



# MEMORANDUM

**To:** All Community Care Clients and Participants  
**From:** Richard de Haast, National Director  
The Salvation Army Aged Care  
**Date:** 23 March 2020  
**Subject:** **Coronavirus (COVID-19) update**

Dear all,

In the last 24 hours there have been several announcements from the Federal Government and State / Territory Governments detailing changes in how certain businesses deliver their services, as well as the closures of schools in some states. We recognise that this may cause increased uncertainty for you and your loved ones and will certainly impact your everyday lives. I would like to take this opportunity to assure you that these announcements do not impact the aged care industry and the services that we provide.

As you would be aware, we are taking our advice and guidance from the Department of Health and we have shared some information from them further on in this note.

I would also like to urge you to call your Care Co-ordinator if you are feeling unwell so that we can keep an eye on you and also let your care worker know this before they visit you so they are prepared. Also, as tough as it may sound, I would like to urge you to ask that your family and visitors do not visit you if they are unwell. This will minimise the potential of you contracting any illnesses from visitors. Our staff are aware of the added precautions they need to take when caring for you in your home, not least of which is to practice good hand hygiene – this is the most effective way to prevent the spread of the virus.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

The Department of Health has released a helpful resource for older Australians which includes frequently asked questions. Below are a few questions and answers that may assist you. You can find the full list on the Department of Health's website at [https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/03/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-older-australians\\_3.pdf](https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/03/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-older-australians_3.pdf)

## **Why is this virus so dangerous for older people?**

The risk of serious illness from COVID-19 increases with age. The highest rate of fatalities is among older people, particularly those with other serious health conditions or a weakened immune system. There is currently no cure or vaccine for COVID-19, or immunity in the community. For people living with dementia or some form of cognitive impairment, the ability to follow instruction or to alert others about potential symptoms may be a challenge. This is especially so where there is a limited capacity to communicate verbally or express pain and discomfort. In this situation, observation by someone who knows the person with dementia may assist in identifying changes in their health. To protect older Australians and those with compromised immune systems we all need to work together to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

## **Should I be wearing a mask?**

Only people who have a confirmed case of COVID-19 are required to wear surgical masks,



and only when you are around other people. If you are well, you do not need to wear a surgical mask. Specific requirements are in place for people who have returned from overseas or have been in close contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus. If you are required to self-isolate, you should use a surgical mask (if you have one) in the following circumstances:

- You need to leave your home for any reason and will be in public areas
- You are visiting a medical facility
- You have symptoms and other people are present in the same room as you.
- When a Home Care worker attends your home to provide your care and services.

### **I have a Home Care Package - what does this mean for me?**

Consumers with Home Care Packages have flexibility with how they spend their funds over a wide range of care and services to support to stay safe, healthy and independent in their home. The Australian Government will ensure home care providers have even greater support to meet the changing needs of clients as the virus unfolds. With support from the Australian Government, home care providers are working hard to meet people's needs during the crisis. The services you currently receive through your Home Care Package will continue. If you are concerned about the way your current services are being delivered or would like to make changes to your services because of the COVID-19 outbreak, please contact your provider. You can also speak with your provider about changes to your usual services, such as arranging help to go to the shops or arranging your Carer to shop on your behalf.

### **What happens if I've spent all the money in my home care package this month?**

In emergency situations, if an older Australian has fully allocated their Home Care Package, they may access short term home support services (for a range of services including nursing, personal care and meals). Speak with your home care provider about these measures.

The complete list of frequently asked questions runs to seven pages and so we have just highlighted a couple of them here. I would encourage you to have a look through them and share them with your friends and family.

If you have any questions or feedback, please feel free to contact me directly at [Richard.deHaast@salvationarmy.org.au](mailto:Richard.deHaast@salvationarmy.org.au).

If you did want more information, please visit The Department of Health's website. A collection of resources about the virus is also available on <https://www.health.gov.au/>

*Take care of yourself and others*

*Richard*

Richard de Haast  
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The Salvation Army Aged Care