

27 April 2020

Dear Residents and Families,

Thank you for your ongoing understanding and support as we work together to protect our community from COVID-19.

Visiting Aged Care

Since we implemented a strict 'No Visitors' policy on 27 March 2020 I am pleased to report we have had no cases of COVID-19. The NSW State Government regulations under the Emergency Management Act, were reinforced on 28 March 2020 and we are focused on continuing to minimise risk to those in our care.

It is important to remember that COVID-19 is 2-4 times more contagious than the flu and 10-20 times more likely to result in death, even though 80% of people don't get very sick. The most at-risk group is those aged over 80 with chronic disease which is a vast majority of the people we support in residential care – so we are taking this pandemic very seriously. Across the world and in Australia we have all been encouraged to 'isolate' wherever possible including families to stay at home and refrain from visits or gatherings with friends and relatives, children to stay home from school, closure of non-essential business and services and ceasing community activities and sports.

Recently the Australian Prime Minister went on record saying that aged care services should not be in lockdown and be able to receive visitors as aligned with previous Government principles issued on 18 March 2020. This has caused a great deal of confusion and concern in the sector, and we still believe our decision to move to a lockdown of our residential care services was in the best interests of the health of staff and resident.

Throughout this time, there have been unique circumstances such as end of life, where conditions have been set up to allow visitors. We have received correspondence from relatives both requesting visits recommence as well as thanking and encouraging the organisation to continue to keep visitors away, to keep their family member as safe as possible. We have feedback from Residents with similar divergent views.

Last week, our Leadership team met to review the visitor restrictions and based on the understanding there are no current untraceable COVID-19 cases in our region, we will be facilitating a reintroduction of visitors from 4 May 2020.

We will closely monitor the COVID-19 cases in our region and should they increase we may need to reverse the decision without notice.

Following public health guidelines and requirements, visits will occur under the following conditions:

- **Visits will need to be booked with the facility and with the agreement of the resident**
- *Visits should be brief (up to 30mins) and be conducted in a designated area*
- *The Visit area will be cleaned between every visit to minimise the possibility of virus transmission*
- *Visits will be between 10am and 3pm every day except Saturdays, where there will be no visits permitted*
- *Social Distancing guidelines will need to be followed during visits*
- *Visitors should arrive before their booking time to undertake screening, which will include:*
 - *Name, Address and region lived for last 14 days – this will assist determine appropriate personal protective equipment*
 - *Temperature screening*
 - *Confirmation visitors have not been overseas in the last 14 days*
 - *Confirmation visitors have not been in contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the last 14 days*
 - *Confirmation visitors have no COVID-19 or influenza-like symptoms*
- *Visitors are to enter and exit our services through one entry point and to use our hand sanitising stations*
- *Visitors must have been vaccinated against influenza and provide evidence of the vaccination prior to the visit.*
- *1 care and support visit per resident a day with 2 visitors present maximum*
- *Children under 16 years are only permitted in special circumstances.*
- *For individual residents with very specific needs, creating an exception category that enables visits under prescribed conditions, for example enabling a support person to visit to reduce distress or confusion of a resident with certain conditions, such as dementia.*

Calls and Activity

We are continuing to increase phone calls and face-time calls between family members and residents on request. To arrange a call please call the service directly on one of the numbers below. We are hopeful that we will have a video chat function available in the next week or so that will enable us to receive more calls.

Even in the lockdown, our Lifestyle staff continue to work regularly with residents on Lifestyle activities. They have been very innovative in modifying activities that are still engaging while complying with social distancing guidelines.

Gifts and Laundry in Aged Care

We have received a number of inquiries regarding gifts for residents. There are very specific guidelines regarding accepting gifts on behalf of residents and as a general rule, if the gift cannot be sanitised it cannot be accepted. As an example, flowers and fresh foods cannot be sanitised, while a box of chocolates or a pack of lollies can be sanitised. Please keep this in mind when thinking of gifts for your loved ones, particularly as Mother's Day is nearly upon us.

Newspapers and magazines can still be made available to residents who will then need to dispose of them after use. Please note that there may be a future requirement to manage all laundry from within our services. The reason for this is that there are specific temperature requirements to ensure laundry is not potentially infectious.

COVID-19 Tracing APP

We encourage you to consider downloading and using the Government COVID-19 Tracing App.

I appreciate and empathise that these requirements are asking you to interact and communicate differently with your loved one, but please be assured these requirements are in place for the sole purpose of keeping your loved one safe and well.

If you have enquiries about the above and to book a visit, please contact our services directly on:

Emmaus - 6589 9800
St Agnes Site - 6583 3811

Kind Regards



Bronwyn Chalker
General Manager