

MEDIA RELEASE



7 April 2020

Coronavirus priority testing must include paid care workers in people's homes

Carers Australia believes all paid carers and volunteer carers must be eligible for priority coronavirus testing including those who provide care in the home.

As matters stand, the Victorian Government has approved testing for people with at least one clinical criterion and at least one epidemiological criterion. The epidemiological criteria cover paid or unpaid workers in healthcare, residential care, and disability care settings. We call on other states and territories to follow this example.

However, it is not clear even in the Victorian provisions that the relevant settings cover care delivered in the home to people with disability or to the aged who are particularly susceptible to the most severe outcomes of contracting the virus.

We are aware that many people with Aged Care Home Care Packages and National Disability Insurance Scheme plans and their family carers have become fearful of paid carers providing services in the home, and are withdrawing from this kind of support to the detriment of their wellbeing. They perceive that since these support workers provide assistance in a number of homes, the likelihood that they will carry and transmit the virus is increased.

Such fears are natural, but in most cases they can be contained, as long as these workers observe the hygiene and, to the extent possible, the social distance requirements. For those who must work in close proximity to those they care for, personal protective equipment (PPE) should be provided.

We are also hearing that some support workers providing home support are failing to turn up for scheduled appointments because they also fear they may be carrying the virus and may pass it on. It would do much to allay the fears of Australia's carers, those they care for and workers, if these care workers were given priority access to testing if they have one or more symptoms associated with the virus.

We can see no reason why home care workers should not have access to the same testing as their equivalents in other settings.

Access to testing should be arranged quickly to allay everyone's fears about contracting and transmitting the virus.

For media enquiries please contact Samara McCann on (02) 6122 9917 or 0408 956 578