



Australian Jewish community management of COVID-19 pandemic

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Jewish community organisations and leaders across Australia have intensified their efforts to manage the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Jewish institutions, families, individuals and, most especially, the elderly and vulnerable. We recognise with deep appreciation the continuing work being done by the Jewish community roof bodies in each State, the Crisis Management Teams of the Community Security Groups, shules, the Day Schools, the aged care sector, the welfare sector and volunteers, and commend them for the high sense of responsibility they have demonstrated.

Despite a very small number of unfortunate exceptions earlier on, everyone in our community now appears to be sensibly heeding government directions, and advice from Jewish lay and religious leaders, to maintain strict physical distancing. Those who ignore these requirements are a danger to themselves and to others. For the time being, gatherings for prayer and study or for social or other purposes carry too many health dangers to be tolerated. It is literally a matter of life and death. So too is keeping children physically separate from their grandparents, great-grandparents and other older relatives, and utilising only non-physical means of contact.

On 23 March 2020, a short [video featuring Dr Norman Swan](#) gave practical advice for Jewish families on the imperative of physical distancing until the COVID-19 pandemic is over. It was a joint production by the ECAJ, NSW Jewish Board of Deputies and CSG/JEMP NSW. It was widely shared online and on social media and sent to Jewish roof bodies in the other States and the ACT, to circulate to their local networks.

On 24 March 2020, the ECAJ President, Jillian Segal AO, delivered a [video message](#) to the Australian Jewish community. It had three key messages: (i) be strict about practising physical distancing, with grandparents, and with anyone outside the household (ii) take care of the elderly or those with health conditions living independently who feel isolated and in need of help (iii) if you need counselling

and support reach out to us. The video was also widely shared online and on social media, including to ECAJ constituent and affiliate organisations and was accessed by many people.

We note the emails of appreciation by several of our state presidents who found these resources valuable and we appreciate everyone's assistance in widely distributing this important content.

A video is being produced with the assistance of clinical psychologist Dr David Goldman on handling the psychological and emotional toll of isolation, anxiety and disruption caused by the current situation.

The following is an update from last week's summary of the current status of Jewish community life in each State and Territory.

New South Wales

- DMG now has a DMG Core of 6, plus a wider extended group
- Crisis medical committee continues to meet and plan
- Crisis finance committee continues in its assessment of the financial ramifications of COVID-19 on the community
- A sub committee dealing with communications has been set up dealing with both messaging and methods of communicating
- JEMP is opening an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) today
- EOC acts as a central point of connection, operation and liaison for support organisations within the community
- EOC operated primarily by CSG professionals and volunteers, plus other recruits
- CSG has alerted its volunteers and reserves – a total pool of up to 600
- EOC operates through a 1300 phone number
- As incoming calls are logged and triaged, the liaisons and coordinators become responsible to allocate the required resources and communicate back to the relevant community organisations

Victoria

- All shules have now closed
- Jewish Care Victoria Launches COVID-19 Helpline has come online, Monday to Friday between 8:30am - 6:30pm for people who as a result of the coronavirus:
 - Are experiencing emotional distress and worry,
 - Are finding themselves socially isolated,
 - Are experiencing financial hardship, or
 - Are losing their connection to community and need a helping hand to run errands and collect groceries.
- Standup has establish the Jewish Response to Corona Virus (Facebook group)
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/215421613037244/permalink/21556615635>

6123/) which is coordinating volunteers in a range of areas, providing an information exchange for those trying locate items, and assisting in areas such as employment and housing.

Western Australia

- Leadership group (JCCWA CSG Menora Rabbis and medical team) are averaging two zoom meetings each week as well as a very active WhatsApp group.
- All shules are now closed - Rabbonim working closely with JCCWA, Menora Charity and CSG ensuring the well-being of the community
- Carmel School is still open for children who need to go to school. Online for everyone else which will commence on Monday. As of today most high school students are home while the school is getting ready for year 11 and 12 students which will be implemented after the school holidays.
- Maurice Zeffert Home is still working as per WA Govt Guidelines. However visiting has been extremely limited and is completely monitored.
- Buddy system now in place and people living on their own are being phoned.
- Menora Charity very busy ensuring there are sufficient supplies for those who are needy. Menora Charity's annual appeal has now been brought forward to Monday next week instead of May. There is a need to financially help many families in the community
- JCCWA is still sending out updated information throughout the community.

