

Dear Clients, Carers and Family Members,

Further to my update to you in May, we were hoping that the impact of COVID was reducing. Instead, with the new strains of COVID, as well as winter colds and flus, we have seen a high rate of clients and team members needing to isolate, recuperate and regain energy after having COVID.

This is a national challenge with many hospitals across the country unable to cope with the numbers of those needing care. Unfortunately this impacts greatly on our aged care workforces with vacancy rates up to 40% and the Australian Defence Forces continuing to provide supports where required.

While we at Melville Cares are not experiencing the large vacancy rates as elsewhere, we are facing significant staffing challenges. Because of this we have had to make the decision to put a hold on any new referrals to ensure we can best meet the needs of our current clients. This is a very difficult decision as we are aware of many people requiring supports in our community.

#### **What impact will this have on my services?**

Due to the number of team members isolating, we have had to move services to other times and team members, and in some cases, it has been necessary to cancel services. Please be assured we will always speak with you to ensure you won't be left without essential services, and limit cancellations to domestic assistance, or other services, where family members may be able to assist, such as medication administration. We work very hard to see what can be changed so your service can go ahead, but in some instances it just isn't possible.

We know this is frustrating for some of our clients, and it is difficult for our team members to feel they are letting you down. We continue to work hard to bring on new team members, as well as providing the safest environment to keep our team well. Please be assured we endeavour to ensure any cancellations are minimal and we appreciate your patience and understanding while we work through these challenges.

#### **What steps are Melville Cares taking to ensure our safety?**

All staff and volunteers continue to wear masks while providing your services. This is imperative, as along with regular hand washing and infection precautions, masks provide our strongest method to keep each other safe. Masks remain mandatory for all clients travelling in Melville Cares' vehicles. This is a requirement under the current restrictions as we come under public transport provisions, and we strongly support this.

We continue to execute our COVID-19 Plan which adheres to all government requirements, and is regularly reviewed.

We appreciate that not everyone can have COVID vaccinations due to underlying health reasons, or other reasons, and some find wearing a mask difficult. Please be assured we will work with you to look at other options, with our main priority being continuity of your supports. Where there are alternatives that still maintain your safety and that of our team members, we will consider them.

**In addition, it is timely to consider the influenza vaccination. If you would like assistance with transport to your GP, or local vaccination clinic, please speak with your coordinator.**

### **What if I get COVID-19, or my carer does?**

Please remember if you feel unwell, or may be isolating with suspected COVID-19, or have tested positive, we have specialist trained COVID-19 Response Team members who can continue to support you with services. You may need no more than some groceries dropped off, or a check-in to see how you are. Others may require more support, particularly if you have family and friends also isolating and your usual support group are restricted. Please be assured that we are here to support and reassure you, so please do not hesitate to contact us.

### **What about the safety of the staff?**

Our team members have all received infection control training, and have been provided with personal protective equipment. All staff have received their two vaccinations and are required to have a booster in line with the Department of Health's mandate.

Office staff continue to work in teams to limit personal contact and meet online rather than hold face to face catch ups.

Team members continue to undertake regular Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) if they feel unwell and our Community Workers confirm that they do not have any symptoms before logging on each day.

We currently are offering all team members no cost influenza vaccinations at our local Terry White Pharmacy in Palmyra.

We hope that this gives you peace of mind that when we enter your home, we are as safe as possible.

### **What do you require me to do?**

Please continue to let us know if you have any cold like symptoms, are not feeling well, have been told you are a close contact, or advised to be tested for COVID-19 for any reason, so that we can work with you to provide the support you need in the safest way possible.

Thank you for your ongoing flexibility when we need to reschedule service times, or when your usual team member is unavailable. Your flexibility and feedback has been wonderful. We have received more compliments than ever, and have been sharing these with all team members. It gives them a great boost, so thank you.

In summary, please be assured that we are taking all steps to maximise the safety of our clients and team members, while continuing to provide your usual services. As always, should you have any other questions or comments, I welcome them. My sincere appreciation to you for your ongoing flexibility and patience as we work together.

Maria

Maria Davison  
Chief Executive Officer