

NEW VISITING ARRANGEMENTS IN PLACE FOR UNITING AGEWELL RESIDENTIAL CARE FACILITIES IN VICTORIA

Dear Residents, Families and Representatives

The level of community transmission of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 continues to escalate at an alarming rate, affecting every aspect of community life. It has certainly been particularly difficult for aged care services, and as many of you have already experienced, it is causing an increasing number of residential care homes to go into outbreak lockdown, which is distressing for both residents and families.

Our teams have been working tirelessly across the Christmas/New Year period, with many cancelling their leave, to ensure that our residents remain safe and well cared for. There is no doubt it has become very challenging, with the number of staff furloughed due to either contracting COVID-19 or being a close contact.

VACCINATION BOOSTERS

In December last year, Uniting AgeWell mandated booster shots for all staff. We expect the vast majority of staff will have received their third dose of the vaccine by 12 February 2022.

We are also facilitating booster clinics at all of our residential care homes to ensure residents and staff receive their booster shots as quickly as possible, with many residents already having received their third dose.

Families and friends are also urged to get their booster shot as soon as it falls due. It is an important added protection we can all provide to our residents and loved ones.

VISITING ARRANGEMENTS

Given the level of community transmission of COVID-19, we also need to reduce the number of people entering our facilities to try and reduce infection risk.

Unfortunately, we do not currently have access to the number of Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT) and staff that would be needed to test every visitor, therefore, in line with the new Victorian Government Care Facilities Directions that will come into effect from 11.59pm today, 12 January, Uniting AgeWell will only be permitting two visitors per resident per day.

These visits must take place within Uniting AgeWell's Safe Visiting Guidelines, which remain unchanged, other than the number of visitors permitted. Whilst we are not mandating a current negative RAT result prior to each visit, we strongly encourage visitors to undergo a RAT and confirm a negative result before entering our facilities.

Unvaccinated visitor arrangements also remain unchanged. Visits will continue to be limited to one unvaccinated visitor per resident per day for a maximum of 30 minutes duration. These visits must be pre-booked and take place during week day visiting hours (no weekends or public holidays). The requirement to wear full PPE will also continue.

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In the event that a residential care facility needs to go into outbreak lockdown, essential visitors will be permitted for compassionate and end-of-life circumstances in consultation with the Residential Services Manager and the General Manager Victoria.

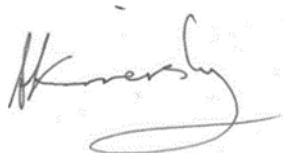
We understand that visitor restrictions are onerous and impact on the lives of residents, their families and friends. In taking this action, we seek to balance the risk presented by COVID-19, with the health, safety and wellbeing needs of every resident and our staff.

We appreciate your ongoing cooperation and support to ensure safe visiting can take place for the benefit of all.

I also want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the tremendous support and understanding we have received from both residents and families and the loyalty and commitment of Uniting AgeWell staff, as we have worked together over the past two years to navigate the challenges of COVID-19. What has been extremely evident is our collective resilience and desire to keep each other safe.

Thank you again for your ongoing support.

Yours sincerely



Andrew Kinnersly
Chief Executive Officer
Uniting AgeWell