



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

11 March 2020

Funding boost for aged care set to strengthen defence against COVID-19

Senior Australians in aged care and at home remain the focus of a plan of action from the Morrison Government aimed at limiting the spread of COVID-19.

Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians, Richard Colbeck, today outlined the measures in place to protect residents, staff and their families at facilities across the country.

The front line of defence starts with a funding boost of \$101.2 million with a focus on:

- Upskilling aged care workers in coronavirus infection control;
- Boosting staff numbers, support and training for residential care homes where an urgent health response is required;
- A telehealth consultation service provided by doctors, both GPs and specialists, for anyone over the age of 70;
- Specialist onsite pathology services ensuring residents don't have to leave facilities and to quickly respond to potential cases; and
- Additional funds allowing the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission to work with providers on improving infection control.

“Our objective is to ensure Australia’s aged care sector is ready and able to protect our most vulnerable. It remains our highest priority,” Minister Colbeck said.

“While those aged over 70 are at greater risk from the virus, it’s important to understand Australia has a robust health system.

“We are already ahead of the curve with practical guidelines and protocols to assist with containing outbreaks while ensuring those who contract the disease have access to the best treatment.”

The Government is investing in the national medical stockpile and will support aged care providers with personal protective equipment (PPE) resources for staff where it is needed, as part of the infection control measures.

The Primary Health Networks will co-ordinate distribution to ensure effective management of supplies to areas of need.

Minister Colbeck said clear communication across the aged care sector and to Senior Australians was key.

He said the Government will deliver a \$30 million National Communications Campaign – across all media – to provide people with practical advice on how they can play their part in containing the virus and staying healthy.

The campaign will keep the health and aged care industry informed with up-to-date clinical guidance, triaging and caring for patients, the development of an app and advice to workers in looking after their own safety.

“We understand that clear communication is important and as a government we are working to ensure Senior Australians get the information they need,” Minister Colbeck said.

“The implementation of infectious disease guidelines is nothing new for Australia’s aged care sector.

“While the spread of COVID-19 presents significant problems, the Federal Government stands ready to offer support when and where needed. We will get through this together.”

An online forum later this week would offer a platform for providers to have additional questions answered.

It follows a meeting with aged care providers last week where Minister Colbeck and the Commonwealth Chief Medical Advisor Brendan Murphy outlined strategies aimed at ensuring the continued delivery of safe, quality care to senior Australians.

Measures discussed included the need for providers to maintain infectious control protocols, the activation of the COVID-19 Emergency Response Plan when and where needed and ensuring lines of communication between aged care residents and their families.

The Communicable Diseases Network of Australian (CDNA) will also soon be releasing guidelines for the prevention, control and management of COVID-19 in residential aged care facilities.

Fact sheets are available at the Department of Health’s [website](#) and 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.

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