



The Hon. Greg Hunt, MP
Minister for Health

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

13 July 2020

Face masks required for aged care workers in Melbourne hotspots

Aged care staff who work in residential facilities or provide home care support across Victoria's lock down zones will be required to wear surgical masks following recommendations from the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC).

The latest advice for aged care workers is in addition to all other infection control and staff screening measures already in place across the sector to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Minister for Health, Greg Hunt and Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians, Richard Colbeck, today said personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks, would be vital in preventing the introduction of COVID-19 to senior Australians receiving aged care as well as providing protection for carers.

An additional four million masks will be made available to aged care and home care providers in the areas with restrictions including Greater Melbourne and Mitchell Shires.

This will immediately assist around 449 residential aged care facilities and 425 home care providers, with a total of 60,427 aged care recipients in these services.

This is in addition to the one million masks made available to primary care workers announced last week.

“The Australian Government has worked very hard to ensure there is a sufficient supply of PPE, including masks, in the National Medical Stockpile (NMS) to ensure our health care workers, and those working in aged care, can access them,” Minister Hunt said.

Since late March, more than 295 million masks, more than four million gowns, more than 41 million gloves, and more than five million goggles and face shields have been received into the NMS.

Substantial amounts of PPE, including additional masks, will continue to arrive over the coming weeks and months.

Additionally, Minister Colbeck said further targeted testing will be conducted on aged care residents and staff in facilities in the affected areas.

Other support measures include:

- Deployment of clinical first responders direct to facilities where an outbreak has been identified;
- Immediate access to emergency response teams if there is a significant outbreak; and
- Access to a surge workforce, to help providers if they're unable to fill critical skills because of infection or staff have to self-isolate.

The Aged Care Quality Safety Commission will continue to conduct site visits where concerns are raised, including in the Melbourne metropolitan area.

The Federal Government is also providing advice to services around screening people entering residential aged care facilities, particularly in hotspot areas.

Minister Colbeck said more than 1.35 million items of PPE had already been supplied to Victorian aged care services since late February 2020.

A large deployment of up to 250,000 surgical masks, 250,000 gowns, 250,000 face shields/goggles and supplies of hand sanitizer is currently underway for services in these areas.

“With the current surge in COVID-19 cases in Melbourne, there has been a particular emphasis on ensuring additional PPE has been sent to Victoria to ensure aged care workers in that state have access to such equipment,” Minister Colbeck said.

PPE is the last line of defence – preventing the introduction of coronavirus into aged care services and protecting our older Australians.

“We need everyone to continue to practise good hygiene and follow limits to public gatherings including keeping 1.5 metres of distance,” Minister Colbeck said.

“If you have any symptoms of COVID-19, stay at home and get tested.”

Aged care providers in Melbourne and Mitchell Shire can contact AgedCareCOVIDPPE@health.gov.au to request masks for in home and residential aged care workers delivering close personal care and clinical care, and other PPE like gloves and gowns to aged care services with a potential or confirmed COVID-19 outbreak.

The email is closely monitored and prioritises facilities with active Covid-19 cases.