

MEDIA RELEASE – 28 JANUARY 2020

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION & CARE SERVICES GEARED TO FACE CORONAVIRUS

The global concerns about China’s Novel Coronavirus spreading has reached Australia’s youngest, but not in terms of the number infected or negative statistics but genuine anxieties for their and their families’ safety.

In New South Wales, there has so far been no children aged 0-5 years old who have been infected or suspected of infection. However, there have been four confirmed cases of the coronavirus from four adults. All four had travelled from China recently (in particular, the Hubei Province).

“A long established, mandatory and legal requirement to operating as an approved early childhood education and care (ECEC) service provider is the ability to handle infectious diseases. Hence why all services continually update and practice what they must do should they ever face such a situation,” said NSW President, Lyn Connolly, who is herself a veteran of the sector for 42 years.

Across the 5,500 services in New South Wales, service providers would have been contacting their attending parents and guardians of children who they believe might have recently returned from the Hubei Province in China. They would be inquiring if any may be showing signs of flu-like symptoms, including fever, cough, sore throat or shortness of breath.

“Like others, our 1,600 member services would be asking parents and guardians to keep their children at home and seek medical assistance through their GPs and public health authority if they believe they may exhibit those symptoms, and likewise with staff,” said Mrs Connolly.

Notwithstanding the four confirmed cases in NSW, services are also reminding parents and guardians that:

- all inbound travellers from China are being tested at the Australian border;
- eight Chinese cities have been in lockdown and 35 million people have been quarantined, and
- outside of China, there have been no recorded deaths anywhere else in the world.

“All our services would nonetheless be continuing the already embedded practices of frequent handwashing, avoiding contact with your eyes, nose or mouth, sneezing or coughing into a tissue or your upper arm rather than your bare hands so as to prevent the transmission of viral illnesses,” said Mrs Connolly.

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Australian Childcare Alliance (ACA) NSW (www.nsw.childcarealliance.org.au) is the peak body for privately owned early childhood education and care services in NSW, numbering approximately 1,600 childcare services, employing over 25,000 staff and supporting over 125,000 families. ACA NSW provides advocacy, policy and regulatory and business support and advice, member services and professional development for members and their staff across the state.

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