

18th March 2020

Dear Valued Volunteers,

Re: Development and Relief Agency (an agency of the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle) - position on the Novel coronavirus (COVID-19)

The Development and Relief Agency (DARA) is closely monitoring the development of the coronavirus (COVID-19) situation and is committed to following guidance provided by the relevant authorities, NSW Health and the Australian Governments Department of Health.

The safety and wellbeing of our clients, staff, carers and volunteers is our paramount consideration and we are implementing a number of measures to ensure that we are responding appropriately to the situation as it unfolds.

Self-isolation for people returning from overseas

From midnight Monday 16th March 2020, people who have returned from anywhere overseas, or have been in close contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus, are required to self-isolate for 14 days. If you develop symptoms including a fever, cough, runny nose you should immediately and urgently seek medical attention. This information sheet should be read in conjunction with the [What you need to know](#) and [Isolation guidance](#) information sheets.

Preventative measures

Practising good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene is the best defence against most viruses. You should:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, before and after eating, and after going to the toilet.
- Cover your mouth when coughing and sneezing, dispose of tissues, and use alcohol-based hand sanitiser.
- If unwell, stay home and where possible, avoid contact with others (stay more than 1.5 metres away from people).

As you are aware, DARA's food services provide an essential service to homeless people, many of whom have limited access to other services in their region. As an agency of the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, we believe we have a social justice obligation to continue to provide our food services to the most vulnerable people in our communities whilst balancing the safety and well-being of clients, staff and volunteers during this difficult time.

In order for us to continue to provide food services to our diners, we are implementing the following amended practices in all our food service locations:

- For volunteers who may be more susceptible to contracting COVID-19 i.e. people with underlying illnesses that make them more vulnerable to respiratory disease, including those with diabetes, chronic lung disease, kidney failure, people with suppressed immune systems and older people, we encourage you to consider opting out of volunteering for a period of time. This can be re-assessed regularly.
- We will simplify the meals we served to reduce risk of contamination and possibly the increased burden that may result from a reduction in volunteers. This will include predominantly serving sandwiches and pies with pre-packed sauce containers.
- For locations with small dining rooms (i.e. Taree Community Kitchen) we will be asking diners not to sit inside but rather we will provide a take-away service.
- Signage will be displayed advising diners of the changes across all locations.
- Any surplus food supplies (not cooked food), will be packaged and distributed as food packs.

Business continuity

DARA and the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle are developing business continuity plans to respond to what is a developing situation that has the potential to impact our staff, services and clients. To this end, DARA has established a business continuity team that meets daily. This team includes:

- Gary Christensen – Director
- Rob Dawson – Manager Strategy and Engagement
- MaryAnne Kerrins – General Operations Manager

DARA | DEVELOPMENT AND RELIEF AGENCY.

Gary Christensen
Director, Development & Relief Agency
P 02 4979 1190 M 0408 129 709
50 Crebert St Mayfield NSW 2304
Email gchristensen@catholccare.org.au

- David Robson – Quality and Compliance Manager
- Carlie Sazdanoff – HR Business Partner
- Wayne Carmen – Safety and Wellness Business Partner.

I understand that the unfolding situation in relation to COVID-19 may cause some stress and anxiety.

Please understand that we are doing everything we can to follow the guidelines issued by the relevant authorities. We value your ongoing contribution as a volunteer and we will seek to keep disruption to services to a minimum. For further information please speak directly with your service coordinator.

Regards,



Gary Christensen
Director
Development and Relief Agency