# **DHHS and NDS COVID-19 Briefing for Disability Sector - 27 March 2020**

Vision 2020 Australia staff participated in a joint briefing focussed on supporting the disability sector through COVID-19 and its impacts. In summary:

* The briefing highlighted the importance of working together to ensure that people with disability and their service providers are supported as much as possible in a rapidly evolving and dynamic environment.

Professor John Catford and others reminded participants that:

* We should remain as optimistic as possible acknowledging that Australia is still considered to be in the early stages of the pandemic impact and at this stage, the majority of the coronavirus cases are from people who have travelled overseas, rather than community-acquired transmission.
* Personal hygiene behaviours are critical – regularly washing your hands, being careful of coughing and sneezing, and reducing contact with others as much as possible, particularly if you are unwell.

It was noted that disability services are an essential service, however it is not business as usual for those services or their clients.

* The area of Behaviour Support has unique challenges due to personal distancing and isolation measures, so the care of clients and first responders is being carefully considered
* The NDIA is concentrating on reviewing data, and planning ahead as much as possible to mitigate service disruption. This includes the provision of advance payments to some providers, relaxation of cancellation rules, options for telehealth and other remote models of service delivery, and overall, more flexibility in client plans. Details of these will be available on the NDIA’s website.
* Access and availability of personal protection equipment still remains a challenge which state and federal governments are working on together as a critical issue

If members would like a copy of the more detailed notes from the webinar taken by Vision 2020 Australia staff, please email Janine Sherrard on <jsherrard@vision2020australia.org.au>