

18/03/2020

Dear residents, families and guardians of Greengate Villages: St Luke's Green, St Brigid's Green, St Patrick's Green

Update on COVID-19 Response

I wanted to provide a further update following our recent communications.

As you are aware, last week the World Health Organisation declared the COVID-19 situation a pandemic. Subsequently, our Australian Government has made several recommendations on strategies and actions specific to the aged care industry in response to the changing global environment.

In order to stay abreast of the pandemic, Greengate has formed a COVID-19 Steering Committee which meet every morning to review and discuss the latest medical information and advice and how it affects our villages via a response plan.

Today, the Prime Minister released an update on Coronavirus Measures that has specific recommendations for aged care (extract attached). The Department of Health also released updated guidance (attached). Following these latest recommendations, Greengate is restricting all **non-essential visits** to our residential aged care facility effective from 8am tomorrow being, the 19th March 2020.

Measures defined by the Prime Minister include limiting visits to;

- Limiting visits to a short duration
- Maximum of 2 immediate social supports per visit (including a GP)
- Visits to be within resident's rooms, outdoors or in a designated area that minimises risk of transmission in communal areas
- Children under the age of 16 years are only permitted by exception.

Restrictions have been placed on entry into aged care facilities for any staff member or visitor that has:

- Returned from overseas in the last 14 days
- Been in contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the last 14 days
- A fever or symptoms of acute respiratory infection
- Also forewarning that from 1 May 2020, all visitors and staff must be vaccinated against influenza

In response to the above recommendations, Greengate will adopted the following measures to protect our resident's wellbeing and safety:

- All visitors are **REQUIRED TO ATTEND THE FRONT RECEPTION** before entering at **EVERY VISIT**. Clear signage has been placed at every alternative entranceway to remind visitors of the necessity of attending reception immediately on arrival. This will be monitored and visitors who are found to be within our village without having being screened at reception first will have their fob access cards or pin codes disabled while this pandemic continues.
- All visitors will continue to be asked to sign a declaration regarding their recent travel and health, and will also be subject to a proximity temperature check. Should anyone present with a temperature higher than 37.5°C they will not be permitted to enter the village.
- Visiting hours are restricted to times when our Reception area is open, which is Monday through Friday, 9.00am to 5.00pm and on weekends from 9.00am to 1.00pm. Visitors will not be able to enter the village outside these hours while this pandemic continues.

- We request visitation lengths are moderated to less than 30 minutes. NSW Health guidance states the risk of infection increases with close contact (touch or proximity of less than 1.5m) and for periods of over 15 minutes.
- From 1st May 2020 all visitors and employees will only be permitted to enter the village if they can demonstrate they have had an influenza vaccination. We will await further information from the Government on how this will be implemented, enforced and monitored (vaccinations are not presently available and are not expected until early April 2020).
- To support ongoing contact with loved ones, Greengate has purchased additional iPads to facilitate video calls. Further details will be provided to those interested in accessing his service.
- Employee rosters have been adjusted, to the extent possible, so that employees work on one dedicated floor and reduce unnecessary movement and potential cross contamination between floors.
- We have increased the frequency of our cleaning program to be in line with or exceed the Department of Health recommendations.
- Lifestyle activities including offsite trips and external entertainers coming on site remain paused.
- All contractors and Greengate corporate office team members have been asked to cease non-essential visits to our village.

Health Minister Greg Hunt has publicly stated, 'The residential aged care environment remains the safest environment to support our elderly Australians'. We have strong protocols around infection control and person centric care and are entirely focused on keeping our residents safe and comfortable. We recognise that some of these strategies will have an impact on the social and emotional wellbeing of our residents, families, guardians and employees. We greatly appreciate your support and understanding as we work together during this challenging and unprecedented time.

As always, your local village team are available to discuss these required actions and the ongoing care and support of our residents.

We aim to keep you as informed as possible and further updates will be distributed when new information comes to light.

Sincerely,



Ralph Warburton
Chief Executive Officer



The Hon. Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister

MEDIA STATEMENT

Wednesday 18 March 2020

UPDATE ON CORONAVIRUS MEASURES

The focus for the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments is the health and wellbeing of Australians and their livelihoods, ensuring that Australia is positioned to emerge strong and resilient from this global pandemic crisis.

Leaders met last night for the second National Cabinet meeting and agreed to further actions to protect the Australian community from the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Aged Care and Older Australians

As the transmission of COVID-19 increases rapidly, it is our priority to protect and support elderly and vulnerable Australians. Aged care is a critical sector that faces staffing challenges as existing staff are either subject to self-isolation requirements due to COVID-19 or are unable to attend work.

