



DELIVERING AGED CARE SERVICES IN A 'LIVING WITH COVID-19' WORLD

Australia has been demonstrably successful in limiting the degree of outbreak in the community and in residential aged care.

The approach of governments is therefore to gradually reduce the restrictions on day to day activities, including movement and gathering limitations to reach a new way of living and working in an environment where the threat of COVID-19 remains.

For those providing services to the most vulnerable to the virus there will be particular concerns and considerations that will need to be factored into any re-established activities.

Our current expectation is that there will not be, for the foreseeable future, a return to a pre-COVID-19 version of normal. Therefore, all resumed activities will need to factor in how they can be safely and sustainably reintroduced, re-established or redesigned.

There are issues to be addressed at both the organisational/employer level and those as a service operator. In addition, aged care operators will be working in a complex environment of intersecting federal and state/territory legislative frameworks.

Organisational preparedness and planning

A number of resources aimed at employers have been published to support organisations as they emerge from the restrictions imposed to respond to COVID-19 so that they plan for and implement COVID-19 safe workplaces.

The [Prime Minister and Cabinet tool](#) is a comprehensive risk tool to enable services, to establish COVID-19 safe working environments and arrangements within the employer-controlled workplace. It is helpfully divided into three sections: Keeping People Safe, Adapting My Business and Accessing support and assistance. This is a simple but useful way of identifying priorities and setting up plans for an employer in an often confusing landscape.

[Safe Work Australia](#) has also prepared a number of resources and advice about how organisations respond to COVID-19 as part of the work, health and safety responsibilities. This includes a resource on key considerations for undertaking a risk assessment associated with COVID-19 ([click here](#)).

Workforce planning

Moving forward in a COVID-safe workplace it will be important for aged care employers to ensure that their training, policies, procedures and contracts of employment are up to date and take into account the new COVID-safe provisions. The ability to adapt the workforce and its practices will be integral to an aged care employer's success in this new environment.

It would be useful for management to start with a list of all changes to how the organisation employs people that:

- have been put in place and
- need to be put in place, including both those that will remain in place and
- those that will phase out. Management can then work from there to see what provisions need to be formalised in training, policies, procedures and contracts of employment to properly reflect the organisation's new COVID-safe provisions and embed them into every work day.

Some examples of areas to consider are as follows:

- When employing a new employee or an employee has returned after being absent during a critical time, it will be important to ensure that there is an induction process in place for them which deals with the organisation's new COVID-safe procedures. The employee will need to be informed of and trained in the organisation's COVID-safe procedures so that they can successfully implement them. This will keep them, other staff and clients/residents safe. It would be useful to have a record of this COVID-19 safe training for future reference.
- When implementing new COVID-safe procedures it will be important to train all current employees in how that will operate. This will enable a safe and successful implementation. It would be useful to have a record of those who have undertaken the COVID-19 training to ensure compliance with the direction to undertake the training and for future reference.
- It may be useful for aged care employers to consider keeping a record of the other organisations that each employee works for so that if there is a COVID case or outbreak at those organisations, it will be possible to quickly identify any risks from these employees. This could be updated with employees every 6 or 12 months or you could have a register that employees need to update as they change employers. This would need to be supported with a new policy which makes clear the requirement on employees. This can form part of your COVID-safe procedures that are implemented across your organisation. It can also be added to the contract of employment of new employees that it is a condition of their employment to provide this information for that purpose.
- For workplaces that have seen an increase in aggression against frontline employees arising from restrictions on access to the premises or another COVID-related measure, it would be appropriate to ensure that employees receive training on dealing with difficult behaviours and that there is a procedure in place for managing such incidents. SafeWork NSW have a [sample training program](#) that could be tailored to an employer's needs. There is also a [SafeWork NSW Guide for preventing and responding to work-related violence](#) that can assist employers.
- Given the additional working hours that employees have been performing for single and multiple employers, it would be beneficial for aged care employers to assess whether fatigue is an issue in their workforces. Safe Work Australia has a [Guide for managing the risk of fatigue at work](#) which can assist with identifying fatigue, identifying factors that may contribute to or increase the risk of fatigue and controlling the risks. As employees are performing duties that often have a clear impact on the safety of themselves and others the impact of fatigue can be serious in aged care workplaces.
- An assessment of risk for people who work alone should be considered. If a risk assessment shows that it is not

possible for the work to be done safely by a lone worker, arrangements for providing help or backup should be put in place. Lone workers should not be at more risk than other employees. This may require extra risk control measures.

