



# MEMORANDUM

**To:** All Residential Aged Care Centre Residents and Families  
**From:** Richard de Haast, National Director  
The Salvation Army Aged Care  
**Date:** 25 March 2020  
**Subject:** **Coronavirus (COVID-19) update**

Dear all,

As you know, we are absolutely committed to providing continuity of care and service while placing necessary precautions in place during the COVID-19 pandemic. This ensures we keep you and your loved ones as safe as possible.

In the last 24 hours, we have seen an exponential increase in the number of cases of COVID-19 across the country and a number of the State and Territory Chief Medical Officers have also issued specific guidelines with respect to visitors to residential aged care centres. In particular, the directives from the State and Territory Chief Medical Officers have tightened up the visitor restrictions to residential aged care centres and we are needing to adjust our processes accordingly. I would note and share with you that in all instances those directives are legally binding and come with fines associated with non-compliance for individuals and organisations.

We have needed a day or two to put in place these changed measures and so effectively from 5pm Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2020 the following measures will be in place:

- **Visitors**
  - Currently we have a number of limits on visitors such as: -
    - A maximum of two visitors at a time;
    - Any visit with a resident needs to be conducted in their own bedroom or in an outdoor area;
    - No children under the age of 16 years of age are permitted to visit;
    - Exceptions to the above will be considered if a resident is in palliative care.

The key changes in addition to the above are: -

- Each resident will only be permitted one visit per day. This visit is bound by the conditions outlined in the section above;
- This visit may last for a maximum of two hours;
- This single visit needs to take place between the hours of 9am and 12pm and 2pm to 5pm;
- On arrival, the visitor(s) will be met by a staff member who will ask a number of screening questions and the visitor(s) need to undergo a temperature test. Should the screening questions or temperature check elicit any concerns then the visitor(s) will be asked not to visit.



The screening questions are based on the following: -

- Have you returned from any travel outside of Australia? If Yes, have you self-isolated for a period of 14 days;
- Have you been in contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus? If Yes, have you self-isolated for a period of 14 days;
- Are you experiencing any flu-like symptoms – coughing, runny nose, fever or shortness of breath?

These changes have been introduced in response to the changing environment and in particular the directives / directions from State and Territory Chief Medical Officers. These restrictions are mandated, and we know that these will have an impact on our residents and their visitors. Please let us know how we can support you as a resident through these changes.

I need to emphasise that when our staff ask visitors to comply with these directives, they do so in order to stay within the law and follow the directions of Chief Medical Officers who are issuing these instructions to keep elderly Australians safe. I would please ask that if you are feeling frustrated about these changes that you do not take this out on our staff who are doing their best in an ever-evolving situation.

Other changes that we are implementing include: -

- **Temperature checking of all staff**
  - All staff will be temperature checked when they arrive for their shift. If they are running a temperature they will be instructed not to attend work.
- **Self-isolation following discharge from hospital**
  - From today onwards, we will be ensuring that all residents who are either being admitted or returning from a hospital admission will be in isolation for a period of 14 days on arrival to the home. Residents will need to remain in their room for this period of isolation. During this time, they will still receive care and will be delivered the services that they need. These services will be provided to residents in their rooms.
  - Residents returning from hospital will not be able to have visitors during this time, unless they are in end of life care and under approval of the Centre Manager.
  - These measures will ensure that we minimise the potential risk of the virus entering our facilities, and, to our residents who are especially vulnerable to the virus.
- **Group activities and lifestyle visits**
  - Alternative programme of activities will now be formalized and external visits for activities will be ceased.
- **Visits outside of the Centres with family members**
  - We have no desire to prevent family members taking their loved ones who are residents with us for excursions. In fact, at this moment we do not have the authority to do so. However, we would prefer that did not occur as this does place our residents in a position of being potentially exposed to situations and members of the public who may be infected. The steps that have been put in place enable us to control those coming into the Centres to minimise that risk,



however outside if the Centre those risks then increase exponentially. This not only places them at risk, it also places their friends and neighbours back at the Centre at risk if they become infected with COVID-19.

- **Temperature checks**
  - We are implementing an operating rhythm of checking all resident temperatures daily.
- **Cleaning**
  - We have already been operating at an increased cleaning tempo and will now move to further increase the number of times we clean all handrails, hard surfaces and common areas.

I appreciate the potential inconvenience that limiting the number of visits per day for our residents will create and I recognise any frustration and possible anger that this may create. These are not steps that we take lightly, and, in this instance, we are now obligated to take them under direction from the relevant Chief Medical Officers.

### **Communication**

For your ease of reference, we have created a separate landing page on our website that contains this and every other piece of communication to you. You can access them by typing the following URL into your browser <https://agedcare.salvos.org.au/coronavirus-updates/> We will continue to place all our correspondence in this location as we distribute it.

### **Visual Messaging**

We understand that people sometimes prefer to hear a message and so I have videoed the content of this letter and you can listen to it by typing the following into your browser <https://youtu.be/P8Ypb8DNprQ>

### **Resident and Family Question and Answer Sessions**

We are still finalizing an appropriate technology platform to conduct these, and I remain hopeful that we will confirm the times and dates with you shortly.

Naturally, 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](mailto: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/>

*All the best and take care*

Richard de Haast  
National Director  
The Salvation Army Aged Care