



## **Australian Government**

### **Department of Health**

Dear all

#### **Introducing the providers of the Aged Care COVID-19 Grief and Trauma support package**

I am pleased to provide more information about grief and trauma supports intended for the aged care sector including residents, home care recipients, their families and staff, following the Minister's announcement about the providers of the grief and trauma package – available [here](#).

This package is intended to focus on the grief and trauma aspect of the aged care response to COVID-19, complementing existing [mental health supports](#) and expanded primary health services funded by the Australian Government. They will also complement the support arrangements provided to aged care staff by their employers, and [The Essential Network \(TEN\)](#) supports provided by the Black Dog Institute for frontline health workers including aged care staff.

OPAN are hosting a webinar with experts from each of the providers on Wednesday the 28<sup>th</sup> October, where they will be discussing the services in more detail, as well as responding to questions sent through in advance. For more information or to register/submit a question click [HERE](#).

Phoenix Australia will also be delivering a webinar on Trauma Informed Care (TIC), scheduled for Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020. The webinar will discuss why TIC is important to consider in the context of aged care, what it is, and potential benefits for staff and residents. Register [HERE](#).

The package providers and supports proposed are as follows:

#### **1. The Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement (ACGB): Grief and Bereavement Counselling**

ACGB is the largest provider of grief and bereavement support in Australia with over 24 years' experience including many crisis responses. The ACGB has a well-established clinical service which has for many years' utilised telephone support for bereaved people.

ACGB grief and trauma services will include:

- 1) a national toll free telephone service linking callers with specialist bereavement practitioners and triage callers into appropriate support programs including individual bereavement counselling via telehealth and video calls, or group based telehealth support. Provisions will be made to visit clients where disability or access to technology prohibits access to the service. ACGB will use TIS and Auslan as required.
- 2) aged care COVID specific web portal, online referrals and SMS text support.

- 3) self-care resources (including translated and printed versions), a My Grief app, and webinars for residents, families and aged care staff.
- 4) coordinating an in reach program for aged care; including developing a physical presence in aged care and home care settings where intensive support is required
- 5) creating a peer led support pack which can be delivered by trained and supported peer leaders in residential aged care with the support of ACGB clinicians.
- 6) support for aged care services, where after reaching out to ACGB a program response for that service can be developed. This includes staff care, facility meetings, community meetings, memorial events and peer support sessions.
- 7) capacity building and support for community groups to enhance their ability to reach out and respond effectively to their community who may be suffering from grief and bereavement. This includes culturally and linguistically diverse groups, regional/remote, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and other diverse and vulnerable communities.

The ACGB Aged Care COVID-19 grief and bereavement support service is now live and available on 1800 22 22 00. The ACGB will be bolstering staff for an aged care specific line in future weeks while developing the aged care COVID specific website and other resources. <https://www.grief.org.au>

## **2. Phoenix Australia: Trauma Informed Care and Trauma Self-Care**

Phoenix Australia, an independent not-for-profit organisation affiliated with the University of Melbourne is Australia's National Centre of Excellence in Posttraumatic Mental Health. Phoenix Australia have a wealth of experience in delivering education, training and wellbeing materials for professionals as well as individuals and organisations directly impacted by trauma. They also have extensive experience in working with organisations to improve their approach to managing trauma in the workplace.

The Phoenix Australia program of work will contain three resource packages:

- 1) Trauma-informed care policy resources for organisations; including a service framework, workbooks and self-assessment tools.
- 2) Trauma-informed care practice resources for staff. The resources aim to support staff wellbeing and to assist them when providing care to residents who have experienced trauma. This does not include training on trauma counselling or accreditation. Rather, the resources are designed to assist staff to be trauma aware in their current role and provide support in the management of behaviours associated with trauma when providing care. The package will include:
  - Trauma-informed resources to care for residents: videos, webinars and online training, information for staff on a variety of topics including background on trauma, responses to trauma, understating trauma and dementia, and guidance on when and how to seek help.
  - Self-Care for the workforce exposed to trauma in the course of their work: education on acknowledging traumatic stressors; providing peer support, self-care strategies and resources; with referral options for additional support. An evidence-based online wellbeing program will include a mental health screen so staff can self-check their mental health, and will teach skills to deal with stress and trauma with the aim of preventing the development of depression and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- 3) Trauma awareness and support resources for residents and their loved ones; including videos, plain language information and animations on understanding trauma, guidance on when to seek help, self-care strategies and resources to assist with caring for a loved one affected by trauma.

The first Phoenix Australia webinar will take place on 11 November and focus on how managers within the aged care sector can identify and manage trauma to better support residents and their families, as well as the workforce.

Phoenix Australia has a wealth of information on their [website](#) currently about dealing with trauma and will shortly be delivering aged care COVID specific resources as a part of the package.

### **3. Dementia Support Australia (DSA):**

DSA delivers three free, nationwide dementia behaviour support programs, the Dementia Behaviour Management Advisory Service (DBMAS) the Severe Behaviour Response Teams (SBRTs) and Needs Based Assessment (NBA) assessing eligibility for Specialist Dementia Care Programs. These programs assist carers when behaviours and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD) are affecting a person's care or quality of life. DSA offers specialist clinical support, advice and information to assist carers to recognise situations that can trigger these behaviours and to develop skills and strategies to minimise these behaviours occurring.

DSA will continue to be available for 24-hr a day assistance on 1800 699 799, and will continue to reach out and respond to aged care providers to provide further strategies to minimise BPSD that may be further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As part of this project, DSA will also recruit extra engagement consultants to support the aged care sector by:

- 1) developing and distribute brokerage kits;
- 2) providing on the ground or remote assessments of care homes and residents, with emphasis on individuals with greatest needs;
- 3) working with care home staff to make the brokerage kit meet the needs of the residents; and,
- 4) capacity building for support staff via modelling and mentoring.

### **4. Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN)**

The Grief and Bereavement Response Package will be supported by OPAN which has received additional funding under this measure to provide expanded COVID-19 support and advocacy services. OPAN will be a key partner for providing information into the community as well as reaching out directly to families and providers for a warm referral to the services.

### **Delivery Support and Evaluation**

The Department will establish a consultation group to support providers of the package with direction, testing and feedback on materials. Some of your organisations will be invited to form a part of this group.

Catering for diversity and ensuring access of information is obviously critical for this cohort of vulnerable people. I can assure you that the Department has this front of mind when procuring the above providers who are committed to planning for diversity in their approach, as well as how we communicate about the package. My team will be working with the providers to ensure comprehensive translation of materials, as well as print and mailing of information in language to aged care

residents and home care recipients; as we know that many older people prefer to receive printed information in their language.

This will be supported by a social media campaign to raise awareness of the services available to aged care staff and those with loved ones receiving care.

The package will also be subject to an independent formative evaluation.

If you have any questions about the package, please submit them to OPAN prior to the webinar on Wednesday via the registration link and the experts will aim to answer (time permitting).

My team and I (Isolde.Kauffman@health.gov.au; 02 6289 2987 or Gen.Bond@health.gov.au) are also happy to speak with you directly about the intent or delivery of the package.

Warm regards

Robert Day  
Assistant Secretary  
Dementia and Supported Ageing Branch  
26 October 2020