

# COVID-19: AGED CARE INDUSTRY FACTS

APR 21ST, 2020 | ARTICLE

Normally, we release an update on the industry news for Aged Care each month. However, as we all know, life is not currently normal. Having just gotten through the 2019-2020 'Black Summer', our industry that we are all so passionate about is facing yet another incredibly difficult period as the world confronts COVID-19.

We know that there are lots of rumours, and we're gathering facts as they come available. Most news regarding our industry is related to the current situation of COVID-19, and some smaller things that we would normally report no longer seem as critical as they once were, or have altogether disappeared as life as we know it is turned upside down.

For now, we will aim to keep you updated on the things that matter most as we get through this period. That is, the facts that will affect the industry at this point in time; the circumstances that affect the future of the industry and its ongoing evolution and change; and of course, the amazing stories of people that come to light in a time of the most difficult of challenges,

There are many excellent resources out there and we highly recommend keeping up to date with all the Aged Care peak bodies, who continue to provide a great deal of support and information in this time; the Ageing Agenda, Talking Aged Care, the Weekly Source & the Donaldson Sisters for timely Aged Care news; and the Department of Health updates.

We'll return to our usual schedule of industry news as it fits, when the current challenges ease. In the meantime, here are some of the important facts that stand for our industry as a result of the pandemic.

## **FUNDING PACKAGE AND TEMPORARY RATE INCREASES**

The Government has announced \$444.6M in additional funding to support the industry amidst the pressures of tackling COVID-19. For an overview of the inclusions, please refer to Minister Richard Colbeck's [media release here](#).

As a part of this funding, \$78.3 million in temporary additional funding to support additional costs and workforce supply pressures resulting from COVID-19 for Residential Aged Care will be delivered through ACFI subsidies. The temporary funding will be in effect from March 1st 2020 – 31st August 2020, with the funding being available to Providers from April 2020. You can view the [new rates with the temporary subsidy increase here](#).

\$26.9 million has also been allocated for a temporary 30% increase to the Residential and Home Care Viability Supplements and the Homeless Supplement. Again, rates can be found in the Government's [Schedule of Supplements and](#)

[Subsidies here](#). These payments will also take effect from March 1st – 31st August 2020 and should start flowing to Providers in April.

We have updated our [2019 ACFI rates page](#) to include the temporary increase subsidy, or for the new rate totals that include the Temporary Subsidy Increase daily subsidies, refer to our article here.

An [additional funding package of \\$205M was announced on the 1<sup>st</sup> May](#) which will see a one-off payment to Aged Care facilities. The funding aims to support facilities with the additional costs incurred, such as implementing extra safety measures and equipment, as a result of dealing with COVID-19. For Metropolitan Aged Care facilities [the one-off payment](#) will be \$900 per resident; and \$1,350 per resident to for regional facilities.

### **AGED CARE VISITOR ACCESS CODE CREATED**

After [scrutiny by both the Federal Government](#) and the Australian media of the Aged Care industry's policies on visitor restrictions as a result of COVID-19, Aged Care consumer & peak bodies joined to request a nationally consistent code of guidelines. The [release of the draft Aged Care Visitor Access Code](#) was announced by Prime Minister Scott Morrison and [opened for consultation](#) from 1st May to the 7th May.

Designed by national Provider and consumer organisations, the code has been endorsed for public consultation by consumer advocacy organisations Carers Australia, Council on the Ageing Australia, Dementia Australia, National Seniors Australia and the Older Persons Advocacy Network and aged care provider peak bodies Aged & Community Services Australia, Aged Care Guild, Anglicare Australia, Baptist Care Australia, Catholic Health Australia, Leading Age Services Australia, and UnitingCare Australia.

You can [read the draft consultation code here](#).

### **AGED CARE ROYAL COMMISSION SUSPENDS HEARINGS & WORKSHOPS INDEFINITELY**

On the 20th March 2020, the Aged Care Royal Commission made the decision to [suspend all hearings, workshops and group consultations until at least the end of May](#), in light of COVID-19. The suspension will be subject to ongoing review. Adelaide Hearing 5, covering Mental health, oral health and allied health care, was also suspended as a result and did not take place. The deadline for [public submissions has also been extended](#) to 30 June 2020, with continual monitoring.

