

SETSCoP

Communique: Queensland COVID-19 and Best Practice Meeting Videoconference – 6 April 2022

On 6 April 2022, the SETS Community of Practice (SETSCoP) held a videoconference for CoP members in Queensland to share their best practice and innovative service delivery, along with challenges faced recently due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Highlights

Men's groups have been established, where issues of healthy relationships and social inclusion are able to be discussed. Other men's groups have been started with information shared on family wellbeing in amongst the activities of football and shared meals.

Several SETS providers have been conducting **consultations with young people** from multicultural backgrounds to gather feedback for submissions on the **Education Queensland CALD** review. This review was triggered through COVID-19 as they recognised that CALD families were not well supported in schools.

COVID-19 specific support

SETS providers continue sharing information through Whatsapp and text messages to community leaders to **dispel myths and share legitimate pathways to information**. Some are also sending information to individual clients. One strategy that has been used is an internal newsletter for SETS clients which includes updates on COVID-19. Providers have also been working to share myths and trends directly with the Queensland Department of Health. One example of this is that people have said that those who have been vaccinated are getting worse symptoms than those who are unvaccinated.

Information sessions are continuing, although it is more effective to share COVID-19 information alongside other topics, as clients are currently less likely to attend sessions that are only about COVID-19.

Some providers have worked with Refugee Health Queensland, to bring staff into schools to share information about **vaccinations** and to provide vaccinations.

Attention on COVID-19 has diminished and there has been very limited new information coming from the government. In particular, how schools are affected by **changing restrictions**. There has been confusion on masks / no masks, and on whether you need to be vaccinated once you have had COVID-19.

Since February there has been an **increasing disconnect across communities** because people were not attending gatherings, such as churches, as it may not be safe to gather. Therefore, isolation has been increasing.

There has also been **impacts for those who work in labouring role** or the manufacturing industry who have had to attend testing dates that are not paid for. This has had a direct impact on their income.

Providers are continuing to be mindful of **COVIDsafe practices**, particularly if they are conducting home visits to share information.

Some providers have continued to deliver **vaccinations** from their offices, which has been effective, particularly if it has been conducted to target a particular population.

Some groups of clients, particularly **young people** were not as aware of COVID-19 and vaccination. When restrictions were eased, some clients were unhappy, as they felt that their efforts to be vaccinated had not been worthwhile.

Challenges

One provider shared about the effect of the recent **flooding** event, which has meant that their staff are currently working from home, whilst their office is being repaired.

The most significant issue being faced by Queensland SETS providers currently is **housing**. The recent flooding has made the situation worse. There has been an increase in young women who are homeless long term, e.g. for up to one year. Providers have been working to improve pathways from settlement providers to housing specialist services. One example of what has made this difficult, is some people have received public housing and then rented it out at a higher rate. Many are being asked to move out of their current rental property, as it is being sold. An example of the challenge is one client who had submitted 54 rental applications and was denied.

Another challenge for SETS clients is the increase in the **price of citizenship applications**.

Immicard renewals have been taking a significant amount of time to be renewed. There has been time wasted when providers have attempted to contact to find out where a new card is. Some clients have waited up to one year for their renewed card. There is confusion on whether this card is necessary. It was suggested that if the expiry date could be removed, this would assist.

The **lack of paper forms** able to be used by government departments has made it difficult for SETS providers to encourage clients to do a first attempt independently and then check and provide assistance where needed.