

Friday 21st August 2020

Dear Residents and Relatives,

Re: COVID-19 update

RSL LifeCare is taking every precaution to prevent COVID-19 from entering our homes. While it's sad to see the extent of outbreaks in other aged care facilities, we are very fortunate that to date, none of our 31 homes has been affected.

We know, too, that we cannot be complacent. If NSW experiences levels of community transmission like in Victoria, aged care homes here will be vulnerable.

While all residential aged care facilities are required to be able to manage infectious outbreaks like the flu and gastro, they are not hospitals, and are not designed to be. That's why the highly contagious nature of COVID-19, and the fact older Australians are so susceptible to it, makes managing COVID-19 outbreaks in aged care especially challenging.

With that in mind, we have been following the situation in Victoria very closely and have been working with expert advisers who have first-hand experience handling COVID outbreaks in aged care settings.

I want to reassure you that the lessons we have learned from these experiences, together with our daily analysis of data from local public health services and months of forward planning, means we are as prepared as we can be to manage an outbreak.

And if that happens, it is important that you know what to expect, in terms of our procedures and how decisions are made.

What to expect in the event of a COVID-19 outbreak

1. Home in 'lockdown' and outbreak procedures initiated

As a first step, the impacted home will initiate its outbreak procedures, which will include a full and immediate lockdown of the facility, with deep cleaning and additional infection control measures.

Practically, this means all residents will be taken safely to their rooms, and all staff will wear full Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). RSL LifeCare will make sure there are always enough care staff to look after residents, and no staff member will be allowed to work across other aged care homes.

No visitors will be allowed into the home until the public health authorities provide further guidance.

2. Public health authorities notified

RSL LifeCare is required to notify the NSW Public Health Unit and other relevant authorities once we have one confirmed case of COVID-19 in the home.

The Public Health Unit will let us know when to begin COVID-19 testing for all staff and residents. They will also advise us on whether and how residents should be moved within the home, or out of

the home (for example, to hospital) to minimise risks to their health and safety, and to that of others in the home.

3. Communication to staff, residents and families at the affected home

As soon as we can after briefing our staff and notifying the health authorities, we will phone all nominated resident contacts, and will follow up with an email to make sure you have all the relevant information.

The dedicated contact for every resident will receive a daily update phone call. In addition, a 1300 Support Centre will be available for all families to ring for further information.

4. Additional supplies for the home

RSL LifeCare will deploy a COVID-19 Outbreak Response Kit to the affected site(s). This will include spare stocks of PPE and other items needed for deep cleaning and infection control. We will also request additional PPE stocks from the Public Health Unit.

5. Managing the outbreak

It's important that you understand an outbreak can last anywhere from a couple of weeks to a couple of months (or more) in order to contain, suppress and overcome the infections.

This process is a partnership between the home's management (who are trained in infection control) RSL LifeCare central support staff (who will provide operational support and oversight), NSW health clinicians (who will assess our residents for clinical need and conduct all contact tracing and COVID-19 testing), and federal government representatives (who will provide workforce support and other directed support required).

6. Resident's wish

- A. It is possible that some residents will wish to leave the affected facility, to temporarily live with their families or carers. RSL LifeCare will support this wish if the following conditions are met:
1. There is no Public Health Order, legislation, or regulation preventing RSL LifeCare from complying with the resident's request.
 2. The Resident, and the carer / family member they are residing with, understand the requirement for the resident to remain in self-isolation for 14 days after leaving the affected RSL LifeCare facility.
 3. The carer properly understands their responsibility to provide adequate care and support to the Resident.
 4. In instances where the Resident is a high needs Resident, the carer has the proper competencies to attend to the needs of the Resident, and
 5. The Resident, and the carer / family member agree to comply with any other requirements established by health authorities.

- B. RSL LifeCare would prefer to transfer COVID positive patients to hospital where practical, and with the family's consent. This decision ultimately belongs with the local health services.

Who's in charge?

All decisions during an outbreak will be made under the direction of the local health authorities, in the best interests of our residents.

You can expect the situation during an outbreak to remain fluid, and advice may change from one day to the next. That's why we will be making daily phone calls, updating our website daily and offering an inbound call centre, so you will always have access to the latest information.

I would like to reassure you that everything we are doing is to prevent an outbreak – and we certainly hope we will never have to use it.

We know that prevention is the best cure, and so we are continuing with our health screening for all people entering our homes, including staff before every shift, and ensuring all our homes are working to 'COVID-safe' practices and procedures.

Please join us in our fight to prevent COVID-19 from entering any of our homes or villages. If you are not feeling well, please get tested. And if you (or anyone you live with or have associated with) has been tested, please self-isolate at home, until you receive the results.

These are challenging times for everyone (residents, their families and our staff). Let's work together and keep each other safe. Please refer to the [COVID-19 section of our website](#), which is regularly in an effort to keep everyone informed.

If you have any concerns or questions, please don't hesitate to contact your local home or email me directly at customercare@rsllifecare.org.au

Yours sincerely,



Matthew Filocamo

General Manager - Residential Care

RSL LifeCare