



## Message from the Commissioner – COVID-19

I am writing to provide an update on the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission's ongoing actions to ensure that aged care providers are focused on, and supported in, taking all steps necessary to protect the safety and wellbeing of aged care consumers during the current COVID-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak.

### Proportionate risk-based regulatory response

We have published the Commission's [regulatory response on our website](#). Our response encompasses acting in the best interest of people who receive aged care services by:

- focusing our additional effort where it is needed most to ensure that aged care consumers are safe, by concentrating on services where we identify elevated risk to safe, quality care;
- being flexible in considering adjustments to our routine regulatory activities and program so as to avoid putting untimely demands on providers; and
- supporting providers and fulfilling our duty of care to Commission staff.

From Monday 9 March, we have introduced a new [risk-based question](#) that will be asked on commencement of a performance assessment for residential and home services:

*What action has the service taken to assess and minimise infection-related risks for the care of aged care consumers including the impact of a potential coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak?*

### Assessing and managing risk of infection

We continue to encourage all providers to use our [online self-assessment tool](#) against the Quality Standards, taking into account the requirements under [Standard 3](#) and [Standard 8](#) to ensure that services have appropriate arrangements in place for the assessment and management of risk associated with infectious outbreaks. Later this week, we will publish a fact sheet for providers outlining actions you can take now in relation to infection prevention and control.

Noting that the flu season is coming, I would also remind you that annual vaccination is the most effective way to reduce the impact of influenza in the community, and especially in residential aged care services. Under the Quality of Care Principles 2014 and the Records Principles 2014, your service(s) must take precautions to prevent and control the flu and minimise infection-related risks. Please keep an eye out for release of the flu vaccine (expected to be available in April) and move promptly to promote and facilitate access to it by staff, volunteers and residents.

If you have concerns about an individual consumer displaying flu-like symptoms, you should contact their GP. If you have three or more consumers with influenza-like symptoms, or one confirmed case of COVID-19, you should contact your state or territory public health unit. Contact details for each state and territory are available here: <http://www.health.gov.au/state-territory-contacts>. If you contact the central number provided, the state health department will direct you to your local public health unit.

For general information and advice, the National Coronavirus (COVID-19) Health Information Line is available on 1800 020 080. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

### Updated information

The Commission will continue to work closely with relevant authorities to source and/or produce fit-for-purpose information, resources and advice, which can be found in a regularly updated [section of our website](#). You will be receiving further communications from the Chief Medical Officer, Dr Brendan



Murphy from the Department of Health in the coming days and the Commission will also be providing ongoing communication to you as the situation changes.

Our focus continues to be on making sure that providers can access the latest information and tools to protect and enhance the safety and well-being of consumers.

*J. M. Anderson*

Janet Anderson PSM  
**Commissioner**

**12 March 2020**

