



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

16 April 2020

Enhanced COVID-19 testing to offer vital safety net

The Federal Government will act immediately to test for COVID-19 at three aged care facilities across Tasmania's North West Coast as the campaign to stop the spread of the virus continues.

It follows confirmation from the Tasmanian Government that contact tracing from the North West Regional Hospital and Private Hospital had identified a health care worker who had also worked at three aged care facilities.

The worker tested positive to the virus today (Thursday).

Aged Care Minister Richard Colbeck said Commonwealth emergency response teams will also be mobilised as a matter of urgency to work with the three aged care centres to provide:

- additional workforce where required to maintain safe levels of care;
- adequate supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE); and
- support and advice on COVID-19 infection control procedures.

“We will have teams on site at each facility to start testing all residents and workers tomorrow (Friday),” Minister Colbeck said.

“We will provide assistance as necessary for surge workforce given diminished capacity in the region.

“All steps are being taken to ensure requisite workforce is available to ensure continuity of care.

“It is vital that we act quickly to understand the situation and get on top of any potential cases.”

Minister Colbeck said he was working closely with Tasmania Health Minister Sarah Courtney, the State Government and providers.

Tasmanian Public Health Services said there are so far no confirmed cases of COVID-19 at any of the three centres.

However, results from one patient who had experienced mild respiratory symptom were expected tomorrow (Friday).

“This is a difficult time – but we are ready to ensure we continue to stop the spread and save lives,” Minister Colbeck said.

“We will work with providers to ensure residents in aged care facilities across the North-West, the staff who care for them and their families are kept informed as the situation unfolds.

Minister Colbeck said the Federal Government responded immediately once informed, including the arrangement of priority testing for residents and staff.