



3 June 2020

BY EMAIL: covid.sen@aph.gov.au

Senator Katy Gallagher
Chair
Senate Select Committee on COVID-19
Senate
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator Gallagher

**Senate Select Committee on COVID-19
Anglicare Newmarch House**

I refer to the public hearing of the Senate Select Committee (**Committee**) which took place on 26 May 2020. Evidence was heard at the public hearing regarding the COVID-19 outbreak at Newmarch House, a residential aged care facility in Kingswood operated by Anglican Community Services (**Anglicare Sydney**).

Anglicare Sydney is an approved provider of residential aged care pursuant to the *Aged Care Act* (Cth) and as a not-for-profit, religious and charitable organisation has provided services to greater Sydney and the Illawarra community for over 160 years.

By letter dated 27 May 2020, I wrote to the Committee Secretary advising that we intended making a brief submission to the Committee on some of the matters raised during the public hearing. We are grateful to the Committee for providing us with an extension of time to provide this submission.

There were a number of issues raised during the course of the Committee's public hearing relevant to Anglicare Sydney. I do not intend to respond to each of those in detail but wish to make some brief observations.

As the Committee will be acutely aware, since notice of our first COVID-19 positive test was received on the evening of Saturday, 11 April, it has been and continues to be an incredibly challenging time for Newmarch House. Our residents and their families, including the families of those residents whom have been tragically lost during the COVID-19 outbreak, are and continue to be our paramount consideration. Our focus is on managing the ongoing issues and ensuring the delivery of safe, high-quality care to our residents. We have been and continue to be incredibly grateful for the advice, support and assistance of many government departments and stakeholders.

Anglicare's obligations under the *Aged Care Act* (Cth) have never been in question. However, these are unprecedented times, not only for Anglicare Sydney, but more broadly for the aged care sector. Clarity regarding decision making at Newmarch house was largely resolved when the Outbreak Management Plan was agreed by all relevant parties on 21 April 2020. We continue to work collaboratively with a number of government entities and clinicians in accordance with this plan.

There are many lessons to be learned arising out of our experience at Newmarch House. However, at the current time, our single focus must be on ensuring the wellbeing of our residents, staff and the broader Newmarch House community. We are committed to learning from our experience at Newmarch House and hope to share those learnings with the broader aged care sector, in due course.

Specific responses to the evidence provided to the Committee

At the public hearing, evidence was given regarding the workforce challenges experienced by Anglicare Sydney.

At page 6 of the transcript of the public hearing, Ms Amy Laffan said:

'Staff funded through the Mable platform commenced on 16 April and Aspen staff commenced on 20 April, noting that arrangements were made for them earlier and offers were made earlier.'

Senator Patterson responded:

'You say "offers were made earlier". Was the offer of assistance not immediately taken up by Newmarch House?'

To which Ms Laffan responded:

'With respect to Aspen, that's correct ... Aspen was first offered to Newmarch House on 14 April and as I said before, were first deployed on 20 April.'

On 16 April 2020, the Department of Health issued an FAQ document entitled '*FAQs – Aged Care Workforce Measures*'. The publication of the FAQ document followed a media release on 12 April 2020, by Senator the Honourable Richard Colbeck, Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians, Minister for Youth and Sport, regarding contingency measures to ensure continuity of the aged care workforce during COVID-19. In that media statement, Minister Colbeck states:

'Healthcare solutions provider Aspen Medical has been engaged to deploy the emergency response teams immediately to an aged care facility if a significant outbreak occurs... in an emergency situation where large parts of the workforce or specific skills can't be sourced through existing channels, providers can access the Mable workforce platform to recruit workers in nursing, allied health, personal care, domestic assistance and social support service.'

The FAQ document (**attached**) adds detailed information on accessing the surge workforce support offered by the Department. Mable is identified as being able to provide temporary surge workforce support for operators directly impacted by COVID-19, where all other recruitments avenues have first been exhausted. Following the outbreak at Newmarch House on 12 April, Anglicare deployed its internal surge team on 13 April 2020 and thereafter, made contact with Mable on 14 April 2020. Mable contractors were on site at Newmarch House by 15 April 2020.

By 17 April 2020, Anglicare encountered difficulties in the availability and suitability of contractors engaged via the Mable workforce platform. Enquiries were made by Anglicare to ascertain other avenues that may be available to source suitably skilled staff to work in a COVID-19 positive environment.

