

AMT Position Statement

Provision of massage therapy during a COVID-19 outbreak

From the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, AMT has provided advice to massage therapists that is based on rapidly evolving evidence and supports the public health objective to curb transmission of the virus within Australia.

AMT convened a Biosecurity Committee in April 2020 to monitor and contextualise research about COVID-19 for the massage therapy clinical setting, and to formulate industry-specific guidance on safe return to practice, as Australia reopened after its first wave.

The resources provided to massage therapists by the AMT Biosecurity Committee were always ahead of the public health advice. Risk assessments acknowledged airborne disease transmission and the associated need for masking, ventilation and air purification as central to the response of a close contact profession.

The public health orders in relation to the provision of massage therapy across the various states and territories have not been consistent. This lack of consistency has created enormous stress and confusion for massage therapists. However, AMT has consistently pitched its advice ahead of the public orders to create a coherent, uniform, nationwide framework that reflects the actual risks of transmission present in the massage therapy clinical setting. This kind of grassroots, bottom-up approach to pandemic control is crucial to the broader public health response, particularly as the virus outpaces the rate at which large bureaucracies can respond.

AMT is conscious of the new threat that variants of concern such as Delta pose for the industry, given that workplaces and households are the key vectors for transmission. Although the public health orders in some jurisdictions allow massage therapy to occur under specific limited conditions, the overwhelming evidence shows that it is not safe to provide face-to-face care during an active outbreak, particularly those involving variants of concern like Delta.

AMT supports massage therapists to stay ahead of the public health advice and cease face-to-face consultation during a COVID outbreak based on the specific risks present in the clinical settings where massage therapy is provided.