

# COVID-19

## RURAL AND REMOTE RESPONSE

March 2020

Dear Supermarket Managers

Firstly, we would like to thank you and your staff for all the work you are currently doing to ensure our communities have access to food and household items during what is an unprecedented time with the outbreak of COVID-19.

As you can understand, rural doctors too are experiencing very difficult times in relation to providing care for people who have contracted COVID-19, testing the patients who may have been exposed and also providing care and support to patients who are extremely concerned about the potential of them contracting COVID-19, along with providing care to our regular patients.

We would like to thank supermarkets for putting strategies in place to ensure some of our most vulnerable people are given reasonable access to your services, in a safe way such as the quarantined shopping time for elderly customers.

To this end, on behalf of rural doctors and other rural health professionals, we seek your assistance to minimise the future spread of COVID-19 within our local community by taking the following actions:

- Look at how you are able to limit the number of people in store to support the 1.5 metre distancing between customers and/or staff.
- Allocate a staff member to dispense hand sanitiser to every customer entering your store. We know many of you have placed the hand sanitiser near the entrance but we continue to see customers enter the stores without using it.
- Have hand sanitiser on every check out or prominently displayed as people exit the door so people can clean their hands upon exit.
- It would also be useful for antibacterial wipes to be made available for customers to wipe down the trolley handles and basket handles as they collect them.

If you do not have sufficient staff to dispense the hand sanitiser we request it be displayed prominently upon entry, with large signage put in place to direct customers to use it.

What we know is that COVID-19 can remain active on plastic surfaces for up to 72 hours after it has been contaminated<sup>1</sup>. We also know supermarkets are going to remain a key point of activity throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, which will be a minimum of 6-9 months.

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Our members, who live in rural Australia, have reported how city people are visiting and basically purchasing significant amounts of stock in the country supermarkets, leaving rural people with limited supplies. Our organisations are doing a lot of public health messaging through media outlets, to discourage city people travelling to rural and remote communities during this time, and the need to minimise unnecessary travel. We would encourage you, as some supermarkets have already done, to put measures in place where customers are required to provide proof of residence in the local area before they can enter.

Thank you for your consideration, and we appreciate your willingness to help us help our community and reduce the transmission of COVID-19. In our rural and remote communities, our access to health services is less than what our city colleagues have, so it is important we all work together to care for the community and do what we can to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

If you have any questions in relation to this matter please do not hesitate to contact us via email [ceo@rdaa.com.au](mailto:ceo@rdaa.com.au).

Yours sincerely



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WORLD LEADERS IN RURAL PRACTICE



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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2020-03-20/how-long-does-coronavirus-last-on-surfaces/12074330>