

Our community is experiencing an unprecedented public health event and we want to reach out and inform everyone that we care deeply about our community, employees and volunteers and their loved ones and the impact that these changes place on the community physically, emotionally, financially, socially and mentally, across all areas within our community, not just healthcare.

We are responding seriously but calmly and rationally to the situation and taking every reasonable step and appropriate precautions to minimise the risk of contracting COVID-19.

Our priority is to continue to support the end of life palliative care needs of all our current patients and their immediate family members and remain open for admissions.

We are resilient and have implemented measures in addition to our regular infection control procedures, to ensure everyone who enters the hospice, in terms of their safety and wellbeing, are maintained. These measures are guided daily by Qld health and other private regulatory bodies and are changed accordingly. Interim policies, procedures and notices have been sent out to our staff, volunteers and key stakeholders and will be updated or changed as directed by Queensland Health, under the guidance of our COVID-19 Response team and the Management Committee. Our business continuity plan has been updated. Our COVID-19 risk management action plan has been put in place and has been updated daily. This includes the provision of adequate cleaning products, hand sanitisers, personal protective equipment and medication supplies by our contracted pharmacy.

We have sound infection control policies and procedures which include, but is not limited to hand hygiene practices, Personal Protective Equipment use, cleaning and disinfection, immunisation, cough etiquette. We monitor the competency and compliance of these policies and procedures by conducting audits daily, in all areas of infection control such as hand hygiene audits. We continue our annual online infection control modules and recent addition of the online COVID-19 training.

An important notice to all our visiting families, visiting clinicians and essential contractors, is to remain patient as we implement these changes.

What has changed at the Toowoomba Hospice in preparing and responding to COVID-19?

All nonessential meetings have been suspended until further notice. We are providing updates to our staff and volunteers on a regular basis via emails, phone calls etc. Meetings that are essential to the governance and operational level such as Management Committee Meetings, Strategic Planning, and Clinical meetings will resume via teleconferencing from our Board room in the next few weeks. Our correspondence to the relevant reporting bodies and stakeholders will continue through the regular email correspondence, newsletters and social media.

Social distancing practices have been implemented, which includes cessation of volunteering in all areas until further notice, as of Midnight 23/03/2020. Essential services such as accounting and bookkeeping will be provided offsite.

Administration staff members who can work from home have been provided this opportunity.

Anyone who has travelled or been in contact with someone with COVID-19 including staff are required to adhere to the 14-day self-isolation protocol stipulated by the Federal Government.

All staff who present with a temperature of over 37.5 degrees and respiratory related conditions such as cough, sore throat etc. as per our updated procedure, are required to stay at home. The nursing team will assess risks on entry to the hospice to ensure the safety of our vulnerable clients.

We have reduced traffic to high risk areas such as the clinical area and kitchen to clinical staff only, and access to clients by their immediate family members in limited numbers. Visiting is at the discretion of the clinical team.

Tours of the facility for potential clients has been suspended but general information can be sourced on the website and further admission enquiries can be discussed with the Director of Nursing, or Clinical Nurse during office hours via email or telephone as per our contact details on this website.

All direct contact fundraising events are being reviewed and an announcement will be made at the end of the March 2020. The Mother's Day High Tea and Palliative Care Breakfast have been cancelled and all those who had paid will be refunded.

All staff have been updated on COVID-19 throughout the changes, including on line training accessible from the Health website on this URL: <https://covid-19training.com.au/>.

For information on COVID -19 please view the updates as per the following link:
<https://www.health.gov.au/news/coronavirus-update-at-a-glance>

For the latest advice, information and resources, go to www.health.gov.au
Call the National Coronavirus Help Line on 1800 020 080. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you require translating or interpreting services, call 131 450.

Please remain reassured we are still admitting clients and providing the essential compassionate, safe, quality palliative end of life care. If you have any concerns or queries, please feel free to contact us via our website at info@toowoombahospice.org.au or call 07 46598500 , so we can respond to you.

**Eugenie Corbett
Director of Nursing**