



Health support for aged care in flood-affected regions

The Australian Government has a range of supports to help Australians that are being impacted by flooding across the east coast of Australia, including additional support to Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACFs) and Home and Community Aged Care providers in these regions. This factsheet outlines these supports.

Emergency Contacts - How should people seek assistance?

- **In an emergency or life threatening situation**, call Triple Zero (000)
- **In Queensland (QLD)**, for non-life threatening flood and storm emergency assistance contact the **Queensland Fire and Emergency Services** <https://www.qfes.qld.gov.au/> or call **13 74 68**.
- **In New South Wales (NSW)**, for non-life threatening flood and storm emergency assistance contact the **New South Wales State Emergency Service** www.ses.nsw.gov.au or call **132 500**

Providers impacted by current flooding events

All aged care providers

All aged care providers should activate their existing emergency management plans to respond to flood and weather emergencies. This should consider:

- How safe and quality care of residents will continue to be delivered, and where this will occur, should potential evacuation be required.
- How you will access additional disaster management supports, as required.

Providers should remain aware of their surroundings and heed the advice of emergency management authorities as directed – resident and care recipient safety must always be prioritised.

Providers are required to continue to deliver appropriate care in accordance with their emergency risk management plan and their relevant aged care program, and provide regular advice to staff, family and care recipients.

Providers should also consider mechanisms for providing ongoing access to primary care (for example utilising telehealth arrangements where possible) and medical supplies, including pharmacy and prescription medicines through existing or alternate supply chains.

More information on emergency planning and response for RACFs and in-home and community aged care providers is provided further below.

Disaster supports for aged care

State government support arrangements

A wide range of state-government disaster support arrangements have been activated in response to the current flooding. These provide both immediate logistical and operational based support, as well as assistance to help with the longer-term impacts, such as repairs and recovery.

To make sure that appropriate support is provided as quickly and as possible, all aged care providers must follow existing state and government to request help. These channels are well developed and will guarantee that requests are prioritised as part of whole of government response efforts.

The Department of Health State Offices will support providers with connections to services, where required, including connecting in directly to state emergency operations centres.

In Queensland:

- Enact business continuity and evacuation plans.
- Request assistance through the Local Council which will have a Local Disaster Management Plan and will link providers to the Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) supports.
- Local Councils and LDMGs are best placed to support providers for a range of needs, including food, clean up and evacuation. Local Councils will escalate any issues that require support beyond local assistance.

In New South Wales:

- Activate emergency risk management plans; ensuring decisions are timely and informed and where it may culminate in a partial or complete evacuation of the facility.
- Liaise with local emergency services via Triple Zero (000) to determine the seriousness of an emergency and the level of risk posed to the facility and care recipients.
- Confirm that emergency services will link in at the Local Health District level to prioritise and deliver supports.
- Continue to deliver appropriate care in accordance with emergency risk management plans and keep staff, family and care recipients well informed.

Access to workforce support to assist with floods

All aged care providers should review their workforce management plans so there are options for sourcing surge workforce if you need it:

- Plan for staff being unable to attend work due to road closures. Consider other roles for staff unable to attend including providing updates to families
- Remember you may need to replace all types of staff: personal care workers, and cooking and cleaning staff to administration and management staff
- Make sure you have a plan on how to orientate surge workforce and who will supervise these staff
- Think about options for fatigue management including for staff who are trapped due to road closures. If needed, provide facilities for staff to sleep and take breaks.

Access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs)

The delivery of PPE and RATs will be prioritised through the National Medical Stockpile (NMS) to RACFs in affected areas to ensure these facilities can continue to manage any COVID-19 outbreaks. Providers can replenish their stock of PPE and RATs if it is destroyed during a flooding event by:

- PPE can be sourced utilising the [online ordering form](#).
- RATs can be ordered through the existing pathway in situations of urgency.