On 20 April, Anglicare made contact with the Department of Health and requested additional information regarding the requirements to access an Emergency Response Team (**ERT**). As set out in the Department's FAQ document, an ERT can only be activated when a provider is significantly and directly impacted by COVID-19 and they '*no longer have capacity or capability to deliver quality care due to COVID-19.*' The process set out in the FAQ document was followed by Anglicare on 20 April and an ERT was immediately mobilised and provided to us through Aspen. We are grateful for that initial support and the ongoing support through Aspen.

We intend to comprehensively assess and analyse the systems and processes that impacted our response at Newmarch House. This will take some time, particularly while the COVID-19 situation is ongoing and remains uncertain for the community generally.

We hope that the examinations of our circumstances will be useful to both Anglicare Sydney and more broadly, to the sector as we all seek to reflect on these events in coming months.

I do hope this brief submission is of assistance to the Committee's ongoing consideration of these issues.

Yours faithfully
ANGLICARE SYDNEY



Grant Millard
CEO

Copy to:

Ms Caroline Edwards
Acting Secretary, Department of Health

Mr Michael Lye
Deputy Secretary, Ageing and Aged Care, Department of Health

Ms Janet Anderson
Commissioner, Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission

Ms Amy Laffan
First Assistant Secretary, Aged Care Reform and Compliance Division, Department of Health

Encl: FAQ document



Australian Government
Department of Health

FAQs – AGED CARE WORKFORCE MEASURES

On 12 April 2020, the Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians and Minister for Youth and Sport, Senator The Hon Richard Colbeck, announced additional workforce contingency measures to ensure continuity of aged care during COVID-19.

The measures include:

- Access to a surge workforce (through the online platform Mable), to help providers if they are unable to fill critical skills because of infection or staff have to self-isolate;
- New emergency response teams (through Aspen Medical) on standby if there's a significant outbreak in a residential aged care facility; and
- Remote locums (through Aspen Medical) to support aged care providers in remote Australia if they are unable to source staff.

[A link to the Minister's media release is available here.](#)

This is in addition to the COVID-19 Aged Care Support Program, established to reimburse expenses due to direct impact of COVID-19.

Further detailed information on each measure is provided below.

Temporary Surge Workforce Support

Eligibility	When	How
Approved provider of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Residential aged care● NATSIFACP● Home Care Packages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Directly impacted by COVID-19● Exhausted all other recruitment avenues	Contact My Aged Care Provider and Assessor Hotline 1800 836 799 who issue a referral to Mable following screening and eligibility checks

How do I access surge workforce support?

Let the Department of Health know that you are experiencing a case or outbreak of COVID-19 via agedcarecovidcases@health.gov.au

Mable, an online workforce platform provider, has been engaged by the Department to help eligible approved aged care providers directly impacted by COVID-19 to find skilled workforce to fill critical gaps or shortage.

Eligible approved aged care providers can access these supports through the **My Aged Care Provider and Assessor Helpline on 1800 836 799**.

My Aged Care will determine eligibility to access funded workforce through Mable and will direct providers to Mable to access the workforce they need.

Providers will be able to engage the required workforce for up to 4 weeks initially. The Government will pay the costs of eligible approved aged care providers for engaging the workforce through Mable.

This is designed to fill an immediate gap while the aged care provider finds a longer-term solution, which includes staff returning from isolation or quarantine due to COVID-19.

Who is eligible?

The following Commonwealth funded approved aged care providers with one or more services directly impacted by COVID-19 are eligible:

- Residential Aged Care;
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program (NATSIFACP); and
- Home Care Package providers.

Directly impacted means services with one or more COVID-19 infected or isolated residents / clients / staff.

Providers must have exhausted their existing resource recruitment channels before they are eligible to access funded workforce support.

For example, if a home care package provider urgently needs a personal care worker to deliver in home care services or, a residential provider requires a registered nurse and they have been unable to find a resource(s) using their existing channels, they can use this service to get an appropriately skilled person to deliver the services they need.

Can I get access workers from Mable if my service is not directly impacted by COVID-19?

If an aged care provider is not directly impacted by COVID-19 they are not eligible for funded workforce support.

Aged care providers can still access workforce via Mable. Providers can go directly to the Mable website: <https://mable.com.au> and find workers in their local area who may be available for a variety of roles.

Providers will be responsible for paying for all costs associated with engaging workers.

Emergency Response Teams (ERT)

Eligibility	When	How
Approved provider of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Residential aged care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Significantly and directly impacted by COVID-19No longer have capacity or capability to deliver quality care due to COVID-19	Departmental officer will be in contact with all providers directly impacted by COVID-19 and will deploy Aspen Medical ERT if assessed as needed

How do I access an Emergency Response Team?