State/territory based instruments

Each jurisdiction will have different and evolving orders in relation to the requirements in their areas. These do change regularly and it is important for providers to stay up to date with the latest iterations.

Australian Capital Territory COVID-19 site	South Australia COVID-19 site
New South Wales COVID-19 site	Tasmania COVID-19 site
Northern Territory COVID-19 site	Victoria COVID-19 site
Queensland COVID-19 site	Western Australia COVID-19 site

Service preparedness and planning

Below we have included some information for considerations to be factored into the planning for each type of service operation.

The primary factors to be considered are:

- a regularly reviewed and documented risk assessment which factors in the local circumstances in which the client and provider is operating (e.g. local outbreaks);
- nature of the services which are being considered and the availability of services from other organisations (e.g. transport services for respite day services);
- the needs and demands from clients and residents for wellbeing services re-introduction balanced against the precautionary approach to maintaining safety; and
- the costs and sustainability considerations that would need to be factored into planning for services to be resumed in COVID-19 safe ways.

Home Care services -

Q. My client who lives alone wants his care worker to take him grocery shopping, visit a coffee shop, and go for walks, is that permitted?

You must follow state-based health guidelines and keep abreast of changes in restrictions as they occur.

You must conduct a risk assessment in partnership with the client so that he understands the risks of exposure to infection when in the community and so can make informed choices. Discuss alternatives and other ways to meet his needs, reduce infection risks and be able to maintain a 1.5 metre social distances where possible.

Conduct WH&S risk assessments with staff or volunteers and together work on ways to reduce risks and protect staff and clients when on outings with clients. Including, thorough cleaning of cars before and after every client activity and other infection control activities.

Follow the latest guidelines for Home Care Providers: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guide-for-home-care-providers>

CHSP services

Q. When can we recommence social support group activities?

You must follow state-based health guidelines and keep abreast of changes in restrictions as they occur.

Re-commencement of face to face social support group activities can only occur in those states or territories easing restrictions to allow face to face social activities.

Where health guidelines permit social activities, you must continue to keep abreast of changes in restrictions as they occur.

Before recommencement, you must have appropriate infection control safeguards in place and undertake health and safety risk assessments for all client, carers, employees, volunteers and contractors.

Before recommencing, you will need to:

- o develop a [COVID safe plan](#) for your workplace
- o ensure that activities enable all participants (staff and clients/carers) adhere to social distancing and infection control requirements
- o ensure people can stay 1.5 metres away from each other during these activities whenever and wherever possible
- o maintain good hand washing and cough/sneeze hygiene
- o ensure those participating (staff and clients) are well before they participate.
- o encourage staff and clients to download the COVIDSafe app so the virus can be found quickly if there is an outbreak
- o review client care and services support plan to include social support group activities

Reference: <https://www.health.gov.au/news/newsletters/protecting-older-australians-covid-19-update-21-may-2020>

Residential care services

Q. Do I still have to ensure all persons attending my RACF have provided evidence of having a current 2020 Influenza Vaccination?

Yes, Unless the vaccination is not 'available' to them, due to a history of anaphylaxis, Guillian- Barre, or certain cancer treatments. (Check each States' direction)

Q. Do I still have to screen all staff and all visitors for the health checks?

Yes, now is not the time to become complacent – activities instigated to keep us COVID Safe, such as physical distancing, screening health checks and good handwashing will need to become our new normal.

Q. How long will restricted visiting be continued in RACF's?

For the time being restrictions will be in place. As the AHPPC advises National Cabinet on the easing of restrictions generally there may flow changes to local state and territory directions.

Q. Do I still need to have, follow, review and evaluate a COVID Management Plan?

Yes, absolutely! And this needs to be trialled and tested – the first 72 hours are critical – do you know your staffing contingencies, how much stock of PPE do you have, and can you create an "isolation area"?

Retirement living

The easing of restrictions on the use of community facilities and visitation in retirement villages has been the number one topic of discussion and questioning around the country. Each state regulator is easing restrictions at different times. The following links will provide information for operators as directed by each state regulator. Overall, retirement villages in all states are expected to ease restrictions in line with community directives. There have been no 'specific' directives for retirement villages but operators are responsible for managing the risk in their villages and may choose to ease restrictions differently to manage risk. The following information is current at time of writing (stage 1 easing) but can change frequently. LASA will continue to keep members updated as changes occur.

