



Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck
Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians
Minister for Youth and Sport

24 April 2020

Aged Care Visitation

The Australian Government is determined to ensure a safe environment exists in aged care facilities as we work together to contain the spread of COVID-19.

Aged Care Minister Richard Colbeck says while providers shared a responsibility to protect the wellbeing of Senior Australians in care, total lock downs of facilities were not supported by the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) or the National Cabinet.

It follows calls by Prime Minister Scott Morrison who reminded providers not to impose tougher visitor restrictions.

“As the Prime Minister emphasised today we are calling on aged care providers to voluntarily implement the AHPPC guidelines and if this does not occur we will consider moving to mandating these requirements and any exemptions would need to be authorised,” Minister Colbeck said.

“Contact with family and friends during this difficult time can be a vital link to ensure the health and wellbeing of Senior Australians in care.

“The AHPPC is concerned that in some cases this level of contact is not being maintained.

“It is not okay that residents should remain completely cut off from loved ones or their carers.

“This is particularly important for those residents with dementia.”

But Minister Colbeck said the call to work to the AHPPC recommendations was not a green light to go back to pre-COVID visitation routines.

“We all need to remain vigilant in managing the protection of Senior Australians,” he said.

“The advice to National Cabinet has not changed.”

The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission has issued guidance to providers reminding them to be conscious of their responsibility to ensure the health of residents and required quality of care levels.

“This guidance draws on what has already been learned from experiences with recent COVID-19 outbreaks,” Minister Colbeck said.

The Commission’s Chief Clinical Advisor has also offered advice around strategies to minimise the risk of transmission through staff and visitor screening.

“It is important to ensure those people in residential aged care facilities remain safe and appropriate screening is carried out for anybody entering for work or to visit a loved one,” he said.

“These guidelines apply to all visitors and staff.”

Additionally, the AHPPC has advised that all residential aged care staff and visitors should be vaccinated by 1 May 2020.

State and Territories have issued directions to give effect to these requirements. These directions will be enforced and persons who fail to comply could face penalties including fines for individuals and for bodies corporate.

ACQSC advice on visitor restrictions is available [here](#).

Entry screening advice from the Chief Clinical Advisor is available [here](#).