

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday, 8th April 2020

Essential support during the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic

The Disability Council NSW understands that the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic has resulted in additional strains and challenges that affect people with disability, their carers and families. However, it is important to be aware that both the NSW and Federal Governments have made appropriate supports available to get everyone, including people with disability, through this difficult period.

This media release will set out much of the support that can be accessed, but the Council recommends reviewing these websites on a regular basis to keep up to date with government assistance and advice.

Easy to read information on COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

The Council for Intellectual Disability (CID) has prepared some [Easy Read resources](#) on how people can stay safe, healthy and happy during COVID19 (Coronavirus). Easy Read information on CID's website includes:

- [Staying at home during Coronavirus.](#)
- [Look after your mental health during Coronavirus.](#)
- [Staying safe from Coronavirus.](#)

If you have questions regarding the easy read COVID-19 (Coronavirus) resources call CID on **1800 414 065**.

Official health advice from the NSW Government

The Disability Council NSW strongly recommends that everyone familiarise themselves and keep up-to-date with the latest official health advice from the NSW Government's ['COVID-19: what you need to know' webpage](#). In brief, the advice is that we all need to:

- follow the government's 'stay at home' direction;

- maintain social distancing (stay at least 1.5 metres away from others);
- look after yourselves and others (e.g. by washing hands regularly and checking up on family and friends electronically, where possible).

More details on how to stay safe and healthy can be accessed at the [NSW Health website](#).

Support from the NSW Government - General

The NSW and Federal governments have set up a number of central webpages where people can go to access the help they need during the COVID-19 pandemic. These pages include:

- [Supporting NSW during COVID-19](#) – Service NSW (or call 13 77 88);
- [Together against COVID-19](#) – Department of Communities & Justice (NSW);
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) information and support](#) – NDIS;
- [Affected by coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) – Services Australia.

Support for people with disability

Some regular support services that people with disability access through the NDIS may not be operating as they normally would. Please speak directly with the NDIS service providers who assist you to ensure that you are still able to receive the necessary support to stay safe and healthy.

The NDIS has published a range of resources that explain how recent changes made to the NDIS to improve services during the COVID-19 will affect NDIS participants, carers and providers. Participants and carers can refer to the [NDIS' frequently asked questions](#) and easy read information webpage to learn more. Please visit the [NDIS website](#) for regular updates, information and support during this time.

The NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) has also produced a [useful tips guide for supporting older people and people with disability](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Housing assistance

If you require housing assistance you can access support from the NSW Government:

- through the MyHousing app which can be downloaded from the [App Store](#) or through [Google Play](#); or
- by going to www.facs.gov.au/myhousing.

The NSW Government recommends against visiting a Housing Office unless this is necessary, to ensure your health and safety and that of NSW Government staff. If you need to visit housing office, we recommend that you follow the advice of NSW Health.

Homelessness Services

NSW Government services to homeless clients remains fully operational. Help is also available if you are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless.

Link2home is the statewide homelessness information and referral telephone service. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Link2Home can be contacted by phone on **1800 152 152**. Clients can also contact their nearest social housing provider by phone for housing assistance and advice.

DCJ and Community Housing providers will now provide an initial 5 nights of Temporary Accommodation for clients who are homeless.

Financial assistance due to unemployment

The economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic means that many people with disability, their carers and families may be suffering financial difficulties due to job loss or decreased business revenue or shut downs. Information on additional financial payments and assistance to support you, your loved ones and your businesses can be found on the following websites:

- [Affected by COVID-19](#) – Services Australia.
- [Businesses and employment](#) – NSW Government.

Child and Family Services

Keeping children safe is an essential service and the NSW Government's child protection and out-of-home care (OOHC) services will continue to be provided throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

If you have any urgent concerns about child's health or life, please phone emergency services on **000**. If you think that a child is being abused or neglected, call the Child Protection Helpline on **13 21 11** (open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week).

Mental Health and Wellbeing

The Disability Council understands that the COVID-19 pandemic and its disruptions to the economy and our daily lives will cause substantial strains to the mental health. Ensuring that those who are struggling have access to the mental health supports they need remains a priority of the NSW Government.

In an emergency, please call **000** or go to a hospital emergency department. For, mental health support in other circumstances, the Mental Health Line is able to help 24 hours a day 7 days a week. It can be reached by calling **1800 011 511**. Other contact numbers that may be able to provide assistance are:

- Lifeline Australia, crisis support and suicide prevention – **13 11 14**.
- Alcohol and Other Drugs Information Service (ADIS) – **(02) 9361 800** or toll from country areas on **1800 422 599**.
- Family Drug Support - **(02) 4782 9222** or **1300 368 186**.
- HealthDirect Australia, 24 hour health advice line staffed by registered nurses – **1800 022 222**.

Domestic and Family Violence

The NSW Government will continue to support victims and their families through police and frontline services. As people cooperate with social distancing directions, self-isolation and quarantine there is an associated risk that domestic and family violence will increase. The NSW Government's Domestic Violence Line remains ready to help, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. To reach the Line please phone **1800 65 64 63**.

The COVID-19 pandemic will be a tough period for everyone and people with disability, carers and families will certainly face additional difficulties. However, as our leaders, the Premier, the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian MP, our Minister, the Hon. Gareth Ward MP and the Prime Minister, the Hon. Scott Morrison MP have noted we are all in this together and we will all get through these difficulties to see better times in the future. We will do this by following the official advice, taking care of ourselves and others and by making use of the assistance that is available.

The NSW Disability Council will continue to work through the COVID-19 pandemic and will continue to assist people with disability, their families and carers through this in all the ways that it can.

Mark Tonga

Chair

Disability Council NSW