With thanks to Minter Ellison for the table provided.

Jurisdiction	Latest Updates	Latest Public Health Directions (Home Confinement and Gatherings) current as at 9:00am 25 May 2020
QLD	<p>From midday 1 June - 20 people are permitted to gather at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ restaurants, cafes and pubs (complying with a COVID Safe Checklist and noting additional requirements in the Direction) ■ homes ■ gyms, health clubs and outdoor community sport (noting additional requirements in the Direction) ■ non-contact indoor and outdoor community sport ■ pools (indoor and outdoor) and community sports clubs (noting additional requirements in the Direction) ■ museums, art galleries and historic sites ■ libraries ■ places of worship and religious and civil ceremonies ■ community facilities, such as community centres and halls (with a COVID Safe Checklist) ■ indoor cinemas ■ open homes and auctions ■ beauty therapy, nail salons and now tanning, tattoo parlours and spas (with a COVID Safe Checklist) <p>Additionally:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ intrastate travel restrictions are lifted (excluding biosecurity or restricted zones for indigenous communities) ■ overnight stays can be resumed ■ 50 people can attend a funeral and 20 people at a wedding <p>If there is an Industry COVIDSafe plan or Site Specific COVIDSafe plan that is approved by health officials, than more than 20 people (per discrete area) will be permitted to gather at the above venues (excluding homes and beauty services) in accordance with that plan. More information is available about Industry COVIDSafe plans here</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The one person per 4 square meter rule still applies ■ Health Minister, Steven Miles has said that very large venues can erect temporary partitions to allow them to host groups of 20 ■ guidance and a factsheet for preparation of Industry COVID Safe plans has been published ■ The advice is for businesses is to work with their relevant Government Agency for further advice to ensure the plan is comprehensive (evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Restrictions on Businesses, Activities and Undertakings Direction ■ Movement and Gathering Direction

Jurisdiction	Latest Updates	Latest Public Health Directions (Home Confinement and Gatherings) current as at 9:00am 25 May 2020
QLD	<p>of relevant industry stakeholders is required) and submit plans for approval by email to: COVID-19.Industryplans@health.qld.gov.au</p> <p>There is currently no specific Industry COVIDSafe Plan for retirement villages</p> <p>Operators should be aware that there could be multiple Industry COVIDSafe Plans relevant to facilities in retirement villages. The Government has flagged that industries eligible to develop an industry plan include (but are not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ gyms, health clubs and yoga studios; and ■ restaurants and cafes <p>These industry plans are yet to be released. We will advise when that occurs or available plans can be monitored on the Queensland Government COVID Safe Businesses website here.</p>	
NSW	<p>From 1 June, the Premier revealed that an announcement on gyms, dance studios and community sport will be made in the near future</p> <p>From 1 June a further easing of restrictions commenced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ museums, galleries and libraries re-open ■ pubs, clubs, cafes and restaurants can have up to 50 customers (or one customer per 4 square meters excluding staff) per existing separated seated area ■ beauty salons offering nail, waxing, tanning and beauty services can begin treatments under strict COVID-safe guidelines (capacity must not exceed 10 customers) ■ community centres may re-open for the following purposes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — to provide assistance to vulnerable members of the public — as an early education facility — to provide counselling or support services ■ Industry guidelines for COVID safe workplaces re-opening on 1 June are now available ■ 20 people will be able to gather at weddings and up to 50 people will be able to attend a funeral, including at places of worship ■ The 5 person limit on visitors to a home still applies. Public gatherings of not more than 10 people are now permitted <p>The updated order also directs employers to allow employees to work from home if reasonably practicable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Public Health (COVID-19 Restrictions on Gathering and Movement) Order (No 3) 2020

