



A message from aged care to Australia

Aged care services are working hard to keep older Australians safe - and we need your help

Aged care services are at the forefront of saving lives during the coronavirus pandemic, committed staff working harder than ever before to keep hundreds of thousands of vulnerable older Australians safe.

For this, we say a heartfelt thank you to the aged care workforce for their outstanding dedication in challenging times, with limited resources.

We are deeply saddened by the loss of lives in Australian aged care homes. However, the nation can be proud of the passion and commitment to minimise infections. We continue to employ lessons learnt from the catastrophic nursing home outbreaks and deaths we have seen overseas.

Our response to the pandemic has been directed by the National Cabinet's guidance on visitor restrictions, with enhanced resident protections put in place by some facilities in response to local risk factors.

These decisions were not taken lightly and have been made with the sole intent to save lives. We note the majority of residents and their families are supportive of the visitor restrictions put in place to protect them.

As our nation continues the fight against coronavirus we are working with residents, their families, advocates and governments to ensure we can continue to protect people in our care. A top priority is maintaining strong community, with innovative connections with loved ones and strengthening bonds with fellow residents.

To continue providing the best protections, we appeal for further public cooperation and government support:

- 1. We need a national approach for visits in aged care homes that respects the need for strong infection control, balanced with the needs of our residents for social and emotional supports provided by their friends and families.**
- 2. To implement this, we need the resources outlined in the aged care Rescue Package that the aged care sector has been calling for over recent weeks.**

The ability of many services to meet the needs of those they care for was already constrained due to major and prolonged financial pressures, long before the pandemic. The rising costs of keeping residents safe from coronavirus is pushing us closer to breaking point.

We welcome the additional funding support provided by government so far - but this equates to an average of \$2 per resident per day. This is not enough to cover the costs of keeping people safe, including masks and protective equipment, cleaning and sanitation, paying casual staff who have to isolate and also being able to pay the backfilling staff, technology to maintain family connections, social distancing measures and processes to make visits to residents safe.

We call on the government and the community to join us as we do all we can to continue to keep older Australians in our care safe from coronavirus.

Respectfully yours,

Aged and Community Services Australia - Patricia Sparrow
Anglicare Australia - Kasy Chambers
Baptist Care Australia - Nicole Hornsby
Leading Age Services Australia - Sean Rooney
UnitingCare Australia - Claerwen Little