Queensland

- Synagogues are seeking help with checking out the Not for Profit funding options as most if not all, do not have the capacity to follow this up.
- Department of Home Affairs Regional North has been in contact to check in to see how community is managing. All is in hand and calm but there will be a time where some financial resources will be required for various support activities. Department promised to advise if there is going to be a way to access funds for community support without going through a long process.
- South Brisbane Hebrew Congregation now closed as per national announcement
- Beit or V'Shalom Brisbane has now closed and did not hold services last Shabbat.
- Gan Gani Kindy (Queensland Jewish Kindergarten Association) will now go to Pupil Free days next week in the lead up to the end of the school term. Staff will remain on duty to provide services for children of those parents or guardians who are deemed to be essential workers and who are in good health.
- Sinai College will now go to Pupil Free days next week in the lead up to the end of the school term. Staff will remain on duty to provide services for children of those parents or guardians who are deemed to be essential workers and who are in good health.
- **An essential worker is anyone who is required to maintain employment during this time.**

- QJBD will likely tag onto the NSWJBD Yom HaShoah Livestream and will probably email to the community messages on the day.
- QJBD will not now be distributing the Zachor Candles at this time and will use them in 2021 or later in the year if it is decide to link Kristallnacht to Yom HaShoah commemorations this year.
- JCareQld Inc. is continuing to be at the frontline for and with QJBD with registering volunteers and identifying people who will or do need assistance. Many people have volunteered so far but the cases are minimal thus far.
- JCareQld is coordinating with NCJW Gold Coast which is already servicing the Gold Coast region and have many volunteers in place already.
- **If anyone interstate is aware of a family member or friend living in Queensland (anywhere) who may need assistance, please email Howard Posner President JCareQld Inc. jcareqld@gmail.com or phone Howard on 0424 335 969. There is now an active network of support from Tweed Heads to Cairns and all points west.** Please do not contact other organisations in Queensland as QJBD is trying to make sure no one slips through any cracks due to lack of coordinated contacts.
- Chevra Kadisha was in touch to advise that they are working with Funeral Directors in Queensland. PPE is being provided, all care and safety measures being taken.
- Kosher food preparation options have now been organised in Queensland and will be distributed to those in need via JCareQld as and if needed.
- Financial assistance in the form of long term no interest loans is also available. All enquiries should be directed through JCareQld.

ACT

- With the closure of ACT public schools, the ACT Jewish Community (ACTJC) has stopped running Tuesday and Sunday Cheder;
- ACTJC has launched a community billboard for members to advertise products and services; this service is being offered to support community members who are suffering financial hardship due to losing employment or customers due to the COVID-19 pandemic;
- The JewishCare worker has now finalised a contact list of members in need – JewishCare, Rabbi and Shalich keep check on their wellbeing both physically and emotionally and will deliver essential shopping and meals;
- Via JewishCare, the ACTJC now has a freezer filled with kosher meals for senior Jewish community members;
- Sales of challah, bakery and wine at the ACTJC Centre have been suspended; messages have been posted to the entire community not to enter the building;
- Rabbi Miller has moved all his classes online and will run the first virtual Kabbalat Shabbat service this evening as well as the ‘communal seder’ following conversations with senior rabbinic authorities on the acceptance of this practice.

South Australia

- Jewish Community Services (JCS) has been granted authority from the federal government to provide emergency services to community members 65 years and older who are not currently clients nor registered with My Aged Care. JCS is providing additional social support via phone, shopping assistance and delivery, and flexible respite to community members.
- Beit Shalom Synagogue has transitioned seamlessly to digital services, adult education and cheder delivery.
- Online orders for seder meals for Pesach are being organised.

Tasmania

- No change since last week

We again stress the necessity of strict social distancing. Please keep safe and keep those around you safe, by exercising every precaution.

The ECAJ continues to receive a wonderful response to our national e-mail calling for volunteers to assist the most isolated and vulnerable members of our community.

Shabbat shalom.

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