

SETS Community of Practice

Communique: COVID-19 Best Practice and Innovation Meeting (QLD/TAS)

Videoconference – 2 June 2020

On 2 June, the SETS Community of Practice (SETSCoP) held its fifth videoconference for CoP members in QLD and TAS to share their emerging best practice and innovative service delivery through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Safe work environments

Attendees shared their approaches to maintaining safe work environments, as staff return back to the office and provide more face to face service delivery. Providers agreed on the importance of WHS considerations and risk management in SETS delivery.

Some of the approaches shared by providers include:

- COVID-19 screening questions for clients
- hand sanitisers
- groups held outside where possible (limited by the weather)
- social distancing in face to face individual and group sessions
- use of large meeting rooms
- allocated client days
- support and advice from a WorkSafe advisor

Many providers are planning for the next 12 months to ensure that any future events (e.g. Harmony Day 2021) factor in the new potential risks highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some attendees discussed working with relevant stakeholders to ensure both staff and client safety.

Changes to service delivery

Attendees discussed some of the impacts of COVID-19 on SETS service delivery. Despite the challenges providers have faced, many have noted that the necessity for innovation has been a positive consequence.

Some of the changes to SETS program delivery as described by attendees include:

- providing a combination of online and face to face SETS delivery
- a general decrease in new clients and client numbers
- higher support needs from clients
- greater reliance on outreach, welfare checks and phone support
- combining of groups and longer group sessions
- more frequent and additional group sessions both online and face to face

There was a general consensus that a significant barrier to groups returning to face to face, is the issue of transport. Many expressed that their region's public transport is limited and many providers are facing challenges maintaining adequate social distancing while transporting clients by car or bus. Some providers are using larger vehicles for a smaller number of clients to ensure adequate

distancing and are holding smaller group sessions more often (i.e. 2-3 times per week). Other providers are holding groups in halls or parks closer to where clients live, so that they can transport themselves.

Education

Many providers shared how SETS clients are worried that home-schooling has negatively impacted their children's progress in education. Additionally, that many clients who are attending TAFE or university themselves, are concerned about the impact that online learning has had on their own educational outcomes.

Access to computers continues to be an issue. Providers shared how they have received donated laptops, and some are looking at ongoing collaborations with schools and other organisations to develop a laptop lending program.

Despite the general feeling of relief with the return to face to face schooling, some SETS clients are experiencing anxiety around sending their children to school on public transport. The different approaches by schools is confusing some clients. One provider shared how they are organising a large education meeting with relevant stakeholders to explore how best to support parents, children and schools moving forward.

Impact of COVID-19 on clients

Attendees agreed that COVID-19 has highlighted some of ongoing issues and challenges for SETS clients. Issues such as inequitable access to technology, poor digital literacy, domestic and family violence and barriers to education, have become more visible.

With the continued changing of information for COVID-19, providers shared how SETS clients have struggled to keep up to date on all changes and how differences interstate, is causing confusion for many clients.

Despite this, one provider shared that through recent consultations with their SETS clients, 85% of those consulted reported to be doing "as well" or "better than" they were pre-pandemic.

DEX and reporting

Providers shared some of the challenges they have faced with DEX and reporting during the COVID-19. This information is being collated and shared with Department of Home Affairs.

Resources shared

[MyAusCOVID-19 App \(Migration Council Australia\)](#)