In late April, the Royal Commission called for submissions from both the public and organisations on [the impact of COVID-19 on the Aged Care Industry](#). In the same statement, the Commission stated that despite the suspension of hearings and workshops, an 'extensive body of research' on multiple topics, that commenced in 2019 would be released to the public in the coming months.

### **AN-ACC TRIAL & 2020 ACAR ROUND ON HOLD**

The Australian National Aged Care Classification (AN-ACC) assessment trial, that has been underway since late 2019 and was set to be completed in June 2020, has been put on hold for at least 6 months. The 2020 Aged Care Approval Round (ACAR), which had originally been set to open in March, and the home care payment alignment project have also been put on hold in order to focus resources on the COVID-19 outbreak. You can [read the Minister's media release here](#) and view our updated timeline below. In this time of uncertainty, it is as of yet unclear how the delay of the trial, as well as the Royal Commission suspension will affect the remainder of the AN-ACC trial.

### **UNANNOUNCED VISITS POSTPONED**

The Aged Care Guide are reporting that unannounced visits will be postponed until further notice, [based on a statement issued to Providers by the Aged Care Quality & Safety Commissioner](#), Janet Anderson. They report that other site visits will continue based on based on specific circumstances, and have [released a media statement](#) on the current regulatory activities that the Commission will undertake throughout the pandemic. Minister for Aged Care Richard Colbeck also [released a media statement to reject claims](#) made that no inspections had been taking place by the Quality & Safety Commission since the COVID-19 outbreak.

### **FLU VAX**

As you will all be aware, the 2020 flu vaccine is mandatory for Aged Care workers (and any other visitors entering facilities), and must be received prior to 1 May 2020. You can view the [Minister's announcement here](#). Due to the increase in demand for the 2020 flu vaccine, the Government is [assisting Aged Care Providers to coordinate flu vaccines](#) for their teams, in both sourcing the vaccine and administering it. Primary Health Networks across Australia will contact all Residential Aged Care Providers to discuss needs and coordinate vaccination programs if there is an identified need. You can read further on the [requirements for Aged Care workers here](#).

### **PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)**

As with the flu vaccine, PPE is in great demand with a worldwide shortage. For your reference, here is the Government's advice for Aged Care and Health workers:

- This [video](#) covers how and when to use PPE in Aged Care
- This [page is the Department of Health's advice](#) for Health & Aged Care workers when battling COVID-19, including when to use PPE

