

MEETING SUMMARY

## Human Services and Health Partnership Implementation Committee.



Health and Human Services



VCOSS  
Victorian Council  
of Social Service

### About the HSHPIC COVID-19 Response Group Meeting

During these unprecedented times, vulnerable communities are at higher risk of illness, poverty, violence and disadvantage and the community sector is facing high demand, and workforce, safety and sustainability challenges.

The Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS) and Department Health and Human Services (DHHS) have agreed to bring together community sector peak bodies and government in an expanded HSHPIC to strengthen engagement and planning around the COVID-19 response and recovery.

The HSHPIC COVID-19 Response Group is meeting fortnightly. An informal summary will be published following each meeting.

**You can learn more about HSHPIC [here](#).**

### What was discussed 28 May 2020?

#### **Health system reform**

HSHPIC COVID-19 Response Group discussed the importance of a joined-up health and social services system.

DHHS highlighted health system priorities for recovery, including restoring health, restoring services and reforming the system.

Reforming the system will include looking at new models of care (including digital delivery of services), coordination and collaboration and workforce needs.

We need to think about a whole system that meets health, wellbeing, emotional and social needs and provides integrated support across these domains.

## **Aboriginal Community Taskforce update**

Department Premier and Cabinet updated the group on the work of the Aboriginal Community Taskforce.

The group was established after the Aboriginal community, and Aboriginal community controlled organisations (ACCOS) identified that the early COVID-19 responses needed a stronger self-determination lens.

The health and wellbeing impacts of COVID-19 are significant in the Aboriginal community. In addition to the taskforce, a mechanism was established to provide a single entry point for the Aboriginal community to raise issues, and escalate them to the taskforce.

The issues coming before the Taskforce are very broad, across all domains of the Aboriginal Affairs Framework.

A strong focus of the Taskforce has been on strengthening culturally safety in universal services and supporting ACCOs in their work, including through adequate funding to respond to COVID-19.

There have also been positive impacts in the community, for example some Aboriginal families having access to devices and IT, and to the internet for the first time.

VACCHO reported a new case of COVID-19 has been confirmed in the community, highlighting that the risk is not over.

## **COVID-19 Workplace Planning**

As restrictions ease, planning is turning to the restoration of services, ensuring COVID-safe workplaces and harnessing the innovations and lessons from this period.

DHHS reported they are developing resources to provide advice and tools for the community services sector, in workplace planning and restoring face-to-face services where appropriate.

There are 5 broad questions for organisations to consider:

- Is there a need to change current service delivery approaches and start to restore face-to-face service delivery?
- Does your organization have the capacity and capability to operate safely under restrictions?
- Are other partner services available for you to do your job effectively?
- Where are your risks for COVID transmission?
- What are your strategies and actions to keep people safe?

DHHS will provide more specific advice for some services and sectors, where it is needed. They invited HSHPIC COVID-19 Response Group members to provide feedback on where sector-specific advice is warranted and needed.

The group noted that the combination of social distancing, managing infection risk and increasing demand for services are creating workforce and capacity challenges. Organisations are trying to balance risk minimisation for staff and service users, with providing support people need and not further restricting their activities.

### **Lapsing contracts**

DHHS advised that government had deliberated on funded programs lapsing 30 June and determined they will be extended to 30 September 2020, with some exceptions. Organisations are encouraged to talk to their DHHS Departmental Leads (where they are funded by DHHS) about which contracts are impacted.

DHHS is aware there is a gap between 30 September and the new state budget in November. Arrangements for this period have not been finalised. Discussions with DTF are ongoing.

### **Links and resources and information**

The [DHHS Funded Agency Channel](#) is a central source of information. It includes new information about:

- [Victorian State of Volunteering – Survey for volunteer organisations](#)
- [Family violence crisis brokerage guidelines](#)

Kind regards,

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