

22 April 2020

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE #5 – VISITOR ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

AT UNITING AGEWELL RESIDENTIAL CARE FACILITIES

Yesterday, the Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Chief Medical Officer Brendan Murphy made comments in the press conference that followed the National Cabinet meeting, regarding visitor access restrictions in residential aged care facilities. Unfortunately, these comments, together with media commentary, appear to have created some confusion within the community. There are a number of matters that remain under discussion between our aged care peak bodies and key stakeholders within Government.

I am writing to confirm Uniting AgeWell's position.

There are many issues to consider before visitor restrictions can be eased, including the ongoing Commonwealth restrictions and State directives that are in place, noting that aged care providers are able to take additional measures to protect the older people in our care.

The strong stance that has been taken by Uniting AgeWell and the vast majority of aged care providers with respect to restricted visitor access and other precautionary measures, has contributed to the better than expected outcome in keeping residents and staff safe from COVID-19. We know the visitor restrictions have been very difficult for families and residents, and our staff continue to do whatever they can to help families stay connected during these restrictions. Can I take this opportunity to thank families and residents for their cooperation, patience and support during this unprecedented time.

Over the coming days Uniting AgeWell will commence the development of a safe and workable rollback plan that will enable gradual and controlled visiting to take place, which will also take into account the ongoing COVID-19 restrictions and the introduction of mandatory influenza vaccinations for all visitors, including family.

The requirement for all visitors to have influenza vaccinations was announced by the Government during March, and Uniting AgeWell welcomes this increased level of precaution. Influenza (flu), is another highly contagious and dangerous respiratory illness. All staff and visitors must have a current flu vaccination by 1 May 2020 in order to work in aged care or visit a residential care facility. You will be required to provide written evidence of your influenza vaccination from your doctor or vaccination clinic which will be recorded before you can enter the facility. We anticipate this will remain an annual requirement.

As you can appreciate, there are a number of processes that will need to be in place to prepare our residential care sites for safely and appropriately managing visitors.

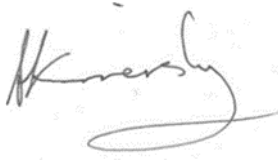
We need to be cognisant that the pandemic is ongoing and there remains localised COVID-19 hotspots and areas of higher risk. As we have seen, the situation in a community can change very quickly and it needs to be understood that our plans may need to change further for individual services if there is evidence of increased risk within particular locations and regions.

Page 1 of 2

Like everyone, we are keen to see life return to normal and for visitation to resume. We will be in contact with families over the coming week to inform you of any changes to the current restrictions.

Thank you for your ongoing support and cooperation.

Yours sincerely

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

Andrew Kinnersly
Chief Executive Officer
Uniting AgeWell