

JOINT STATEMENT

PROTECTING YOU AS COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS EASE AND WE OPEN UP

Thorne Harbour Health (THH), Living Positive Victoria (LPV), and Positive Women Victoria (PWV), are pleased that we are now able to reconnect with our members, clients, and communities.

We recognise the challenges the COVID-19 pandemic has presented for our communities. Many of us have faced social and physical isolation, poor mental health, a loss of social networks as well as employment and financial challenges. Others have experienced the need for extended periods of remote work, home schooling, or study.

As we begin to open up, we want to explain how we will be delivering our services in a COVID-safe way so that everyone can have confidence to access the services they need.

All three organisations are committed to ensuring everyone can safely access care and support; however, we may be offering some services in a different format for clients during this time. We need to follow government health advice as well as the policies of venues where our events may be held. These COVID-safe requirements may include limits on the number of people able to attend, the use of masks, physical distancing, or vaccine requirements.

At venues where we provide social and community support, we will be asking that people share evidence of being fully vaccinated in order to be able to enter the venue. At this stage, only fully vaccinated clients and community members will be able to access most face-to-face community and social services.

This requirement is based on:

- Recommendations and requirements from the Victorian Government
- Health advice of the expert clinicians who work with our communities
- The proven efficacy of COVID-19 vaccination in protecting people from becoming seriously unwell or hospitalised due to COVID-19
- The expectations of our members, clients, and staff that we look after their health and wellbeing

We realise that many people have different views about vaccination and that the decision to be vaccinated or not is a personal choice.

With this in mind, our organisations will offer all our members and clients opportunities to access COVID-safe services through online engagement, telephone, email, webinars, or other means - irrespective of vaccination choice.

Our organisations will always be responsive to any client in an emergency or who is in immediate crisis, and we will consider your needs on a case-by-case basis with you.

Questions You May Have

Where can I get information about vaccination and how it might affect me?

THH, PWV and LPV strongly recommend all clients consider COVID-19 vaccination. This is something to discuss in detail with your GP or trusted health provider.

Information is available from THH, LPV and PWV websites on topics including:

- Information about vaccination and people living with HIV
- COVID-19, vaccination and your health - <https://youtu.be/LD17zQDLYBA>
- Information for women about vaccination, pregnancy and your sexual and reproductive health - <https://mvec.mcri.edu.au/the-alfreds-community-information-session-on-covid-19-vaccinations-and-fertility/>

You can also access information about the COVID vaccine and where to get vaccinated through the Victorian Government coronavirus website: www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/vaccine

JOINT STATEMENT

(CONTINUED)

What are the organisations' vaccination policies about staff?

THH, LPV and PWV all have a policy that outlines the responsibility for all our staff to be fully vaccinated unless a staff member has a valid medical exemption.

Our organisations recognise this meets our legal responsibilities as health service providers, our legal obligations to look after our staff and clients, and the organisations' commitment to providing safe, accessible services based on the best available health evidence. It also meets the expectations of the Victorian Government.

Is it legal to offer different services according to vaccination status? Isn't that discrimination?

All of our organisations have done a lot of work to understand the health, legal, and ethical obligations we have to our clients. We believe that this approach balances a variety of needs, including the need to protect our communities and give people the confidence to access services as safely as possible.

Personal choices about vaccination do not fall under anti-discrimination laws. We have sought different advice to help understand how to meet all our obligations, including our legal obligations.

How long will this policy be in place?

We're regularly monitoring developments in Victoria, including information about COVID-safe service provision. Our approach will always seek to balance health advice, legal responsibilities, and above all, client and member safety with any changing information.

Our service adaptations and restrictions are subject to regular review. We will continue to adapt our services to continue to offer support to our communities throughout all phases of the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Having trouble getting evidence of your vaccination?

For most people this is a pretty straightforward process, but getting the evidence of your vaccination status has been challenging for some.

The easiest way to show evidence of vaccination is to view your certificate on a smartphone via:

- Your Medicare online account through your Services Australia MyGov account <https://my.gov.au>
- The Express Plus Medicare Mobile app <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/express-plus-medicare-mobile-app>
- Link it to your Services Vic app (used for QR code check in). <https://service.vic.gov.au/check-in>

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you are having trouble attaining evidence of your vaccination status. We will be happy to support you in navigating the system.

Living Positive Victoria - (03) 9863 8733 - livingpositivevictoria.org.au

Positive Women Victoria - (03) 9863 8747 - positivewomen.org.au

Thorne Harbour Health - (03) 9865 6700 - thorneharbour.org