



## COVID-19 STATEMENT FROM MIWATJ HEALTH

18 March 2020

The Australian and Northern Territory Governments have introduced a range of measures aimed at reducing the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Miwatj is fully supportive of their approaches and have implemented additional measures to further protect the communities we live in and serve.

In the spirit of transparency Miwatj wishes to summarise some of the key measures we have undertaken to prevent the introduction of COVID-19 into our communities, and the plans that we have in place to support our communities in the weeks ahead.

Currently all our clinics are operating as normal and providing our normal range of services. Clients might notice some pre-checks being conducted prior to entering their clinic. These measure are simply there to direct people to the appropriate area so they can be seen to.

### WHAT HAVE WE DONE IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

- Miwatj has established a COVID-19 Response Group that is responsible for developing, coordinating and monitoring our response plan. This group is led by our Director of Clinical Services and is meeting regularly.
- Limited all non-essential staff travel, and introduced strict self-isolation measures on staff travelling to our East Arnhem communities.
- In conjunction with the NTG; local communities and stakeholders; and other services providers, Miwatj has assisted in the development of Local Pandemic Action Plans for each of the communities in East Arnhem.
- Miwatj has developed our own Health Centre Activity and Staffing Contingency Plan.
- Undertaken wide-spread community education on hygiene prevention measures, such as handwashing, in our communities.
- Miwatj has also, in conjunction with ARDS, developed community messaging (in language) about COVID-19 and how increases hygiene practices can minimise the contraction and spread of the infection.

### TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

As a provider of health services to very remote communities, Miwatj understand the importance of travel from not only a staffing and delivery of service point of view, but also from the community's perspective of it being a way of staying connected with family and friends. However at the same time we know there is serious concern within our communities about COVID-19 and the potential for it to be introduced through people entering the community from outside of East Arnhem.

**Therefore Miwatj has introduced restriction on non-essential staff travel and strict self-isolation measures on staff travelling before travelling into East Arnhem communities.**

**Staff who are returning from overseas have to self-isolate for 14 days in Nhulunbuy (if that is where they live) or in Darwin (if they normal live in our Zone 2 communities of Milingimbi, Galiwin'ku, Ramingining or Gapuwiyak) before recommencing duties or returning to their community.**

Staff who are returning from interstate have to self-isolate for 7 days in Nhulunbuy (if that is where they live) or in Darwin (if they normal live in our Zone 2 communities of Milingimbi, Galiwin'ku, Ramingining or Gapuwiyak) before recommencing duties or returning to their community.

Where possible, these staff may work via computer or phone.

## **COORDINATING EFFORTS**

Miwatj is committed to working closely with the NTG and key community stakeholders to continually monitor the situation and adjust its existing or introduce new measures to further protect our vulnerable communities.

We have participated in each of the Local Emergency Committee meeting to develop Local Pandemic Action Plans for each of the communities in East Arnhem. These Plans outline the steps that are to be taken in the community once they are activated and who is responsible for certain activities.

In addition to these Local Pandemic Action Plan, Miwatj has developed its own Health Centre Activity and Staffing Contingency Plan. This Plan outlines our response to the pandemic and ensuring the needs of our communities are met while addressing possible reduced staffing levels due to illness and the impact this may have on services.

These plans may impact on how and where we see people, especially those presenting with “flu like” symptoms.

**We are reminding people that, where possible, call ahead before attending a medical clinic if you do have “flu like” symptoms.**

## **COMMUNITY EDUCATION**

Miwatj, in conjunction with ARDS, has developed community messaging (in language) about COVID-19 and how increases hygiene practices can minimise the contraction and spread of the infection. These messages have been extensively broadcast on Yolngu Radio and been reinforced with community posters.

Miwatj has also been undertaking wide-spread community education on hygiene prevention measures, such as hand hygiene, personal hygiene, home hygiene and the risks of sharing of cigarettes and drinks with others. We have done this through a variety of measures, including direct visits to homes, schools, churches, ALPA stores and sport and recreation clubs.

## **OTHER RESOURCES**

We are continuing to monitor the situation closely and are strictly applying the directives as advised by the Australian and Northern Territory Governments.

There is many guideline and directive changes related to COVID-19 and the changes are being issued rapidly and often without warning, therefore we a recommending that for the most up-to-date information on COVID-19 people should visit both the [Department of Health](#) and the [SecureNT](#) websites.

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