

# Communique to the Homelessness and Housing sector - COVID-19

The Queensland Government is focussed on keeping all Queenslanders healthy and safe during our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes supporting our state's most vulnerable and providing the funding, structure and support required for the housing and homelessness sector to respond.

As our partners, your ongoing work during this critical time is making a real difference to Queenslanders. The Department of Housing and Public Works appreciates you working with your regional contract officers and local networks to develop responses that meet the needs in your area. Please continue to stay in touch with your local contract officer, as your main contact during this time. The department will continue to provide email updates on how we are responding to COVID-19.

## Transitional Housing changes – to support social housing households

Providing stability for social housing households during COVID-19 is paramount.

To further support household stability, we are immediately suspending some requirements linked to the time-limited nature of transitional social housing, to ensure resources are prioritised to essential functions.

This means that effective immediately, households living in transitional social housing will not be contacted or advised that they must relocate from their existing transitional home to long term social housing. Similarly, any new allocations to dwellings identified as transitional housing will be considered 'long term' for the duration of COVID-19.

These changes align with the feedback given during the *Partnering for Growth* engagements about the importance of housing stability for vulnerable households.

If a household is currently in a home that does not respond to their circumstances (e.g., with shared facilities) and the household has been identified for a move to a more suitable long-term home, the intent is that this would still proceed.

Flexibility is available for this decision to be made at the local level between the Housing Service Centre and community housing providers, considering individual household circumstances. Please contact your contract officer for further information on this initiative.

This change has been given effect through an amendment to the existing Allocations Policy to flag the change for the duration of the declaration made under the *Public Health Act 2005* by the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services. An order declaring a public health emergency in relation to coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is in force by regulation to 19 May 2020 and may be further extended.

The updated Allocations Policy can be found on the department's website here at [https://www.hpw.qld.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0017/5192/allocationspolicyfunded-social-housing-provider-s.pdf](https://www.hpw.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/5192/allocationspolicyfunded-social-housing-provider-s.pdf)

Providers should continue to work with households living in Crisis Accommodation Program properties to identify longer-term housing outcomes, that provide safe, secure and sustainable housing outcomes. The Department acknowledges that it may take longer than usual to achieve such outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic.



## Care Army

The Queensland Government is enlisting people and organisations to help support seniors during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Care Army is made up of everyday Queenslanders who want to help older people living in the community who may not have a wide circle of friends, family or neighbours who are able to support them.

The primary focus of the Care Army is social connection and essential services such as the delivery of groceries and medicines for Queensland's seniors.

If you need volunteers or want to find out more about how Care Army volunteers can work in your community with your teams, please contact Volunteering Queensland (VQ) directly at [www.volunteeringqld.org.au](http://www.volunteeringqld.org.au).

Your organisation may also be contacted by the Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors to support you to access the Care Army.

## For more information

Funded service providers should direct any questions in relation to policies, procedures and the allocation and expenditure of funds to their contract officer. If your organisation identifies any anticipated issues or risks in ensuring continuity of service, please notify your contract officer immediately.

If you become aware of a staff member or client with **a confirmed case** of COVID-19, please follow Queensland Health advice available at [health.qld.gov.au/coronavirus](http://health.qld.gov.au/coronavirus) or call 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84).

### Latest information from Queensland Health

As the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve across the State, we recommend you regularly check the latest Queensland Health directives and guidelines via their website:

<https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19>

### Australian Government directions

Check the Australian Government's website - <https://www.australia.gov.au/> - for the latest COVID-19 news, updates and advice from Australian Government agencies.

**Thank you again for your ongoing support and efforts as we work together to respond to COVID-19 in Queensland.**

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The safety and wellbeing of sector staff, clients, and the wider community is our highest priority.

The department recognises that the COVID-19 situation is emerging and evolving rapidly. Officers have been looking at systems, operations and business continuity plans to ensure we can continue to meet the needs of our customers and maintain business as usual with the outbreak of COVID-19 here in Queensland.

Service continuity is vital, and we will work together as a broad sector, to meet any challenges.

The department encourages all Queenslanders to follow the direction of Queensland Health when considering which steps to take to protect their health and safety.

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