



COVID-19

Dear Providers and Services,

I am writing with a further update on COVID-19 following the Australian Government's announcement on 11 March that travel restrictions have now been extended to **include Italy**.

A full update on the Health advice can be found on the [Department's website](#).

I would also like to take the opportunity to address some of the concerns I know you all have regarding COVID-19 and the potential impacts the virus may have on the Early Childhood Education and Care sector.

On Tuesday the executive team of the Early Childhood Education Directorate met with the Early Childhood Advisory Group to discuss the Department's response to COVID-19 and how we can best support the sector as the situation continues to unfold. A number of questions and concerns were raised and I will attempt to address these below. Please be assured we are doing everything we can to identify potential impacts on services and how these impacts can be managed.

Who will direct services to close in the event of an outbreak of COVID-19?

NSW Health is the agency that will assist you to make decisions about whether or not you should close if staff or children have been exposed to, or diagnosed with, COVID-19. As with any other contagious disease, you should contact Health and follow their advice. Your local public health unit can be contacted on 1300 066 055. We have been passing on the most up-to-date information from Health and will continue to do so as it comes through to us.

What should services do if they are directed to close by NSW Health?

If you are directed to close by Health you should notify the Regulatory Authority as soon as possible via NQA ITS. The Department's information and enquiries team are able to answer general questions about COVID-19 and can direct your specific questions to the appropriate teams. In the unlikely event that a service fails to follow the directions of NSW Health the Department may take regulatory action to ensure the health and safety of children.

What happens if staff are directed to self-isolate?

In situations where staff members are required to self-isolate you can apply to the Regulatory Authority for waivers for qualifications and/or ratios. Fees for waivers relating to COVID-19 will be waived and applications will be expedited to minimise disruptions to service provision. You can apply for waivers through NQA ITS. For assistance contact our information and enquiries team on 1800 619 113.

What financial support will be available to services impacted by COVID-19?

Both state and commonwealth governments are aware that disruptions to operations can have a significant impact on services. The Department is

working with the Australian Government and other jurisdictions to develop response plans for various scenarios. Updates will be provided to you as the situation develops. Further information on Commonwealth funding can be found [here](#).

Will Assessment and Rating go ahead for services impacted by COVID-19?

If you have A&R coming up and have been impacted by COVID-19 please contact the Regulatory Authority to discuss your options. We are committed to ensuring that no service is disadvantaged by COVID-19 in the A&R process.

Will Roadshows go ahead?

Advice from Health is that there is no need to cancel events at this stage. Roadshows are an important avenue for consultation with the sector and will be an opportunity for you to tell us more about what support you need in relation to COVID-19. If the advice from Health changes we will let you know. Please do not attend Roadshows if you are unwell. The second Sydney session on 31 March will be live-streamed and there will be an opportunity for feedback and questions to be provided remotely.

The longer term impacts on the sector, including effects on enrolments and the workforce are being considered. We will continue to keep you updated on health advice as well as operational and financial matters. The ongoing viability of the early childhood education and care sector is critical to the wellbeing of the broader community and the NSW economy as a whole. We are doing all we can and will work with you to ensure that you can go on providing high quality education and care services through uncertain times.

I have listed an FAQ that may help you answer questions for your staff and families as well as a list of key contacts and websites. Please contact us if you have any further questions or concerns.

- [FAQs - COVID-19](#)
- [Key phone and web contact list](#)

Following recent events that have required frequent updates to the sector, we have set up an SMS notification system. Please subscribe by texting "subscribe" to **0429 918 924** to receive SMS alerts on critical updates as they emerge.

Sincerely,

Martin Graham

A/Executive Director, Early Childhood Education Directorate



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