



## **Term 4, ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body**

Dear Community members

On behalf of all members of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body I am writing to you today to assure you that we are working on your behalf behind the scenes to ensure that during this very difficult time the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community are being supported and well informed as the situation progresses.

Given the danger that COVID-19 presents to everyone, we need to look out for each other and observe social distancing to protect ourselves and our families. I understand that this will be difficult for all when we want to look after our families, however it is imperative that we do everything we can to observe all of the health instructions.

Our key community controlled services and many other services providers are still operating – I would encourage you to call ahead and discuss what you need and see if they will be able to assist and support you without you needing to leave your home and family. We are in touch with the ACT Directorates and are working to ensure that your needs are being met, we are also talking with the ACT Government about the impact this will have on our businesses and ensure that non-government relief groups provide support and assistance to families and community where required and when help is asked for.

That said I want to encourage you all to take note of the information being presented to keep us all safe. Check the information regularly so that you can manage your day to day lives with the best information available.

Below please find some useful links to the ACT Government and service providers along with specific information on public transport, community bus and AMC, Bimberi and Children in Care:

<https://www.act.gov.au/>

<https://www.winninga.org.au/>

<http://www.gugan-gulwan.com.au/>

## **AMC**

As of Monday 23 March, all social / domestic visits have been suspended at the AMC until further notice. As an immediate response ACT Corrective Services will be providing all detainees with a \$20 credit for telephone calls each week commencing on Thursday. ACT Corrective Services are also finalising arrangements which will allow audio visual visits to families/ friends from the AMC. This will be communicated to detainees as soon as ACT Corrective Services are ready to go, and details will be on the ACT Corrective Services website.

All detainees were written to last Friday (email and notice distributed) to advise of the situation. Visitors were all advised as they visited over the weekend and ACT Corrective Services have a published notice on the ACT Corrective Services website).

With respect to programs and services at this moment in time ACT Corrective Services are trying to maintain as full a regime as possible for all detainees. This may be impacted upon as the situation evolves and ACT Corrective Services may have to restrict services further, this will also be subject to providers continuing to attend at the AMC – ACT Corrective Services are actively working to keep services operating but are subject to the advice of the health authorities and ultimately must ensure that operations are consistent with health advice.

During this time detainees will have access to Official Visitors and Winnunga continues to be a critical element of primary health care and are continuing to deliver health services alongside Justice Health. ACT Corrective Services are keen to ensure that the health and wellbeing program continues but this will be subject to the same protective protocols as all services.

## **Public transport**

Currently all the bus and light rail services are continuing to operate as per the current timetable. However, the Minister for Transport announced that the new bus network planned for late-April will be postponed. Work is being done to look at what a contingency network might look like over the coming months that

supports the workforce availability and the current changes to schools. More advice will be available in the coming week.

### **Community Bus**

All services within the ACT are continuing, however where borders are closed, such as Queensland, services are not being allowed. Transport Canberra and City Services is currently seeking a point of clarity on trips within NSW. The community bus is there to assist our most vulnerable so if you need transport to undertake essential travel such as a medical appointment please call them on 6205 3555.

### **Bimberi and Children in Care**

Bimberi management have contacted all parents to provide them with information about visits including the precautions taken by the Centre, in addition to providing contact numbers should they have any concerns. These updates include extra precautions which are consistent with the Australian Government and ACT Health advice. If social distancing measures are increased, or there is a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19, Bimberi will move to implement non-contact visits and all family contact will be held via video or telephone. Should this occur, they will attempt to increase contact times and young people will be issued with additional telephone credit to keep in contact with their families.

Justice Health has screened all young people in the Centre as a precaution and provided additional information to the young people including about how to contact Justice Health if they have concerns. There is an on-call doctor available if young people present with relevant symptoms. Bimberi has made plans for managing any young person who may contract the virus including barrier care.

In relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people receiving a service from Child and Youth Protection Services a review of each child and young person's circumstances is being undertaken by the relevant case manager to determine individualised appropriate action in response to COVID-19. Case managers are contacting families and carers to discuss their needs, and to talk about revised arrangements for urinalysis, transport, education and contact. For children not residing at home, every effort is being made to support connection with families while maintaining the health and wellbeing of children and young people in response to COVID-19.

Families should contact their Child and Youth Protection Services case manager if they wish to discuss these matters or any others. Alternatively, they can contact the Cultural Services Team on 02 6207 2228 or email [CST@act.gov.au](mailto:CST@act.gov.au).

During the coming weeks we will all be challenged in different ways, but what I know about our community here in Canberra is that we are a close community and are always there to support each other when it counts. Please check on your family, especially those who are on their own or isolated, the elderly and those with underlying health issues, this can be simply done through a phone call or if you have social media or video capacity it is a great way to keep in touch.

I like many of you will be in home isolation with my kids and this will be an interesting time, let's look out for each other whilst keeping each other safe.

As we receive information about the current situation, we will seek to provide information either directly to you or recommending that you go to particular websites for the most up to date information.

On behalf of the Elected Body, we wish you all well, we look forward to being able to see you all again soon, stay safe.

*Katrina Fanning*  
*Chairperson*

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[www.atsieb.com.au](http://www.atsieb.com.au)

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