

UNITING AGEWELL'S RESPONSE TO THE INCREASING RISK OF COVID-19 IN VICTORIA AND RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE

The continuing escalation of COVID-19 cases via community transmission in the greater Melbourne metropolitan region and abutting regional areas has reached a level that now requires an even stronger response if we are to reduce the risk of COVID-19 entering our homes.

Following 14 days in a row of triple digit increases in COVID-19 cases in Victoria, and the escalating number of cases detected within aged care facilities, Premier Daniel Andrews yesterday announced that visitors to residential aged care must be restricted.

We already have in place visitor restrictions across our metropolitan Melbourne sites and today have broadened that to include our Geelong and Bendigo facilities, with no visitors permitted. Exemptions will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, such as compassionate, end-of-life or assistance visits.

These visitor restrictions will remain in place until at least 19 August in line with the Victorian Government's current Stage 3 restrictions.

We understand these restrictions are very upsetting for residents and families, however we see there is little alternative in the face of the escalating transmission of COVID-19. All of us have a role to play in mitigating the risk of spread of infection.

Uniting AgeWell has in place a range of precautionary measures and controls at every facility including:

- Screening and monitoring of all staff and essential visitors who are required to complete a declaration regarding their COVID-19 risk, each and every time they attend the facility.
- Regular updates and reminders to staff about their obligations and responsibilities in relation to COVID-19 risk, including notification, isolation and quarantine requirements if they or someone they live with is a close contact of a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 or works at a place where COVID-19 is active.
- Doing everything possible to prevent staff working across more than one facility.
- Face masks are being worn by all staff in addition to the hygiene and infection control practices in place. Visitors, when permitted, are also required to wear face masks.
- Uniting AgeWell has ample stocks of PPE available as well as weekly rolling orders. Staff have received further training in the safe use of PPE and refresher training in infection control and management specific to COVID-19.
- Additional hygiene and touch point cleaning is being done every day.
- Our on-site cafes are now closed and our dining rooms are being reconfigured and dining hours extended to ensure optimal social distancing can be maintained.

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- Cohorting of staff and residents within our facilities where possible, to minimise the risk of infection spread in the event a staff member or resident tests positive for COVID-19. This means staff and residents work and spend time in their own wing or floor level rather than across the entire facility.
- Residents are being screened for symptoms consistent with COVID-19 every day.

During visitor restrictions we will continue to facilitate virtual visits and regular communication with your loved ones via phone, Skype, Facetime, Zoom, letters, emails, etc. If you need assistance to connect, don't hesitate to contact your local residential care team. Additionally, the team will keep families well informed through regular updates and conversations.

We have already increased the in-house lifestyle programs and range of individual and small group activities on offer and will continue to provide residents with the extra care and support they need to reduce feelings of anxiety and social isolation. Our chaplains are also providing pastoral care and support.

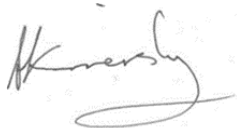
Uniting AgeWell staff are doing an amazing job and working extremely hard to support those in our care during what is a particularly challenging time for everyone and I thank them for their ongoing commitment.

If at any time you are concerned about the wellbeing of your loved one, please don't hesitate to call the Residential Services Manager at your site.

We know these visitor restrictions are difficult. We can only ask for your ongoing understanding and cooperation, and reassure you that our absolute priority is to continue to do everything we possibly can to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of our residents in the face of the heightened risk COVID-19 presents.

Thank you for your trust and support.

Yours sincerely



Andrew Kinnersly
Chief Executive Officer
Uniting AgeWell