

1 May 2020

Kirkbrae Update

Thank you to the many people who have been supportive of Kirkbrae and our staff as we deal with the restrictions and consequences of the COVID19 pandemic. We value the trust that you place in us to care for your loved one.

Across Australia people have had to adjust their lifestyles to minimise their risk of contracting this virus, to keep themselves and their loved-ones safe. Innovative ideas for how to keep in touch, coupled with special treats and celebrations for special occasions prove that we can rise to the challenge of this situation with a bit of imagination and fun. Our aged care residents have celebrated Easter, reflected about ANZAC Day, used Skype to chat with family members, received letters from new and unknown 'friends', missed the AFL, and felt and seen the weather change. Next week Mother's Day will be celebrated with special treats provided by our Lifestyle team.

Be assured that we are doing all that we can to keep our residents safe and to maintain their everyday lifestyle as normal as possible. We are conscious that some residents will be more affected by the reduction in visitors and social contact than others. The senior care staff, Lifestyle team and Pastoral Care team are paying particular attention to the residents impacted by this situation and ensuring that all staff provide extra care at these times.

I am also conscious that the current circumstances are not easy for our staff as they all have their own needs and concerns outside of their work responsibilities too. Thankfully, no staff have contracted the virus and we have the usual staffing levels for all shifts. Staff have been receiving the influenza vaccination with about 98% currently immunised, with a few waiting on medical appointments to finalise this process.

From 1 May NO visitors to the Kirkbrae aged care facility will be able to enter the buildings without having provided proof that they have received the flu vaccination this year. This is a Commonwealth Government directive because of the serious impact that COVID-19 and the flu can have on older people, and those who care for them. In addition to the current COVID19 screening, visitors will also be screened for Flu vaccinations prior to entry to the aged care buildings. Any concerns by visitors about this requirement should be raised with a Care Supervisor or the Facility Manager prior to coming to Kirkbrae.

Staff have received additional training on how to recognise the symptoms of COVID-19, refresher training on infection control procedures for individual virus cases and for outbreaks, and are being kept up to date on their own requirements to work in a safe environment. Kirkbrae has recently been able to purchase additional infection control protective clothing and equipment (PPE) and hand sanitiser to ensure that all precautions are taken to prevent viral transmission.

Kirkbrae is being vigilant in maintaining the restrictions so that we keep our residents and staff safe. Only essential visits are permitted and must be kept short. Our approach is based on our experience over the years with viral outbreaks and, with this pandemic, being informed by the experience of other aged care providers, and by following the guidance of the aged care peak body ACSA. I have attached a recent media release by ACSA which has been sent to the Commonwealth Government and has been printed in major newspapers. It is supported by Kirkbrae and reflects our desire to do all that we can to keep residents and staff as safe as possible.

Mark Sketcher
Chief Executive Officer