

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Delivering Care during COVID

**Pivot, adapt** and **innovate** are buzz words we have repeatedly heard being used when it comes to delivering during 2020, the pandemic year. For service providers like Your Side, delivering care to older people, people living with a disability or mental health challenges and supporting carers can't just stop because of COVID-19 lockdown. Essential services at home such as personal care, cleaning, shopping and mobility assistance are still required on a daily basis, but what changed at Your Side was growth in delivering bespoke services to maintain connection and social activities in isolation – and it happened at a rapid rate.

#### NEW ONLINE SERVICES FOR THE CARE SECTOR

“As COVID-19 was emerging, the team immediately designed and redesigned services with the client at the centre of it, by asking our clients what it was they actually needed and what their main concerns were. With that information, we were able to build new services types - both online and offline,” says CEO Your Side Australia, Danielle Ballantine.

Social Support services that have been popular include online activities such as facemask making, painting, trivia, and online tours. Your Side's [Postcard Pen Pals Project](#) has also been a popular analogue way of keeping in touch and combatting isolation.

“We usually go out on buses to a variety of destinations, but developing online events was a very good decision during lockdown - online meetings with different themes. We have acquired new skills, shared a few laughs and enjoyed social connection during these online activities. I've also learnt more about those involved with my group - things I wouldn't have otherwise,” says DARTS<sup>1</sup> client with Your Side, Loren Lembke.

Your Side does not think this is just a changing COVID-19 landscape. It's the “new normal”. What is NOT going to change is that providers will continue to deliver a mix of online and offline services and build online communities both in health and community care.

“There has been an incredible adoption to digital solutions. What we will start to see in health is an increase in wearable health technology, where a person's health will be monitored on the go, all the time. That means interventions can be delivered immediately, rather than waiting for an appointment. And in community care, what we will most likely see is families feeling far more comfortable having their older parents stay at home now that there is actually technology that supports them to stay at home,” says Ms Ballantine.

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<sup>1</sup> DARTS provides recreational and social outings including the door to door transport to get there for adults in wheelchairs.

## A SILVER LINING

The care sector desperately needs more workers - it's estimated that by 2050 Australia will need almost a million care workers as our population continues to age. One of the really interesting themes that have emerged from this pandemic is that because entire industries are losing their workforce, we're seeing a whole new workforce moving into the care sector.

"For example, imagine a person who was a barista and who is now working with a person with a disability, probably teaching them how to make an awesome coffee. In the future, that person with the disability may become a barista themselves. We're also seeing travel agents that are being matched with older people. That older person may have had a youth of wandering the world, and being able to share their mutual interests and stories in travel is bringing a whole new experience to how we deliver care," says an optimistic Ms Ballantine.

One of Your Side's customer care consultants, Michelle Dickinson, is a former flight attendant and has now found a professional home working as part of the Commonwealth Home Support Program team. "It's been an easy transition to make believe it or not. I am really enjoying my new role. No two days have been the same and I love that I have been given the opportunity to continue to help and care for people, the only difference is it's on the ground now and not 40,000ft in the air," says Michelle.

## MORE THAN JUST GOING DIGITAL

In terms of sector response in the Home Care and NDIS space during COVID it has also been about adaptation and strengthening partnerships and networks. "A lot of people who are ageing or have a disability are at higher risk if they get COVID-19 and so some opt not to have services and supports in their homes. It is about putting PPE and protocols in place to ensure they continue to be supported as well as continue to feel safe. Our sector support team and provider partners have worked tirelessly and collaboratively to share sources of PPE for staff and clients, disclose information about rostering and training best practice, identify who can work with COVID-19 positive clients, and facilitate regular online forums focused on home care response during COVID. Working collaboratively across organisations is the key to building capacity to respond to an outbreak at any time," says Danielle Ballantine.

It shouldn't be about allocating blame, it should be about identifying areas where we can improve and work together. "Providing care to others in a pandemic is about the constant scanning for new information and sharing within your provider network around areas including infection control updates, amendments in lockdown regulations, changes in Government assistance, and learning from experiences in our sector so we don't make some of the same mistakes again and can improve the quality of care delivery and services," concludes Ms Ballantine.

To view video about "Delivering Care during COVID" [CLICK HERE](#)

### CONTACT

Abby Edwards - Marketing & Communications  
T: 0417 808 107  
E: [abbye@yourside.org.au](mailto:abbye@yourside.org.au)

### AVAILABLE TO INTERVIEW

- Danielle Ballantine - CEO, Your Side
- Michelle Dickinson – Customer Care Consultant, Your Side