

30 March 2020

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE #4 FOR ALL UNITING AGEWELL RESIDENTS, FAMILIES AND VISITORS

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in Australia is a health emergency on a scale we have not experienced in over 100 years. In just a matter of weeks, there has been a rapid rise in infection rates both nationally and across the world.

The priority for governments, health and aged care providers and for the entire community, is to stop the spread of this disease. Social distancing, isolation and hygiene vigilance being the most effective ways we can achieve this.

As we have seen, older people, particularly those over 70, are at risk of contracting COVID-19 and having a serious, life-threatening illness as a result. It is why Uniting AgeWell made the difficult decision to implement visitor restrictions at our aged care residences on 17 March to help protect those in our care and our staff from the risk of infection.

While these visitor restrictions were initially in place for 14 days, given the increased transmission rate in the broader community, we have no choice but to continue these restrictions for the foreseeable future.

Only key staff and essential medical and service personnel are able to attend any Uniting AgeWell residence, noting all are subject to rigorous screening, including temperature checking, before they enter. Visitors beyond this will only be enabled in exceptional circumstances and will be assessed on a case by case basis.

Additionally, if a resident needs to leave the facility for any reason, they will be required to isolate in their room for 14 days on their return.

I am truly sorry to have to advise you of this extended visitor restriction period as I understand just how difficult and distressing this is for residents and families. I find myself in the same position as you, with a loved one in care that I cannot visit. I firmly believe however, that this is the safest course of action if we are to protect the most vulnerable in our community.

If you are feeling anxious or you have any concerns or need to get something to your family member, please don't hesitate to contact the local Care Manager or Residential Services Manager and they will assist you.

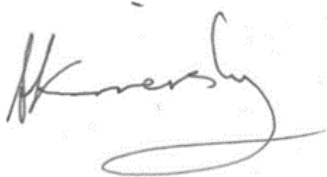
Please be assured that our staff are absolutely committed to keeping all residents safe and are working hard to provide them with the care and support they need to stay well, maintain routines and be actively engaged.

Additional resources are in place and our lifestyle and chaplaincy teams are providing more individualised activities and finding creative ways to keep residents and families connected. We have also distributed more mobile phones and tablets to every residence to make it easier for families to call, skype or FaceTime their loved ones.

Uniting AgeWell will continue to review its COVID-19 response and keep you fully informed of any changes or updates. We have also established a link on our website with the latest information at <https://unitingagewell.org/covid19/latest-information> which you may want to share with other family members.

We know this is a challenging time for everyone and we thank you for your trust, understanding and support as we navigate this situation together.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kinnersly', with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

Andrew Kinnersly
Chief Executive Officer
Uniting AgeWell