

AMT Media Release

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AMT calls on Federal Government to extend stimulus

The Association of Massage Therapists (AMT) is calling on the Federal Government to extend stimulus measures to help self-employed health practitioners manage their response to COVID19.

The call comes as the country's 20,000 massage therapists face increasingly complex risk assessments in response to the spread of COVID19.

Massage therapists are in close non-casual contact with their clients between 5 to 40 hours a week. They are at high risk of becoming vectors for transmission of the virus.

AMT Chairperson Michelle McKerron said "Australia's massage therapy workforce is facing an incredibly challenging and stressful dilemma. AMT members have responded to COVID19 with dedication and professionalism, implementing enhanced infection control and screening procedures. But they also recognise that there remains a high risk of transmission and they want to be the best healthcare citizens they can be."

The massage therapy workforce is overwhelmingly comprised of sole traders who do not have the protections of personal leave and holiday leave. The prospect of shutdown is fraught with financial risks. Many are already doing it tough in the wake of drought and bushfires.

AMT CEO Rebecca Barnett said "Our members have found themselves at the heart of the COVID19 crisis. They are operating at the interface between public health and financial vulnerability. Self-employed massage therapists need to be given meaningful financial support to close their practices temporarily and thus help to contain the spread of the virus. The government stimulus has completely overlooked self-employed health practitioners."

"Massage therapists take their responsibilities as healthcare providers extremely seriously. They are primed to support the public health measures to contain and slow the spread of COVID19 but they need urgent financial assistance from the government to weather temporary shutdowns," said Ms Barnett.

NSW Central Coast therapist, Tara Goulding, provides a mobile massage therapy service to a wide range of people in her surrounding community. For her, the impacts of COVID19 come hard on the heels of the bushfires.

"The COVID19 threat really has made me aware of how vulnerable my business is purely because I work in close personal contact with the public. It's impossible for me to maintain social distance while doing my job. There is no way around it - I have to get within two metres of my clients. I have to touch them, I sometimes have to lean over them. All of these things are directly contravening the Department of Health recommendations for social distancing," Ms Goulding said.

"I follow AMT's guidelines for infection control and hygiene but I don't believe this is enough to eliminate myself as a vector for COVID19 through the act of just doing my job. It's also becoming increasingly difficult to purchase sanitising products for use between clients," she said.

AMT continues to monitor Department of Health and WHO guidelines to disseminate appropriate advice to members.

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