



MEMORANDUM

To: All Retirement Living Residents
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 you and your loved ones and will certainly impact your 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.

I would also like to urge you to call your Village Manager if you are feeling unwell so that we can keep an eye on you. Also, as tough as it may sound, I would like to urge you to ask that your family and visitors do not visit you if they are unwell. This will minimise the potential of you contracting any illnesses from visitors.

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.

I need additional medical / health services – where can I go?

As part of the COVID-19 National Health Plan the Australian Government has increased access to bulk billed MBS telehealth and telephone services and fast tracked electronic prescribing of medicines. The Australian Government's Telehealth scheme allows doctors, nurses and mental health professionals to deliver services via telehealth (video link) or by telephone, provided those services are bulk billed, to those people who are 70+ years of age (or 50+ for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people); people self-isolating at home; or those with chronic health conditions or are immunocompromised. Patients are encouraged to contact their health service providers to ask about the availability of telehealth and telephone services. Examples of possible video applications include FaceTime and Skype, noting that medical practitioners must be satisfied that their chosen options for telehealth and telephone services meet current standards and laws regarding privacy and information security. The Australian Government is creating measures to allow prescriptions remotely and have their medicines home delivered to reduce their potential exposure to COVID-19. This measure complements the expanded use of telehealth under Medicare, and is available to those people who are 70+ years of age (or 50+ for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people); people self-isolating at home; or those with chronic health conditions or are immunocompromised.

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.

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

Richard de Haast
National Director
The Salvation Army Aged Care