

TO: All Media - Murrumbidgee

DATE: 27 March 2020

SUBJECT: Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Release of personal details

As of 8am on 27 March 2020

There have been a further seven cases of COVID-19 identified in the Murrumbidgee Local Health District (MLHD) taking the total number of positive COVID-19 results to 20.

COVID-19 in MLHD by Local Government Areas (LGA)	
Albury City LGA	6
Cootamundra-Gundagai LGA	1
Griffith City LGA	3
Federation LGA	4
Wagga Wagga City LGA	4
Greater Hume LGA	2
Total	20

All cases notified were diagnosed after travelling overseas or being in contact with a confirmed case.

Patients who have experienced mild to moderate symptoms are in self-isolation to ensure they do not transmit the virus. They are being managed at home with the support of their GP and a daily check up with local health services. Those who are more unwell may be admitted to an appropriate local hospital.

Australia has very strong privacy laws which do not allow the release of individual personal and health information to the public.

The release of such personal details contradicts public health ethical principles.

Contact tracing and laboratory testing to identify and isolate cases of COVID-19 are done using standard public health protocols which have proven to be effective here and internationally.

The release of personal details could increase the likelihood of people not cooperating with contact tracing and laboratory testing to identify and isolate cases of COVID-19.

This would increase the risk to the community and individuals with the disease with the potential to cause unnecessary community anxiety and bring stigma and harm to affected individuals and their families.

For these reasons, the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC), which is chaired by the Australian Government Chief Medical Officer and all state and territory Chief Health Officers,

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does not in any way support the public release of personal information of people found to have COVID-19 or those who may have been close contacts with patients.

MLHD Advises:

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, sore throat and dry cough. Symptoms will generally appear 3-4 days after exposure to the virus but can be up to 14 days later.

Members of the public are advised to minimise travel, increase personal awareness around hand hygiene and practice social distancing.

Anyone who believes they have may have contracted the COVID-19 virus (ie: who are returned travellers, or who have come in contact with a confirmed case and are showing symptoms: fever, sore throat, dry cough and shortness of breath) are advised in the first instance to:

- **Call the free-call coronavirus hotline 1800 022 222** and receive advise on the best course of action depending on your symptoms and risks. Medical staff will direct people to the nearest hospital or respiratory clinic, or advise them to stay home and self-monitor, or contact their GP, or
- **Contact your GP** to arrange an appointment (let GP practice know in advance if you have symptoms) or
- Call the **Murrumbidgee COVID-19 Hotline** on 1800 831 099 for assessment (7.00 am – 11.00 pm)

TIPS to reduce potential for virus transmission
Wash your hands regularly
Stay home as much as possible
Stop shaking hands, hugging, or kissing other people
Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces regularly
Avoid visiting vulnerable people, such as those in aged care facilities or hospitals.

MLHD and MPHNS encourage members of the public who need information to visit the NSW Health website at: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/diseases/Pages/coronavirus.aspx>

The NSW Government announced a \$2.3 billion health boost and economic stimulus package to help tackle the COVID-19 outbreak last week.

NSW Health will receive \$700 million to assist in doubling ICU capacity, preparing for additional COVID-19 testing, purchasing additional ventilators and medical equipment, establishing acute respiratory clinics and bringing forward elective surgeries to private hospitals.

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