

The situation with COVID-19 is still changing rapidly. Even though there are no official reports of COVID 19 in Gisborne, Bendigo, Castlemaine or Echuca it is only a matter of time before we have the first cases in our communities. The Commonwealth Chief Medical Officer emphasises that almost all new infections are still coming from people arriving from overseas and if infected the people they are in close contact with after their return.

## **No contact with people returning from overseas**

To keep the people we support and GCSS employees away from the highest risk we need to ensure that we all avoid contact with anyone that has returned from overseas in the past 14 days and any of their close contacts. It is now law that people returning from overseas quarantine themselves for 14 days and monitor their own health. We need to ensure the people we support, all employees and the people we have contact with outside of work are doing this.

## **All staff returning from overseas must quarantine for 14 days**

All staff returning from overseas must not have contact with any person we support or staff for 14 days after returning and then only if they are completely symptom free i.e. no fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, muscle and joint pain, or tiredness/exhaustion.

## **All staff feeling unwell or have come into contact with a confirmed case of COVID 19 must self-isolate**

Because of our work with vulnerable people all GCSS staff who have a person living with them that is going through quarantine or suspected of having COVID 19 must not attend work, self-isolate themselves and contact their manager so a return to work plan can be developed.

GCSS employees must stay home and seek medical attention:

- if you are unwell or
- You have symptoms of respiratory illness (e.g. fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, muscle and joint pain, or tiredness/exhaustion) or
- You have been in contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 you must self-isolate for 14 days and not resume work until you are released from self-isolation.

Contact your manager so a return to work plan can be developed.

The best defence for COVID-19 remains good hand hygiene, cough and sneeze etiquette, and to isolate when unwell.

## **Disability Services will be needed throughout the Pandemic**

Both State and Federal Governments have recently indicated that Disability Support is an essential service along with the Health and Aged Care sectors. I expect that like Health the essential supports we provide will be required throughout the pandemic period. In a recent 'Provider Alert' the NDIS Quality and Safe Guards Commission has made it clear that Disability Services should not cease unless advised by the Australian Chief Medical Officer or State Chief Health Officer.

Yesterday the Council of Australian Government's Disability Reform Council agreed that the Disability Services Sector will be included in the Health response, including access to personal protective equipment (PPE). Since the start of phase 1 of our GCSS COVID 19 response, we have been advocating for access to PPE supplies for the Disability Sector. We applaud this decision and look forward to being informed of how we access PPE supplies ASAP.

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