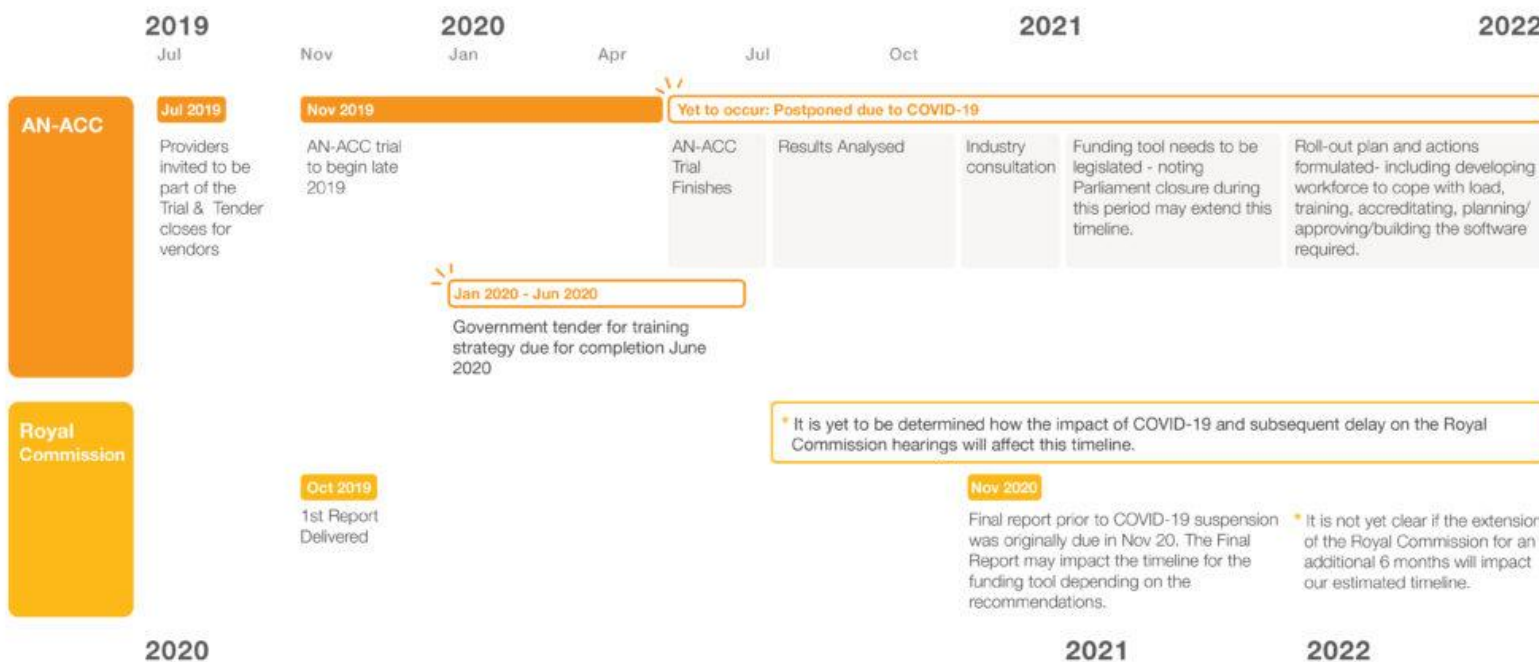
For further information on the use of PPE and dealing with the shortage, you can read the [World Health Organisation's \(WHO\) fact sheet here](#).

If there is anything you would like to know about and need us to look into, or if you have come across something we haven't that you think people should know, please reach out to us at [team@providerassist.com.au](mailto:team@providerassist.com.au) or 1300 419 119.

We hope you are all safe and well in this challenging time. We are all in this together – please do not hesitate to reach out for anything if you need.



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**ACFI & what you need to do**

Mar 2020 - Aug 2020	Aug 2020 - Late 2020	2021 - 2022	2022 & onward
<p><b>BUSINESS CRITICAL</b></p> <p>This period is critical to get your funding in order to ensure you are not missing out on key funding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stay on top of your voluntaries</li> <li>Focus on claiming all entitlements</li> </ul> <p><b>Remember</b></p> <p>Funding is currently elevated by the COVID-19 temporary daily amount, so this will diminish at the close of August. It is crucial to ensure you are in an optimal position once the additional funding ceases.</p> <p><b>Now is the time to act - don't be afraid to engage or outsource additional resources to help you through this period.</b></p>	<p><b>SCALE UP</b></p> <p>As we prepare to move into the post COVID-19 phase, it is important to not take your eye off the ball. Keep your foundations solid.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educate your team on comprehensive clinical assessment. This will support you in both ACFI &amp; Accreditation Standards 2 &amp; 3</li> <li>All your residents will need to be accurately assessed - keep your workflow going</li> </ul> <p>It is important to continue putting your energy into getting your funding in order, so that you will be in the best position for the next chapter.</p>	<p><b>POST- COVID-19</b></p> <p>Be positioned well for change. With your house in order you will be ready for the next phase and able to put your energy into transitioning into a new tool and any changes as a result of the Royal Commission and post COVID-19 world</p>	<p>Stop-loss measures mean that when the new tool comes in ACFI will be grandparented for existing residents and your total facility funding can't decrease more than 5% from this position. So for the best sustainability throughout the post COVID-19 stage and industry changes, make sure all your VRPs and mandates are done by this time.</p>

**Stay on top of news - but don't be distracted**

*Here is an estimated timeline we've created of the current progress of the AN-ACC funding tool trial, the Royal Commission, and what we should be doing with ACFI throughout the COVID-19 period, based on the information we currently have.*