

ECHO Gazette

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Working together to care for our community.

April 2020



CEO's message

Welcome to our special newsletter edition, devoted to COVID-19.

In the last newsletter we provided some information about COVID-19 and how we can all work together to keep our clients, staff and volunteers safe.

This situation is changing so rapidly, we thought it would be helpful to provide an update.

In this edition we'll be providing more details about:

- What ECHO is doing to keep you safe
- How you can help us to keep you and others safe
- How to access essential services if you need them
- Answers to some frequently asked questions
- Scams to watch out for.

For more information on COVID-19, please visit www.health.gov.au or call the National Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080.

As always, if you need extra support for this or any other reason, please ring the office on 9271 7011 to speak with your Client Advisor.

We're all in this together.

Jonathan Smith CEO

Protecting you from COVID-19

ECHO's team has been working around the clock to protect our people – clients, staff and volunteers from COVID-19.

Immediate action

It's hard to believe all this unfolded in Australia over the last two months. News outlets started taking interest in the new outbreak in late January.

Australia's first case was reported in Victoria on 25 January. On 30 January WHO declared a global health emergency.

Already, by the end of January, weeks before it was declared a global pandemic, ECHO recognised the risk to our clients. We immediately imposed strict quarantine restrictions on all overseas travel and all staff and volunteers with flu symptoms, which significantly exceeded Health Department guidelines.

Risk management, physical distancing and rostering

Every day since then, ECHO has taken more steps to protect our people – clients, staff and volunteers. For example, we have been running daily checks and keeping a register of any factors which might increase risks of transmission. If someone has a cough, or has been travelling, or has been in contact with a suspected case, we immediately assess the risk and take appropriate steps to contain and minimise risk.

All group activities have been cancelled. The office is closed to unplanned visitors, most office staff are working remotely, and we've adopted strict physical distancing measures for all staff and volunteers. We've been changing rosters to create tight groups of clients and staff, limiting the number of staff visiting each client, and limiting the number of clients visited by each staff member. This means there are fewer contact points and it's harder for any type of illness to spread.

Infection control, business continuity and governance

ECHO has also increased infection control measures across every part of our service. You have probably heard there are nationwide shortages of basic protective supplies, such as hand sanitiser, gloves and masks, so ECHO staff have been working tirelessly to keep our Support Workers supplied. All staff have been required to complete COVID-19 training provided by the Department of Health.

At the same time, ECHO has developed business continuity strategies, to make sure we can keep delivering services, if any staff are unable to work for any reason. Our Board is now meeting every week to monitor the situation and, on behalf of the Board, we would like to assure you our teams have been working around the clock to make sure we continue to provide you, our clients, with the help you need and keep you safe. If you would like to discuss any of these measures, please contact your Client Advisor on 9271 7011. We will get through this together.

Since January, ECHO's team has been working around the clock to keep you safe:

- Immediate action
- Exceeding government guidelines
- Strict quarantine for all travel
- Physical distancing, closed office
- Infection control
- Closely tracking risk factors
- Tightening rosters
- Group activities on hold

Do you know someone who needs help?

At a time like this there are many older people in the community who might need a bit of extra help. Maybe they are having trouble getting to the shops. Maybe they need someone to touch base with them to make sure they're ok. The good news is the Australian Government has recognised the need for immediate urgent support and has made it easier to get help. If you, or someone you know, needs urgent, immediate support, ECHO is now able to provide short term services immediately. We also have more flexibility in the range of services we can offer. To find out more, please call the office on 9271 7011.

Office staff working remotely

In response to COVID-19, most of ECHO's office staff are now working remotely. This means they are mainly relying on their mobile phones and internet to stay in touch. When you call into the office, Amy, our wonderful receptionist, will transfer your call through to the right person and, if they aren't available, your call will go to their voicemail. Please leave a message, including your name and contact number, and our staff member will call you back as soon as possible – usually within 24 hours. In some cases, if the person you're trying to reach tied up with meetings, or only works part-time, it might take up to 48 hours for them to call you back.

Watch out for scams

Times like this tend to bring out the best in people and, unfortunately, sometimes the worst. ECHO has become aware some scammers are taking advantage of the COVID-19 crisis, to target older people. Please be on the alert. If you receive a phone call or email asking you to do anything out of the ordinary, please check the request is genuine – especially if it has anything to do with your passwords, personal identification, bank details or money. If you need to double-check anything to do with your ECHO services, please call the office on 9271 7011 or email: reception@echocommunity.org.au

No more cash, please

As part of our response to COVID-19, in line with Australian Government guidelines, ECHO's office is closed to walk-in visitors and we are not taking cash payments at the office.

If you sign up to pay your ECHO account by direct debit before 30 June, we'll give you a \$10 credit on your account. Direct debit is easy, safe, and reliable. To sign up, please email accounts@echocommunity.org.au or call ECHO on 9271 7011, and our finance team will help you complete a simple form to move across to worry-free, contactless payments.

To pay your ECHO account by cheque, please make sure you make the cheque payable to 'ECHO' or 'ECHO Community Services'. If none of these options work for you, please call the office on 9271 7011 and speak to our helpful finance team – we'll work something out.

Intelicare on Channel 9 News

On Saturday, 4 April, Channel 9 News ran a story on ECHO's Intelicare trial. The trial is now even more relevant to help older people stay connected during physical isolation.

The Intelicare system uses passive sensors to measure activities contributing to health and wellbeing. Family members can see how you're going using an app on their phone. If the system notices changes in activity over time, this can help ECHO make changes to your care plan, to help you stay healthy and living independently at home as long as possible.

So far, ECHO clients who are already using Intelicare have told us they like knowing their family members have more peace of mind and families tell us they like knowing they can stay connected with their mum or dad from a distance.

If you're following Australian Government guidelines and staying home, an Intelicare system could be a great way for your family to know you're ok, even though they can't be there in person. Best of all, you can try an Intelicare system for free, as part of our Australian Government funded trial.

To find out more about this opportunity, please call 9271 7011 or visit <https://www.echocommunity.org.au/news/free-intelicare-trial>

Help us keep you safe

On Sunday, 29 March, the Prime Minister advised all Australians over 70 to "stay at home and self-isolate for their own protection." Mr Morrison said, "This does not mean they can't go outside, they can go outside and be accompanied by a support person for the purpose of getting fresh air and recreation. But they should limit contact with others as much as possible."

"These arrangements should also apply to those with chronic illness over 60 and Indigenous persons over the age of 50"

Please work with ECHO to help us assess and manage your risk. No one wants one of your family members or friends to expose you to COVID-19 by accident, without realising it. We know your family wants the best for you, so please tell them to help you practice physical distancing.

If this means you need extra services for a while, because your family can't be there, let us know and we will do our best to organise more help for you as soon as possible. And if you are concerned please call your Client Advisor.

ECHO is compiling information for clients in a new section on our website, including a new factsheet from the Australian Government, in a range of languages, especially for older people. If you can't access the internet, please call us on 9271 7011 and we'll arrange to send information out to you.

Ride-on, ride-on time

Do you know anyone with an old ride-on mower they don't need? If so, would they be willing to sell it or even donate it to a good cause? Please call us on 9271 7011 if you can help.