

25th March 2020

INFORMATION FOR BTFA MEMBERS – COVID-19

Do I need to close my Bowen practice due to COVID-19 measures?

The BTFA is regularly monitoring advice from the Australian Government with regards to the COVID-19 pandemic. As the rate of infection in Australia continues to increase rapidly, the Government have announced in a press conference held by Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Tuesday 24 March 2020, further restrictive measures regarding 'non-essential' services which will apply as of midnight tonight.

Read the Prime Minister's media statement, which contains the list of non-essential services, here: <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/update-coronavirus-measures-24-March-2020>

As Bowen therapy is classified as a series of cross-fibre moves from the origin of the insertion of muscle, as such we come under the same category as massage, which is on the Government's list of non-essential services. The Australian Association of Massage Therapists (AMT) has advised their members to close their massage clinics.

With the safety of our members and their clients top of mind, and the deadly, life-threatening nature of COVID-19, we are taking the Government's advice and advising BTFA members to consider closing their Bowen clinics as of midnight tonight, Wednesday 25th March 2020 until further notice as advised by the Australian Government.

If you continue to practice Bowen therapy, please be advised that this is at you and your clients' own risk. We recommend you contact your insurance company for further advice. We have been advised by Aon Australia that a statement will be available in the coming days, which we will forward to all members.

The BTFA recognises the financial strain the Government's measures will place on our members, the majority of whom are self-employed. However due to the nature of a Bowen therapy treatment, the absence of adequate screening for the virus and the fact that symptoms may not show up for several days, it is impossible to maintain the required social distance to prevent the spread of COVID-19. While Bowen therapy is performed through clothing, the infection risk of COVID-19 remains very high with person to person contact.

These new restrictions exclude health-related services in those areas, such as physiotherapy and health-related and allied health services.

OneCAM, the body that represents practitioners in the complementary health industry have today issued a statement saying: *"We will seek further clarification from Government on what is encompassed by "health related and allied health services", as we know complementary medicine practitioner and natural therapy modalities, while not strictly included under the allied health umbrella, are important for the health and wellbeing of many Australians. The delivery of these services, in compliance with current necessary health and safety protocols, has the potential to reduce the burden on our already strained health care system and contribute economically through continuing retail and manufacturing demands on broader industry."*

We have already seen the closure of clubs, gyms, many entertainment and sporting venues, and cultural institutions in an effort to slow the spread of COVID-19. Additional travel restrictions are in place, preventing any overseas travel, and states and territories around Australia are closing their borders. These restrictions now extend to services such as beauty therapy, tanning, waxing, nail salons and tattoo parlours and spa and massage parlours.

At this stage, the medical advice is that children can safely go to schools, with the Prime Minister meeting today with the Australian Education Union to discuss the delivery of education without compromising the safety of children or those who work in schools.

It is urged that people should stay at home unless it is absolutely necessary, and if you must leave the home, that the social distancing rule of 1.5 metres is practiced. In addition, the importance of personal hygiene measures were again emphasised, such as hand washing, sneezing and coughing into your elbow and cleaning commonly touched surfaces.

Please continue to monitor the Australian Government's updated advice with regards to hygiene protocols and social distancing, and please ensure your own wellbeing during these extraordinarily difficult times.

Financial assistance due to loss of income

We recommend if you find yourself in financial hardship as a result of the pandemic, that you are entitled to financial assistance from the Australian Government if you are earning under \$1,075 a fortnight. More can be read at the ABC News website: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-03-22/coronavirus-second-stimulus-package-how-much-money-you-will-get/12078972>

The best option for everyone's health and safety is to do everything online, or over the phone. The Australian Government has recently changed the rules so you can now:

- Prove your identity over the phone (this was previously the main reason new applicants were forced to attend service centres in person)
- Lodge an intent to claim online through the MyGov website <https://my.gov.au/>

Is your First Aid due?

If your first aid is due, due to the in-person nature of first aid courses the BTFA will be discussing a temporary amendment to our regulations as a result of COVID-19 to ensure our members remain covered by their insurance. This will be finalised at a Board meeting this week and will be communicated to members via email.

We will continue to update our members via email and our website on the COVID-19 pandemic. The BTFA will remain open to assist our members as best we can and we are committed to keeping you as updated and informed as possible.

Kind regards,

BTFA