

17th March 2020

COTA SA response to coronavirus, COVID-19

COTA SA acknowledges the threat the coronavirus, COVID-19 poses to our global community.

As an employer and community citizen, COTA SA is mindful of our responsibility to do all we can to contribute to efforts to stop the spread of the virus and to minimise risks to our employees, volunteers and community.

We are monitoring developments and taking the advice of federal and state health officials. We will do all we can to act on that advice for the benefit of the older people we serve, the employees and volunteers who make up the COTA SA team and the broader community.

We are especially conscious that older people, and people with pre-existing medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease), are more vulnerable to becoming severely ill with the virus. We also recognise the risks of prolonged isolation.

In weighing these facts, we advise that COTA SA will immediately –

- postpone all public events indefinitely
- cancel all face to face visits for volunteers with older people
- encourage all employee interactions with older people to be by telephone, letter or online
- implement ways of maintaining contact, providing information and continuing to support older people through letters and phone calls for example
- shift meetings where practicable to electronic, telephone or video formats
- adopt all protocols with regard to social distancing and hygiene
- require that people (employees, volunteers or visitors) do not attend COTA SA if they are unwell with cough, fever, other respiratory, cold or flu-like symptoms or if they have not isolated themselves for at least 14 days following overseas travel
- require any employee or volunteer diagnosed with COVID-19 by a health professional to remain quarantined for 14 days and return to work only once a medical certificate clears them for work

- require any employee or volunteer with suspected COVID-19 to immediately self-isolate and return to work only if there are no symptoms or earlier if the person has been confirmed as having tested negative for COVID-19
- not require employees to undertake any commercial travel
- require all employees and volunteers to follow good hand and respiratory hygiene including -
 - covering coughs and sneezes with an elbow or a tissue and disposing of tissues properly
 - washing hands often with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand sanitisers
 - cleaning and disinfecting surfaces
 - avoiding contact with others if sick
- require a distance of 1.5 metres be kept between people and avoid all physical contact.

We are sorry that we cannot continue being out and about with our community in the short term. We will continue to review our approach. In the interim we will do everything we can to keep in contact with older people and to keep open alternative channels of communication.

For more information please contact:

Jane Mussared, Chief Executive or Ross Atkinson, Executive Assistant on (08) 8232-0422

COTA SA is an older people's movement and the peak body representing the rights, interests and futures of more than 633,000 older South Australians aged over 50.