

Lighthouse

Family News

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COVID-19 Update

In response to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, a major emergency was declared in South Australia on 22nd March. This declaration was extended by 28 days on 2nd May 2020 and means that we are still required to comply with SA Health Guidelines with regard to physical distancing and hand hygiene.

A number of families have indicated that they are keen for their family members to resume 'normal' activities as soon as possible.

To this end, we have approached most of the service providers who work with our clients to explore their capacity to comply with the current restrictions – such as the number of people congregating at one time – that is, physical distancing requirements and hand hygiene practices.

With regard to physical distancing and the number of people congregating in one place, some providers, especially day programs, are struggling with this. Our contact with many day programs has highlighted that;

- Some day programs will not re-open
- Many day programs need a lead time to ensure that they can recruit the required number of staff and manage the physical distancing requirements, and
- Some day programs and supported employment programs are only providing limited services.

This is important information and we ask that families understand that resumption of normal activities will relate to the capacity of providers to safely provide services. Another variable which is problematic is transport; the capacity of providers to ensure physical distancing while transporting people to programs is sometimes questionable.

As of this morning, we are aware that some clients have returned to work and day options, while others are planning to in the relatively near future. If you want your family member to resume these activities, we will ask you to sign a form that indicates that;

- You are aware of any risks about this for your loved one, and
- That it is your decision that you wish him/her to attend the activity

Please also remember, that although there have been no deaths in South Australia for more than two weeks (which is fantastic), we are informed that the relaxation of restrictions is a very risky time when people can become infected, and if this occurs, the results are likely to be more dangerous than the first experience of COVID-19 with potentially more deaths.

If you have any concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to contact your Manager or Steve Denholm to discuss these.

Resumption of normal activities

There are clearly some clients who want to return to their day program or supported employment. However, it also appears that some people have enjoyed being at home during the COVID-19 pandemic (instead of going to a day program or supported employment). There are likely to be multiple factors contributing to this such as the level of engagement with a Lighthouse Disability staff member, access to different activities and/or reduced personal attention due to staffing ratios.

We encourage families to let us know if you think the break from the usual activity has highlighted that other alternatives should be explored, please talk to your Manager or Support Coordinator. In the context of the NDIA which actively promotes 'choice and control' it is important to explore how people would like to spend their time during the day. This may be important information to take into account in the next NDIA planning meeting.

Disability Royal Commission

Some senior staff have recently been privileged to have a conversation led by Maurice Corcoran with other key people working with the Royal Commission about the invitation to families/clients to have a private session with a Royal Commissioner.

Families/clients are invited to share their experiences of good and problematic disability service delivery with a Royal Commissioner in confidence. The aim is to help the Royal Commission build a knowledge base about what good service delivery looks like, and to expose systemic issues. This information will very likely influence any recommendations that are made by the Royal Commission at the end of the inquiry. Legal advice is provided to families at no cost should they choose to ask for it, and as indicated above, confidentiality is assured.

We are assured that families/clients who take up this offer have their experiences heard and respected. As such it is likely that it will be a cathartic experience – and at the same time, it will provide important information that may enable systems to be changed so that others are not exposed to the same problems.

You can register for a private session by clicking on the following link:

<https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/share-your-story/apply-private-session>

Death of Ann Marie Smith

We are deeply saddened by the death of Ann Marie and the circumstances that appear to have caused this. This of course causes us to review our accountability regarding the services we provide and how we assess the wellbeing of our clients. We will report on this in more detail in another Family Newsletter. If in the meantime you have any concerns, please do not hesitate to let us know.

The SA Govt has established a Task Force to ‘... look at where the gaps are and to make recommendations to Cabinet’. The membership of this task force which is required to report to Cabinet by the end of July is;

- David Caudrey Disability Advocate (Co-chair)
- Kelly Vincent, Disability Rights Advocate (Co-chair)
- Trevor Harrison, Disability Advocate
- Jacky Chant, Disability Advocate.
- Sam Paior, Founder and Director, The Growing Space
- Karen Rogers, Project Lead, Our Voice
- Marj Ellis, Chief Executive Officer, Lighthouse Disability
- Richard Bruggemann, Authorising Officer, Attorney-General’s Department
- Anne Gale, Public Advocate and Acting Principal Community Visitor
- Adam Kilvert, Executive Director, Attorney-General’s Department
- Cassie Mason, Director, Office for Ageing Well, SA Health
- Lois Boswell, Acting CEO Department of Human Services

Marj Ellis
CEO