling.
  - [Smartraveller.gov.au](https://www.smartraveller.gov.au) provides Australians with the latest information and advice for safe travel overseas.
- **Look after physical and mental health and wellbeing:**
  - If your team is working from home encourage them to be physically active during the day and to stay in touch with their colleagues through email, phone and social media (as appropriate).
  - Support staff and volunteers to look after their mental wellbeing. Remind them to take time to switch off from all things COVID-19 and focus on things they can control.
- **Record key contacts:**
  - Ensure all emergency contact details are up to date.
- **Be prepared at home:**
  - Recommend staff and volunteers have two weeks' supply of food and medication on hand for all residents and pets. Encourage being prepared, discourage panic buying.

### **Stay informed:**

We hope this has given you a starting point for planning your COVID-19 response. We encourage you to continue to follow health and safety guidelines as advised by appropriate and relevant authorities:

- [SA Health](#)
- [NT Government](#)
- [Australian Government Department of Health](#)
- [World Health Organisation](#)

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### **3. Advice for volunteers**

Volunteers support the provision of essential services - providing food, shelter, transport, recreational, justice, education, communications, health and environmental services.

Volunteer action is especially important for those who depend on the care of others for whatever reason - the aged and frail, children and young people finding their way, people living in regional or remote areas, or people unable to fend for themselves.

Volunteering is a crucial pathway for participation and a way to give back to our communities.

### **I am a volunteer, am I obliged to continue volunteering?**

Volunteers are under no obligation to continue to volunteer if they do not feel comfortable doing so.

If you do continue in your volunteering role then your Volunteer Involving Organisation has an obligation under [Work Health and Safety Laws](#) to provide protections around health and safety. You may wish to have a conversation with your Volunteer Involving Organisation (VIO) about different ways of volunteering, for example continuing to volunteer remotely.

### **When you should not volunteer:**

You should not volunteer if you:

- Have travelled or have been in contact with someone who has travelled overseas recently
- Have been in close contact with someone infected with COVID-19
- Are unwell or have an acute respiratory infection (cold/flu, sinus etc)
- You can assess the risk of infection by using the [Self-Assessment Tool – COVID-19 Fact Sheet](#) provided by the Tasmanian Government.

If you have a confirmed case, you need to isolate yourself to prevent it spreading to other people.

For more information

- [Australian Government Department of Health](#)

### **What happens if your client is unwell? (if applicable to your program)**

- If you arrive to your volunteering role and your client appears unwell, first ensure you are following full infection prevention control procedures for your own safety. It is then recommended to follow your organisation's procedures in notifying of illness and need of medical assistance.

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