Emergency leave provisions to support permanent residents temporarily relocating with family during the floods

Emergency leave provisions are available for residents who would like to temporarily relocate from their RACF to stay with family during the floods, and during the clean-up period afterwards. Aged care providers will continue to be paid residential subsidies when their residents are on emergency leave.

Emergency allocation of residential aged care places

Where required, emergency allocation of residential aged care places will be processed as part of standard emergency management processes. Aged care providers should contact the Department of Health State Office in their state for further information.

Disaster recovery funding arrangements

A range of supports have been activated under the joint Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. This includes supports for eligible older Australians in their own homes for structural repairs and replacement of household items. Some residential aged care providers may also be eligible for additional grants based on their circumstances.

In addition, clean-up and recovery grants may be made available to assist businesses, to resume trading as soon as possible. The grants may be used for clean-up activities, replacement of damaged equipment and stock, and other general repairs. Jurisdictions determine the locations in which these supports are activated and the associated eligibility criteria.

Further information is available from the National Recovery and Resilience Agency: [National Recovery and Resilience Agency](#).

Wellbeing supports

The Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) is available to support older people and their wellbeing during these extreme weather events on 1800 700 600.

A referral program is available for in-home and community aged care services providers, or any concerned parties, to ensure older Australians are safe, healthy, and are not missing out on services due to this challenging time. The service is complementary to the work of home care providers in continuing to connect with the older Australians they assist.

These Wellbeing Checks can be arranged in two ways:

- Clients can ring to register for these wellbeing call backs, or
- providers can register the clients' interest on their behalf (with client consent to be contacted).

Senior Rights Service is the **NSW OPAN** member and **Aged and Disability Advocates Australia** are the **QLD OPAN member**, who can be contacted on **1800 700 600: 8am-8pm Monday-Friday and 10am-4pm Saturday**.

Additional information on emergency planning and response

Residential aged care providers

Residential aged care providers should work with their staff to make sure they are familiar with how each service will respond to an emergency including:

- Make sure all staff know who will lead a response to a flood or weather emergency on each shift.
- Make sure the leadership team is contactable after hours and on public holidays – consider an on-call roster.
- Remind team leaders or shift supervisors about how to activate the emergency management plan including how to contact emergency services from state governments for help.

In-home (HCP) and community aged care (CHSP) providers

In-home and community aged care providers should have emergency plans in place for all care recipients:

- Staff should be aware of these plans and be able to implement if regular staff or care recipients are impacted by the emergency.
- Plans should be implemented if either staff are unavailable to provide services or the care recipient is impacted.
- Staff and care recipients should access emergency support provided by the state/local government and/or emergency services in the first instance i.e., help with flood clean up or emergency accommodation.
- Providers must undertake welfare checks and remain in regular contact with their care recipients, where possible.
- Delivery of in-home and community services that are necessary for the health and safety of care recipients must continue where it is safe to do so. Where a HCP provider cannot continue to provide essential services to a care recipient, they should support the affected care recipient to receive services from another provider willing and able to provide these services, or to a higher needs care setting such as a residential aged care facility or hospital.
- CHSP providers should contact their Funding Arrangement Manager about any major disruptions to normal service delivery at their earliest opportunity.
- CHSP providers can use their 100 per cent flexibility to urgently re-distribute funding to cover any additional service costs. CHSP providers can also apply for emergency funding under the CHSP Ad Hoc Proposals (GO4264) grant funding opportunity as a response to an unforeseen and exceptional circumstance. Applications are open until 30 June 2022.

Aged care state and territory emergency contacts

Aged care service providers can call the Australian Government Department of Health in their state or territory if they need help to find vacancies or resources to manage an emergency. These numbers are always monitored:

- Victoria/Tasmania: **1800 078 709**
- New South Wales / Australian Capital Territory: **1800 852 649**
- South Australia: **1800 288 475**
- Queensland: **1800 300 125**
- Western Australia: **1800 733 923**
- Northern Territory: **1800 355 348**

More information

More information can be found on the [Service Continuity and Emergency Events in Aged Care page](#), on the Department of Health's website, including emergency contact numbers for each State Office.