

Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
Minister for Children, Youth and Families
Minister for Health
Minister for Urban Renewal
Member for Kurrajong

Dear community service partners and providers

The ACT Government is committed to ensuring the wellbeing of workers and vulnerable Canberrans during these unprecedented times. We understand that you are already working hard to minimise the spread of infection and the impact this will have on your services. Please continue to monitor advice, which will be updated daily from the ACT Health web page at health.act.gov.au/about-our-health-system/novel-coronavirus-covid-19 or call the Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080.

The Government will continue to work with you to meet the needs of our community's most vulnerable people, through both financial and regulatory support. The stimulus package announced by the Chief Minister last week committed \$7 million to assist non-government organisations to deal with the increased demand for services throughout this time.

The stimulus package will provide financial support for service providers who deliver care for vulnerable people, the establishment of a central repository for health and hygiene products, and the roll out of a series of grants for services across the community and health sectors.

As the circumstances continue to unfold rapidly, the ACT Health Directorate (ACTHD) will work with organisations to prioritise sector demands. The immediate priorities are to work with the health and community sectors to identify:

- services that are unable to meet the terms set out in funding agreements as a result of COVID-19;
- where diagnoses of COVID-19 in staff or service users result in changes to business practices, for example shortages of staff leading to significant impact on capacity to deliver services; and
- where social distancing measures impact on an organisation's capacity to deliver services.

ACTHD is working in partnership with key health service providers to ensure continuity of access to critical medicines, treatments, health services and residential facilities are maintained within the community. Work is also being undertaken to source personal protection equipment, such as masks for organisations delivering essential services.

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In the coming week, the ACT Government will be rolling out a Food Relief Coordination response by partnering with local food relief providers to deliver urgent food and essential needs through a food pantry model. Eligibility to access these supplies will target those who are considered the most vulnerable members of our community and those impacted directly by COVID-19.

I know that organisations funded by the ACT Government will continue to meet the expectations of agreements in place to the best of your ability. However, I appreciate that these are challenging times and that your organisation may need to adapt its service delivery model in response. To provide you with a level of flexibility, ACTHD is suspending the need for you to seek formal approval to vary your service delivery model until further notice.

I am aware that your staff will be understandably concerned about leave and their work. The ACT Government is offering support to all staff including casual workers, and I would like to see that all of our community partners join us in supporting their workforces, including by using existing funding to support COVID related leave. I encourage you to contact ACTHD about the Government's support package to ensure that your organisation can continue to support its staff throughout this period.

ACTHD will defer routine reporting requirements for all providers for the time being to reduce the administrative burden on your organisations at this time. Your contract manager will be in contact with you to discuss this change in reporting and to discuss your organisation's specific needs, to brief you on available support, and to help you ensure continuity of your services. You can email issues and questions about continuity of service to PSRContracts@act.gov.au.

Directorates are working to coordinate responses to our community organisations and our most vulnerable residents across Government. Some organisations will already have received similar advice from Minister Orr.

In addition to bookmarking ACTHD's COVID-19 web page, you may wish to follow ACT Health on Facebook and Twitter, if you don't already. The Australian Government is also producing information and resources you may find useful, as well as providing regular updates on the national situation on its COVID-19 health alert web page at www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert.

I would like to thank you for your continued commitment to the Canberra community. Please be assured that the Government will continue to support your important work during this unprecedented challenge.

Yours sincerely



Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA

24 MAR 2020