

Stage 4 restrictions UPDATE FROM DHHS (for Melbourne based therapists) from AHPA. (August 6th)

Stage 4 restrictions are aligned to Victoria's current State of Disaster and are focused on saving and protecting the lives of all Victorians through restricting non-essential movement across the state.

Under the 'Permitted Work Premises for the purposes of the Restricted Activity Directions (Restricted Areas)' instructions, if you provide a critical Allied Health services within the context of an 'approved workplace', such as a public or private hospital, you can continue to deliver this service/s without issue.

If you operate as a private practitioner or within an Allied Health private practice setting, you (or your employer) will need to ensure that your patients/clients fit within the prescribed inclusion criteria for an 'essential' service; <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/business-industry-stage-4-restrictions-covid-19>

'All AHPRA registered health workers - and in addition, social work, speech pathology, dietetics and any other health worker required to fulfil a care plan endorsed by NDIS, TAC, Workcover or DVA - to provide services that prevent a significant change/deterioration in functional independence necessitating escalation of care (e.g. a requirement for specialist input/review, an increase in care needs and/or alternate accommodation, avoiding a hospital admission or emergency department presentation)'.

(Note: this means all non AHPRA regulated allied health professions – including ANZACATA members - are restricted to the NDIS, TAC, DVA and Workcover.)

Self-managed NDIS plans are included – provided the service still meets the requirements to - prevent a significant change/deterioration in functional independence necessitating escalation of care (e.g. a requirement for specialist input/review, an increase in care needs and/or alternate accommodation, avoiding a hospital admission or emergency department presentation)'.

Routine services are not permitted.

Care must only be provided if the absence of, or delay of this care, would result in a significant change/deterioration in the patient/client's functional independence necessitating escalation of care – as described above. These directives are about protecting the public and protecting health workers. Practitioners must critically consider if the service is essential for the patient/client in the next 6 week period. This is about saving lives.

Services provided by 'any other health worker' (i.e. those not AHPRA registered excluding social work, speech pathology or dietetics) may only provide care to someone with an endorsed plan and only if that service is preventing a significant deterioration in functional independence. Again, the intent is about saving lives.

Please note you do not require a medical referral to provide care.

There are also no restrictions on the delivery of Allied Health services via Telehealth. We would encourage private practitioners to consider using Telehealth where at all possible so that patients/clients can continue to benefit from their Allied Health services.

AND

Stage 4 Restrictions and Seeking Care and Health Care

- As per current guidance re stage 4 restrictions, individuals can leave their homes to seek 'care and health care' – this guidance does not specific a geographical limit; <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/stage-4-restrictions-covid-19>



- *You can leave home to receive health care or attend medical appointments. If you need to see a doctor or health care professional, you should do so. Do not put off getting medical care. Your doctor or health care professional can provide advice on how to stay safe.*
- *You can leave home to care for a sick or elderly relative. If you are providing care for someone you should try to keep 1.5 metres between you when you can. Wear a face covering.*
- *You can leave home to accompany someone for essential medical treatment if you are a parent, guardian or necessary support person.*

COVID Safe Plans

- Information on creating a COVID Safe workplan; <https://www.business.vic.gov.au/disputes-disasters-and-succession-planning/covid-safe-business/creating-a-covid-safe-workplace>

Key messages for employers

- Under the Stage 4 coronavirus restrictions, there are new requirements for businesses and employers.
- Certain services and industries will be able to remain operational and will be required by law to have a COVID Safe Plan that is regularly updated.
- Every employer must complete their COVID Safe Plan by **11.59pm on 7 August 2020**. This includes employers within the healthcare and social assistance sectors.
- If your organisation has an existing formalised coronavirus pandemic plan, it is your responsibility to ensure that it addresses all the guidance and requirements outlined in the COVID Safe Plan template as a minimum.
- While organisations are required to have a COVID Safe Plan, it is not a requirement to use the COVID Safe Plan template.
- Organisations do not have to lodge your COVID Safe Plan with the Victorian Government. However, you may be required to provide the COVID Safe Plan to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) or WorkSafe upon request or in the event of a confirmed positive case at your workplace.
- The COVID Safe Plan template, guidance on how to prepare your COVID Safe Plan, and additional employer obligations for workplaces that remain open under the Stage 4 restrictions can be found at <https://www.business.vic.gov.au/disputes-disasters-and-succession-planning/covid-safe-business/covid-safe-plan>
- These requirements only apply to services subject to Stage 4 restrictions that are permitted to remain operational.

Permitted Worker Scheme

- Information on how to issue a worker permit and links to templates; <https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/permitted-worker-scheme>

Provision of Essential Services within a Patient/Client's Home Environment

- Provision of 'essential' Allied Health services within a patient's home environment should be interpreted as the equivalent of entering a clinical area and appropriate infection control/PPE guidance adhered to.
- If completing more than one home visit within a single day, this is in effect a change of workplace and a full change of PPE should be instituted – including reassessment of the potential risk and required PPE tier for each individual patient/client.
- Please refer to attached document for further details – 'PPE guidance for Allied Health in Private Practice Settings'.