



## Information for ASLIA members regarding the COVID-19 Pandemic (as of 19/03/2020)

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to unfold and in these uncertain times, ASLIA holds the health and wellbeing of our members and community as the priority. ASLIA continues to monitor both the Department of Health and the World Health Organisation advice, and will take action as deemed appropriate.

**All onsite face-to-face ASLIA meetings and events will be suspended until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020**, where possible these will take place in an online format using ASLIA Live, otherwise they will be postponed. At this stage, the ASLIA National Conference (ANC) is planned to proceed, but this will be reviewed on ongoing basis. You can keep up to date with the latest ANC2020 news [here](#).

**We highly recommend all interpreters follow and keep up to date with the latest precautions as recommended by the Department of Health ([www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)).** Current (as of 17/03/2020) recommendations include:

- Good hygiene – covering coughs and sneezes, washing your hands regularly with soap for 20 seconds, using hand sanitizer, cleaning surfaces and frequently used items.
- [Social distancing](#) – including minimising physical contact (eg not shaking hands) and keeping 1.5m from other people where possible.
- Staying home (self-isolation) if you are unwell.
- Restricting non-essential travel.

**We encourage all members to request more information regarding assignments from their employers to determine the risk level and how these risks might best be mitigated.** Measures might include: requesting a larger meeting room to increase distance between people; access to handwashing facilities when entering and exiting the place of assignment; switching to VRI instead of onsite interpreting. For our own safety, we need to be assertive advocates and work with our employers to inform parties involved of further safety requirements for assignments to proceed. **For those working with Deafblind people where close proximity is required for communication – additional safety measures should be implemented.** This includes strict cleaning of hands prior to and after physical contact along with use of appropriate PPE to ensure reduction of transmission between clients and interpreter practitioners.

**If asked to work in environments with a high COVID-19 risk, negotiate for the use of VRI or the allocation of PPE via your employer.** Information regarding various PPE and their use are outlined on the [Department of Health website](#). ASLIA supports the position outlined by the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI) and the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) in their joint statement on [3<sup>rd</sup> March 2020](#) “... Sign language interpreters who work in emergency and health settings should be given the same health and safety protections as other health care workers dealing with Covid-19. There may be appropriate alternatives for optimum access, such as an interpreting wearing a transparent surgical mask or from behind a transparent screen, so that facial expressions and lip movement is still visible, as these are important grammatical elements in sign languages. If amenable to the deaf patient and in accordance with the practices outlined in the WFD Position Paper on Accessibility: Sign Language Interpreting and translation and technological developments, remote/distance interpreting may also be feasible.”

ASLIA understands that some of these measures may be difficult to implement on the ground, but we encourage and support members to self-advocate to minimise risk of infection. ASLIA would like to thank interpreters for the work you are undertaking in these current circumstances, and realise the uncertainty it presents for most who are casual workers.

If you have any further questions for ASLIA, please contact us on the email addresses:

ASLIA Secretary [secretary@aslia.com.au](mailto:secretary@aslia.com.au)

ASLIA Chairperson [chairperson@aslia.com.au](mailto:chairperson@aslia.com.au)