

What are Omnicare's main priorities during the pandemic?

In March, we identified three areas our organisation we needed to focus on. They are:

1. Delivering essential services
2. Maintaining employment
3. Expenditure

These formed the basis of how we were going to prioritise our ongoing operations.

1) Ensuring we're able to meet client's *needs* has been paramount. Without these, there would be detrimental outcomes to individual's health, safety and wellbeing.

However, it's not a matter of carrying on as before. The existence of the coronavirus means clients, volunteers and staff are at risk of exposure, so doing all we can to minimise this has been integral to the delivery of our services.

2) The indefinite closure of our Social Support Groups day centres and suspension of all group activities has impacted staff in those areas of our organisation.

However, we identified that having employees undertake meaningful and purposeful tasks (as widely and for as long as possible) was important to our long-term future.

We're doing all we can to keep people in work for as long as possible and we've been looking for opportunities to make the most of the circumstances we're in.

There have been many temporary staff redeployments. Among the tasks Omnicare support workers have carried out are Meals Service deliveries and food handling; wellbeing calls to clients; and administrative tasks.

3) We've frozen all non-essential spending and the hiring of any new staff (to roles where existing employees can fill in).

How is the COVID-19 pandemic affecting Omnicare's services?

Omnicare is delivering services in accordance with Federal and State government COVID-19 measures and restrictions. Not all individual services may be available.

Here's how we're currently operating:

- **Omnicare Meals Service:** hot, chilled and frozen meals available as normal, (non-contact delivery). Shopping assistance available.
- **Omnicare Home Care:** in-home support available, including meal preparation, personal care, medication support, social connection (one-to-one visits and non-face to face), unaccompanied shopping, and essential care transport.
- **Omnicare Home Modifications & Maintenance Service:** Essential modifications and maintenance tasks undertaken to improve mobility, accessibility, security and safety in and around the home. Our regular services include bathroom and kitchen modifications; minor electrical and plumbing jobs; custom-built grab rail and ramp installation; garden maintenance.

All jobs are being assessed on a case-by-case basis to establish whether they are essential. Non-essential jobs that compromise COVID-19 infection control measures will NOT be undertaken.

- **Omnicare Disability Services:** personal care, medication support, meals (including meal preparation), unaccompanied shopping, social connection (non-face to face, one-to-one visits), carer support; essential care travel.
- **Omnicare Social Support Groups:** In-home activities-based respite support; activities packs – with information and resources for clients and their carers; online chat groups for carers.
- **Omnicare Planning:** coordination of supports (NDIS), care management (Home Care Packages).
- **Omnicare Access:** information and advice available for NDIS and My Aged Care; referrals to all Omnicare services; visits to your home available (within physical distancing guidelines).

What has Omnicare been doing to support clients and carers?

We've made calls to every Omnicare client (or carer) – that's around 800 – to check on their wellbeing and to offer whatever support we can.

Often it's nothing more than a friendly chat, which itself provides an important social connection. Sometimes it can involve us paying a visit to the client's home to assist in whatever way we can. In some cases, it's led to referrals to other Omnicare services and/or to support clients to maximise the use of their Home Care Package or NDIS funding allocation.

These aren't all one-off calls. In many instances we've made follow-up calls to deal with specific concerns or enquiries. We'll keep making these calls while the current circumstances continue.

This is about reaching out, letting all our clients know that they matter and that they're connected to their communities. We believe a little contact can go a long way to maintaining good wellbeing.

The pandemic measures in place have limited the services we can deliver, but they haven't stopped us lending practical support and maintaining a level of communication there isn't always enough time for when we're operating at full capacity.

And, of course, our staff are taking many calls from clients and carers – that remains a routine part of our operations.

Among the other initiatives we've implemented is the delivery of toilet rolls and Easter eggs to clients and the distribution of orange juice to our Port Macquarie-based clients.

What is Omnicare doing to minimise the risk of spreading COVID-19?

Omnicare has been monitoring, preparing for and adapting to the coronavirus pandemic since early February.

Employees working in person with clients and carers have been issued with personal protective equipment (PPE). Omnicare has supplied each worker with hand sanitiser, latex gloves, face masks and aprons.

It's up to each client whether they want their Omnicare representative to wear a face mask – some clients do, many clients don't.

All our staff visiting clients' homes are obliged to complete a specially drafted form (a COVID-19 screening tool) to establish whether the client may have been exposed to the virus, with instructions on how to deliver the service.

We've called on all staff to report any contact they've had with people diagnosed with COVID-19. Staff have then been directed to self-isolate in their homes for two weeks.

To this point, no Omnicare employee has been diagnosed with COVID-19. Two employees have self-isolated, then resumed work after two weeks' quarantine.

All our staff, who are able to, have been working from home since late March.

With the exception of Omnicare Meals Service (where strict infection control and physical distancing measures are in place), all our offices remain closed to the public.

Staff access to all Omnicare locations is restricted, with arrangements in place for the distribution of PPE.

Each year Omnicare arranges 'flu vaccinations to be made available for every employee and volunteer. Those making their own arrangements are reimbursed (as applicable). We keep a record of each employee's vaccination on their personnel file.

In anticipation of an expected mandatory vaccination for everyone in the aged care sector, we've urged all staff to receive their inoculation as soon as possible.

How has Omnicare adapted to deliver 'non-essential' services?

All services that are deemed to potentially compromise COVID-19 infection control and physical distancing measures are regarded as 'non-essential' – this has resulted from government guidelines.

However, Omnicare staff have worked hard to deliver many of these services in new and often innovative ways.

Among the initiatives we've developed are:

- 'virtual support' – one-to-one support delivered via Skype (available for Disability and Home Care clients)
- WISER Activity Packs – resources, information and strategies to engage Social Support Groups clients and support their carers, based on Omnicare's The WISER Approach
- Online chat groups – providing support, sharing knowledge and facilitating social connection for carers via Workplace (Omnicare's internal social media platform)

Our WISER team is also collaborating with the Disability Services group activities coordinator to develop activities packs for NDIS clients and their carers.

We're also looking into providing training and assistance for clients and carers that have limited or no experience of digital technology.

Why have all group activities stopped?

The Federal Department of Health issued a directive in March for all aged care day centres to close, in order to avoid any breaches of physical distancing guidelines.

As a result, Omnicare has closed its Social Support Centres at Port Macquarie (Morton and Greenmeadows), Wauchope, Laurieton and Kempsey (Parklands Cottage) until the directive is rescinded.

We've also suspended all community-based group activities – including Social Support Groups outings; **The Zone** and **Let's Link** disability group

programmes; and **Eating With Friends**, Omnicare Meals Service's regular social dining events.

It's not possible to run these without breaching social isolation and physical distancing directives.