Jurisdiction	Latest Updates	Latest Public Health Directions (Home Confinement and Gatherings) current as at 9:00am 25 May 2020
VIC	<p>On 29 May the Premier released a statement encouraging Victorians to continue working from home where possible. This is also included in the Stay Safe direction</p> <p>From 11:59pm 31 May a maximum of 20 people are permitted to gather at the following venues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ at a household or outdoors ■ libraries and other community facilities ■ community facilities (e.g. community centres and halls) ■ entertainment and cultural venues (museums, drive-in cinemas) ■ swimming pools (with additional safety requirements) ■ community sport activities (provided the sport is outdoors, non-competitive, non-contact and able to be played 1.5m apart) ■ beauty and personal care services (nail salons, spas, tattoo parlours) provided contact details are kept ■ auctions and inspections (those conducting the activity are not included in the 20 person limit and details of persons attending must be kept) ■ non-food and drink markets ■ overnight stays can resume at private residences or other accommodation (including campgrounds provided there are no communal facilities) ■ cafes, restaurants and pubs will be re-opened to serve meals to up to 20 customers at a time (per enclosed space) <p>From 22 June, provided rates of community transmission remain low:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ indoor fitness and recreation facilities will open for up to 20 people per space and 10 people per activity ■ 50 people will be permitted at restaurants and cafes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Stay Safe Directions (replaces the Stay at Home directions (No 7)) ■ Restricted Activity Directions (No 9)

Jurisdiction	Latest Updates	Latest Public Health Directions (Home Confinement and Gatherings) current as at 9:00am 25 May 2020
WA	<p>From Friday 29 May 2020 remaining intrastate travel restrictions were lifted, excluding travel to some areas including biosecurity zones within the Kimberly region and remote Aboriginal communities</p> <p>Phase 3 of the WA roadmap commences on 6 June. Non-work indoor and outdoor gatherings of 100 people per single space (and up to 300 people over multiple spaces) will be permitted at various venues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Closure and Restriction (Limit the Spread) Directions (No 3)
SA	<p>On 25 May Premier Steven Marshall announced that SA is fast-tracking stage 2 restrictions</p> <p>From 1 June, up to 80 people are permitted at the following venues/activities (provided they a split across discrete rooms/areas in groups of 20):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ pubs, cafes and restaurants ■ gyms (indoor classes are limited to 10 participants) ■ beauty, nails, tattoo, massage (non-therapeutic) ■ cinemas, theatres, galleries and museums ■ places of worship ■ non- contact outdoor sport (competition) (max 20 people) ■ non-contact indoor sport and indoor recreation activities (20 people max per room; 10 max participants per group class) <p>Originally these venues were to be re-opened on 5 June with a limit of 20 persons</p> <p>Businesses re-opening after COVID-19 restrictions will need to create a COVID-Safe Plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Emergency Management (Public Activities) (COVID-19) Direction 2020 (replaces the Non-essential Business and Other Activities No 7) (COVID-19) Direction 2020
TAS	<p>Stage 2 commences on 15 June. Gatherings of up to 20 people at various venues (restaurants/cafes, cinemas, museums, galleries, theatres, gyms, beauty services including day spas) will be permitted.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Stay at home requirements - No 5 ■ Gatherings Direction (No 10)
NT	<p>Chief Minister, Michael Gunner stated on 26 May that border restrictions are flexible and the NT will not wait for community transmission around the country to be eliminated entirely before opening borders.</p> <p>Stage 3 commences from 5 June (midday). All businesses, facilities and services previously restricted will be able to resume.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Directions to close certain places, businesses and activities (No 35)

Jurisdiction	Latest Updates	Latest Public Health Directions (Home Confinement and Gatherings) current as at 9:00am 25 May 2020
ACT	<p>On 26 May the Chief Minister announced Canberra's recovery plan</p> <p>From 11:59pm Friday 29 May (subject to the 4 square meters per person rule) 20 people are permitted to gather at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ homes (there are exceptions where two households come together resulting in a gathering of more than 20 people)■ beauty therapy businesses (nail salons, tanning, waxing, day spas, tattoo businesses). A record of customers is required■ indoor sport<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ galleries, museums■ social sport can recommence (max 20 people)■ community centres can re-open■ real estate open houses and auctions■ cafes, bars, restaurants and clubs will be able to cater for up to 20 people per indoor space or outdoor area (a guide on the size of the space and maximum no of people is available here) – some larger venues will be able to accommodate up to 150 patrons■ Indoor gyms and fitness centres can re-open (i.e. 20 per indoor space)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Restricted Activities - Gatherings, Business or Undertakings Emergency Direction 2020

Don't forget that as part of your LASA Membership you can contact us for all your specific needs. Please reach out to us during normal business hours by calling **1300 111 636**.

