



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

18 March 2020

Strengthened guidelines to protect aged care residents

Aged care facilities around Australia are now required to restrict visitation as the Federal Government continues to combat the spread of coronavirus.

Visits should be limited to two people per resident at one time each day, restricted to rooms, outdoor or specific areas designated by providers.

Children should not visit aged care centres at all.

Large group visits or gatherings, including social activities or entertainment should also be ruled out until further notice.

Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians Senator Richard Colbeck said the tough measures were the best way of protecting older and vulnerable Australians in care.

“None of this is easy, but we are facing an extraordinary health challenge and we need to work together to protect the Australians most vulnerable to COVID-19,” Minister Colbeck said.

“We know the risk of serious illness and death increases with age.

“There is currently no vaccine so preventing exposure is the single most important step we can take.”

Minister Colbeck said providers should use discretion when dealing with family of residents in palliative care. Decisions on visitation should be made on a case-by-case basis.

“Social distancing measures will still apply for families of loved ones in end-of-life phase,” Minister Colbeck said. “However, providers are expected to show compassion and make sensible decisions on a case-by-case basis.”

He said while the decision to stop children visiting was difficult but necessary.

“We know older Australians love to see children in their lives, but the fact is, children are not reliable when it comes to practicing the good hygiene necessary to stop the spread,” he said.

Aged care providers will be asked to ensure video calls are available to all residents to enable them to stay in contact with their loved ones.

Residential aged care facilities should also consider screening all visitors for signs of COVID-19, including taking temperatures.

Hand washing facilities and alcohol-based rub must be made available at the main entrance and at the entrance to each resident’s room.

Minister Colbeck said the welfare of senior of Australians in care would remain a priority in the ongoing response to the outbreak.

“If you don’t absolutely have to go to support a resident in care, please don’t,” he said.

“No one should be entering an aged care facility if they have returned from overseas in the last 14 days.

“No one should be entering an aged care facility if they have been in contact with someone who has COVID-19 in the last 14 days.

“And no one should be entering an aged care facility or if they have symptoms of an acute respiratory infection, including a cough, sore throat or shortness of breath.

“This applies to visitors and this applies to staff,” he said.

Minister Colbeck said any member of the Aged Care workforce who have been overseas or had contact with somebody with the virus should isolate for 14 days and get tested.

Sick leave policies must also support aged care workers to stay home.

Fact sheets are available at the Department of Health’s [website](#) and advice for the prevention, control and public health management of COVID-19 will be updated as new information becomes available.

A 24-hour Coronavirus Health Information Line, run by healthdirect, has also been set up for public enquiries at 1800 020 080.

ENDS