Let the Department of Health know that you are experiencing a case or outbreak of COVID-19 via agedcarecovidcases@health.gov.au

Aspen Medical has been engaged by the Department to deploy Emergency Response Teams (ERTs) where intensive and critical support is required by an approved residential aged care provider who no longer has the capacity or capability to continue delivering aged care services due to the impact of COVID-19.

Where a provider is significantly and directly impacted by COVID-19, a departmental officer will contact the residential aged care provider to discuss what support might be needed. If the Department assesses the provider is in critical need, the departmental officer will seek the deployment of an ERT.

Once this is activated, a Nurse Responder will contact the residential aged care provider to provide advice and support immediately over the phone and be on site within 24 hours (subject to travel time).

Once on site, the Nurse Responder will assess the situation at the facility with facility management to determine workforce requirements and arrange for appropriate staff to be deployed for an initial period of sixteen days.

This will allow the provider to continue delivering quality aged care services and to work on establishing longer-term strategies.

Who is eligible?

Commonwealth funded approved residential aged care providers with one or more services significantly and directly impacted by COVID-19.

For example, this may include:

- a significant proportion of staff (eg. 50%) are infected or isolated due to COVID-19; or
- a significant number of residents are infected by COVID-19 or the spread of infection cannot be contained; or
- senior management (eg. CEO, Director of Nursing or other senior managers) are infected or isolated due to COVID-19 and are unable to continue to operate or provide quality care to residents.

Remote Locum Workforce Support

Eligibility	When	How
Approved provider of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Residential aged careNATSIFACPHome Care Packages in remote location	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Directly affected by COVID-19Exhausted all other usual recruitment avenues	Departmental officer will be in contact with all providers directly impacted by COVID-19 and will seek Aspen to deploy remote locums

How do I access Remote Locum Workforce Support?

Let the Department of Health know that you are experiencing a case or outbreak of COVID-19 via agedcarecovidcases@health.gov.au

Aspen Medical received funding from the Australia Government Department of Health to have remote locums available for approved aged care providers in remote locations directly impacted by COVID-19 to access temporary surge workforce support in the event that they are unable to find staff through their usual channels.

Where a provider is directly impacted by COVID-19, a departmental officer will contact the aged care provider to discuss what support might be needed. If the Department assesses that the provider may need access to remote locums, they will seek support from Aspen to identify and deploy suitable locums.

Who is eligible?

The following Commonwealth funded approved aged care providers in remote areas with one or more services directly impacted by COVID-19 are eligible:

- Residential Aged Care;
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program (NATSIFACP); and
- Home Care Package providers.

Directly impacted means services with one or more COVID-19 infected or isolated residents/clients/staff.

COVID-19 Aged Care Support Program

Eligibility	When	How to access
Approved provider of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Residential aged careNATSIFACPHome Care Packages	Reimbursement of expenses due to direct impact of COVID-19 once direct COVID-19 impacts are resolved	Application form available on GrantsConnect: www.grants.gov.au

Who is eligible?

The following Commonwealth funded approved aged care providers with one or more services directly impacted by COVID-19 are eligible:

- Residential Aged Care;
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program (NATSIFACP); and
- Home Care Package providers.

Directly impacted means services with one or more COVID-19 infected or isolated residents/clients/staff in the period between 24 February 2020 and 31 May 2021.

Who is not eligible?

You are not eligible to apply if you are:

- an approved Residential, NATSIFACP or Home Care Package provider who plans and prepares to manage COVID-19 but does not experience a direct impact;
- an approved Residential, NATSIFACP, or Home Care Package provider with Business Interruption Insurance including COVID-19 coverage;
- an approved Residential Aged Care provider that is not directly impacted but has experienced a decline in the rate of entry resulting in reduced occupancy rates and financial viability issues;

Other providers not eligible to apply are:

- a Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) service. Other assistance is available [for CHSP providers](#) and more detailed information on CHSP specific supports will be available in tomorrow's newsletter.
- a State Government funded and/or operated approved Residential, Flexible or Home Care Package provider; and
- a non-approved aged care service provider.

When can I apply?

The grant can only be applied for when the direct COVID-19 impacts on a service are resolved, that is, no infected or isolated residents, staff members or clients.

The grant is open now and the application form can be accessed at GrantsConnect:
<https://www.grants.gov.au>