



MEMORANDUM

To: All Residential Aged Care Centre Residents and Families
From: Richard de Haast, National Director
The Salvation Army Aged Care
Date: 23 March 2020
Subject: **Coronavirus (COVID-19) update**

Dear all,

In the last 24 hours there have been several announcements from the Federal Government and State / Territory Governments detailing changes in how certain businesses deliver their services, as well as the closures of schools in some states. We recognise that this may cause increased uncertainty for family and friends and will certainly impact their everyday lives. I would like to take this opportunity to assure you that these announcements do not impact the aged care industry and the services that we provide.

As you would be aware, we are taking our advice and guidance from the Department of Health and we have shared some information from them further on in this note.

It is with great sadness that I need to re-iterate a number of the changes that were brought in following the Government directives last week. I say sadness as it appears that the behaviour of some visitors is potentially placing our residents at risk.

Visitors and Access to Essential Supplies

Over the weekend we had a number of occasions across the country where visitors did not adhere to the two visitors at a time rule and in certain circumstances continued to bring young children into the Centres. These actions are not acceptable, and I would ask that you work with us to help achieve our shared goal of keeping our residents safe. These rules have been mandated by the Federal Government and while acknowledging that they may inconvenience people they are necessary.

To better manage this situation, we have made the decision to limit the entrance and exit of visitors to the Centres to a single entrance. This change will come into immediate effect.

Also, over the weekend we had an incident of family members visiting and stealing essential supplies (toilet paper) from one of our Centres. While we do understand that people may be experiencing difficulties with purchasing essential goods, such as toilet paper, we do not condone stealing from the Centre. The supplies that are stocked in our Centres are especially for our residents and assist us with providing care for residents according to industry standards. If you have any concerns around this, please do not hesitate to reach out to your Centre Manager.

As mentioned in previous communications, the Australian Governmental directive is that the following individuals (staff, contractors, and visitors) are not to enter any of our aged care residential facilities:

- All individuals who have returned from any travel outside of Australia unless they have self isolated for a period of 14 days;
- All individuals who are experiencing flu-like symptoms;



- All children under the age of 16 years;
- All school groups;
- All entertainment individuals and groups;
- After 1 May 2020, a person (staff member or visitor) who has not had a flu vaccination.

Furthermore, the Australian Government has placed further restrictions on visitors:

- Any visit to a resident is limited to a maximum of two people at any given time.
- These visits must be for a limited period of time.
- These visits can only take place in the bedroom of a resident or in an outdoor area.
- These visits must only be with the family member of the visitor.
- If a volunteer is visiting a resident, then they can only do this in the bedroom of the resident or in an outdoor area.

For residents who are receiving end of life care, it is important that family members can spend time with them. For this reason, the number of visitors may be increased along with the period of time of the visit, although the visit still needs to take place in the bedroom of the resident.

We are also introducing a new sign in form at all our locations that will ask all visitors to answer a number of questions relating to these directives from the Australian Government.

Frequently Asked Questions

The Department of Health has released a helpful resource for older Australians which includes frequently asked questions. Below are a few questions and answers that may assist you. You can find the full list on the Department of Health's website at

https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/03/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-older-australians_3.pdf

Why is this virus so dangerous for older people?

The risk of serious illness from COVID-19 increases with age. The highest rate of fatalities is among older people, particularly those with other serious health conditions or a weakened immune system. There is currently no cure or vaccine for COVID-19, or immunity in the community. For people living with dementia or some form of cognitive impairment, the ability to follow instruction or to alert others about potential symptoms may be a challenge. This is especially so where there is a limited capacity to communicate verbally or express pain and discomfort. In this situation, observation by someone who knows the person with dementia may assist in identifying changes in their health. To protect older Australians and those with compromised immune systems we all need to work together to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

Should I be wearing a mask?

Only people who have a confirmed case of COVID-19 are required to wear surgical masks, and only when you are around other people. If you are well, you do not need to wear a surgical mask. Specific requirements are in place for people who have returned from overseas or have been in close contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus. If you are required to self-isolate, you should use a surgical mask (if you have one) in the following circumstances:

- You need to leave your home for any reason and will be in public areas
- You are visiting a medical facility
- You have symptoms and other people are present in the same room as you.



The complete list of frequently asked questions runs to seven pages and so we have just highlighted a couple of them here. I would encourage you to have a look through them and share them with your friends and family.

Question and Answer Sessions for Residents and Families

We are still working on a technology platform that will enable us to conduct these sessions. We are close to a resolution on that and are hopeful that we will be able to communicate the invitation to you in the coming days.

We will continue to update you all should we make any changes to any of this information.

If you have any questions or feedback, please feel free to contact me directly at Richard.deHaast@salvationarmy.org.au.

If you did want more information, please visit The Department of Health's website. A collection of resources about the virus is also available on <https://www.health.gov.au/>

Take care of yourself and others

Richard

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