The National Cabinet has agreed to the recommendations by the AHPPC to enhanced arrangements to protect older Australians in Residential Aged Care Facilities and in the community

Restrictions on entry into aged care facilities

The following visitors and staff (including visiting workers) should not be permitted to enter the facility:

- Those who have returned from overseas in the last 14 days;
- Those who have been in contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the last 14 days;
- Those with fever or symptoms of acute respiratory infection (e.g. cough, sore throat, runny nose, shortness of breath); and
- Those who have not been vaccinated against influenza (after 1 May)

Visitors

Aged care facilities should implement the following measures for restricting visits and visitors to reduce the risk of transmission to residents, including:

- Limiting visits to a short duration;
- Limiting visits to a maximum of two immediate social supports (family members, close friends) or professional service or advocacy at one time, per day;
- Visits should be conducted in a resident's room, outdoors, or in a specific area designated by the aged care facility, rather than communal areas where the risk of transmission to residents is greater;
- No large group visits or gatherings, including social activities or entertainment, should be permitted at this time;
- No school groups of any size should be allowed to visit aged care facilities.
- Visitors should also be encouraged to practise social distancing practices where possible, including maintaining a distance of 1.5 metres.
- Children aged 16 years or less must be permitted only by exception, as they are generally unable to comply with hygiene measures. Exemptions can be assessed on a case-by-case basis, for example, where the resident is in a palliative care scenario.
- Measures such as phone or video calls must be accessible to all residents to enable more regular communication with family members. Family and friends should be encouraged to maintain contact with residents by phone and other social communication apps, as appropriate.

Managing illness in visitors and staff

Aged care facilities should advise all regular visitors and staff to be vigilant for illness and use hygiene measures including social distancing, and to monitor for symptoms of COVID-19, specifically fever and acute respiratory illness. They should be instructed to stay away when unwell, for their own and residents' protection.

Given the high vulnerability of this particular group, aged care facilities should request that staff and visitors provide details on their current health status, particularly presentation of symptoms consistent with COVID-19. Screening for fever could also be considered upon entry.

These additional measures should be implemented in order to better protect residents and prompt individuals entering the aged care facility to consider their current state of health prior to entry. Both individuals and management need to take responsibility for the health of visitors and staff at facilities to protect our most vulnerable community members.

These are the recommendations of the AHPPC, individual facilities may choose to implement additional measures as they see fit for their circumstances.

Symptomatic staff

Staff should be made aware of early signs and symptoms of COVID-19. Any staff with fever or symptoms of acute respiratory infection (e.g. cough, sore throat, runny nose, shortness of breath) should be excluded from the workplace and tested for COVID-19. Staff must report their symptoms to the aged care facility.

Further information is available at: <https://www.health.gov.au/committees-and-groups/australian-health-protection-principal-committee-ahppc>



Information for residents of residential aged care services, their family members and visitors

Older people are more at risk of both contracting COVID-19, and having a serious illness as a result. Managers, staff, family, friends and residents need to work together to protect our most vulnerable community members.

In order to protect older people, new restrictions on visits to aged care facilities apply. It is important staff, visitors and visiting workers take care to ensure they stay away from residential aged care services if they may have COVID-19. They should closely monitor their own health, and will be asked to provide details on their health status before entering a facility.

Residents

Like all members of the community, people who live in residential aged care services have an important role to play in protecting their own health. In addition to practising good hygiene and social distancing, there will be restrictions on visits to residential aged care facilities. Large group visits, gatherings, and external excursions will be postponed. Residents will be supported to stay connected with family and friends by phone and video calls.

If you develop symptoms of COVID-19, you will be kept separate from other residents and will not be able to see visitors. Health care and residential care workers will continue to provide support and care while you are isolated. If you need to leave your room, such as for medical care, you will be required to wear a surgical mask, which will be provided by health care workers. There is no need for any healthy resident to wear a mask.

Visitors

Visitors who have returned from overseas or been in contact with someone confirmed to have COVID-19 in the last 14 days will not be able to visit a residential aged care facility. Nor will anyone with a fever, symptoms of a respiratory illness, or who has not been vaccinated against influenza, be able to visit.

From 1 May, you must have your influenza vaccination in order to visit an aged care facility.

Visits should be short, and conducted in the resident's room, outside, or in a specific designated area (not a communal space).

Each resident may have no more than two visitors, including doctors, at a time, and visits by children 16 years and under are not permitted except in special circumstances.

All visitors will need to wash their hands before entering and leaving a resident's room and will be encouraged to practise social distancing where possible, including to stay away when unwell.

Managers and staff

The Government has announced that residential aged care facilities should take extra precautions to keep residents safe from COVID-19. The health of staff will be closely monitored, new and returning residents will be screened before entry, and signage and other forms of communication will be used to explain the steps being taken to protect the health of residents.

To make more workers available to aged care providers, the Government is relaxing international student visa work conditions for aged care facilities and home care providers. This will allow international student nurses and other aged care workers to work more than the 40 hours a fortnight. There are currently around 20,000 international student nurses studying in Australia.

How can we help prevent the spread of coronavirus?

Practising good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene is the best defence against most viruses. You should:

- wash your hands frequently with soap and water, including before and after eating, and after going to the toilet
- cover your cough and sneeze, dispose of tissues, and wash your hands, and
- avoid contact with others (stay more than 1.5 metres from people whenever possible).

More information

While coronavirus is of concern, it is important to remember that most people displaying symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat or tiredness are likely suffering with a cold or other respiratory illness – not COVID-19.

For the latest advice, information and resources, go to www.health.gov.au

Call the National Coronavirus Help Line on 1800 020 080. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you require translating or interpreting services, call 131 450.

The phone number of each state or territory public health agency is available at www.health.gov.au/state-territory-contacts

If you have concerns about your health, speak to a doctor.