

27 March 2020

## A message from DSA's CEO Leisa Hart

### COVID – 19 Important Information for our Participants and Families

Over the past month DSA has been preparing for what the current Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak means for us now, and what it might look like for us all in the coming months.

There is no doubt that all Australians are facing significant changes to our way of life which could last for quite some time. The situation is changing day by day and we are all having to make adjustments to accommodate the changes on an almost daily basis.

Our Number 1 priority is and always will be safeguarding our participants and we continue to closely follow the guidance of the Department of Health ([health.gov.au](http://health.gov.au)).

There is no doubt that COVID-19 will impact the way we operate at Disability Services Australia please be assured that we are responding responsibly in line with government and medical advice and we are planning for a potential worsening of the situation in the coming weeks.

#### What is DSA doing to create a safe environment?

- **All DSA sites** have put in place measures to limit access to non-essential visitors, enhance personal hygiene and infection control activities and implement social distancing.
- DSA's **Employment Solutions** (DES & SLES) and **Packaging Solutions** (ADE) sites are operating on a 'business as usual' basis with the exception of our Braemar Packaging Solutions facility which has temporarily suspended services until after Easter.
- After careful consideration we made the difficult decision to **suspend** our **Community Solutions** (Day Programs). We've made this decision because of unacceptable challenges in ensuring the safety of our participants and their support staff, maintaining effective infection control and social distancing requirements.
- Services will remain suspended until it is safe to resume service delivery and we will keep you informed as we continue to monitor changing conditions. We will post regular updates on our website and have a dedicated page with information for participants, families and carers: <https://www.dsa.org.au/information-for-participants-families-and-carers/>.
- Our **Home Solutions and Mentoring Services** (Supported Independent Living Services) will continue to operate with plans in place to support participants and their support staff through isolation if required.

- DSA's **Support Coordination** services remain active.
- Staff providing **1:1 support to participants** have scaled back support in the community to essential access only and increased supports in the home with appropriate PPE.

### **For people who are still accessing DSA services**

The main message from the Department of Health is that everyone must practice **good hygiene** to protect against infection & **social distancing** to slow the virus spreading. Social distancing means limiting physical contact or sharing spaces with people.

Staff or participants displaying any symptoms of Coronavirus, will be isolated until they can be sent home and will require medical clearance before returning.

There are a number of Easy Read resources available on our website and from your DSA contact person. Our website will have regular updates so please check the site [www.dsa.org.au](http://www.dsa.org.au) regularly.

### **What are the next steps?**

We continue to monitor the changing situation, current health advice and evaluate the impact on our service.

As always, you should feel free to call your key DSA contact person if you have any concerns about your family member or the service.

We will be continuing to monitor the information provided by the government to ensure the best response in keeping people safe and infection free.

At some point, this may mean our service will need to close for a period of time. We are working on contingency planning to reduce the impact on our participants and staff.

We will keep you informed & let you know as soon as possible if this is happening.

### **If you are concerned that you or someone you know may be infected:**

- Please notify us ASAP so we can support you.
- There is a national 24/7 telephone service for people who are concerned about contact with a possible Coronavirus case. If you think you may be infected you can call the hotline on **1800 020 080**.
- Suspected Coronavirus patients can present in person to a GP clinic, a dedicated respiratory clinic or to a hospital Emergency Department if they call ahead.

My priority is safeguarding our people. The health, safety and wellbeing of our participants and employees is vital.

Please stay safe and take care



Leisa Hart - CEO