

Substantive new content since last letter from Chief Health Officer dated 7 August:

- New recommendation to limit staff working across facilities
- Changes to LGAs – addition of Hornsby Shire and Hills District
- NSW/VIC border community visitor changes

Dear Residential Aged Care Facility Director

Thank you for being responsive to implementing measures to prevent introduction of COVID-19 into your facility.

The outbreak of COVID-19 continues in Victoria and the outbreak in NSW, first detected in South Western Sydney, has now spread to some other areas. While the initial focus of cases in Victoria was in metropolitan Melbourne, there is a number of cases in some areas of regional Victoria.

It is crucial that all residential aged care facilities maintain vigilance to prevent the introduction of COVID-19 into your facility.

Minimising staff movement across facilities

As part of preparedness planning, aged care providers should put in place arrangements to limit staff working across facilities.

Where ceasing staff movement across facilities is not practicable, staff movement should be minimised and additional measures should be put in place, such as maintaining records of staff and work locations and increasing use of Personal Protective Equipment.

Infection prevention & control - staff training and competency requirements

I would like to again highlight the importance of comprehensive infection prevention and control preparation in our COVID-19 response. As part of your outbreak preparedness, facilities should ensure that:

- There is an infection control lead or champion at the facility
- Staff are well trained and can demonstrate competency in infection prevention and control, particularly use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Sufficient stocks of PPE are held on site.

There are a number of excellent resources specific to residential care facilities and staff available to support staff training. These are attached to this letter.

Public health advice on screening and entry restrictions

Given the current risk of COVID-19 now in the community please implement the following measures.

All facilities:

- Must have a robust process for screening all staff and visitors on entry to the facility
- Ongoing: any staff or visitors with fever $\geq 37.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ or respiratory symptoms¹, even mild, **should be excluded** from the facility. They should be advised to isolate at home and seek COVID-19 testing.

¹ Symptoms include: fever, cough, sore/ scratchy throat, shortness of breath, loss of taste or smell

- Ongoing: any staff or visitors who have been in Victoria in the previous 14 days **should be excluded** from the facility (noting an exception for staff in border communities with a valid border permit)
- Ongoing: any staff and visitors who have visited any of the locations on the same time as a COVID-19 case (see updated list of venues and dates at <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/latest-news-and-updates>) should be excluded for a period of 14 days since their visit to the listed location. **It is important to regularly check the website, as this list may expand.**
- Until further notice: any visitors to any residential aged care facility who have been in the following local government areas in the previous 14 days **should be excluded** from the facility: **Hornsby Shire, Hills District**, Newcastle, Merrylands (suburb), Guildford (suburb), Canterbury-Bankstown (Bankstown part), Waverley, Woollahra, eastern part of City of Sydney² (refer to footnote for changes), Parramatta, Fairfield, Liverpool, Campbelltown and Camden.
- Ongoing: all aged care staff who reside in the above local government areas, suburbs or a NSW/VIC border community **must wear a surgical mask while in the facility.**

Additional steps for facilities in the above LGAs, suburbs and NSW/VIC border communities:

- Ongoing: all residential aged care staff who work in residential aged care facilities located within the above local government areas, suburbs and NSW/VIC border communities **must wear a surgical mask while in the facility** (irrespective of where they live or have visited).
- Until further notice: residential aged care facilities in the above local government areas and suburbs **should not allow any visitors** (visitors performing essential caring functions may be allowed but must wear a mask). In exceptional circumstances, seek advice from your local NSW Health public health unit on 1300 066 055.
- In NSW/VIC border communities, **only visitors from NSW are permitted** providing:
 - The facility must obtain name and contact detail of visitors (in case there is a need for contact tracing)
 - The visitor is checked against the above questions
 - The temperature of the visitor is checked to be below 37.5 degrees Celsius
 - The visitor is escorted directly to the room (single room) of their loved one, and must remain within the room for the duration of the visit. At the completion of the visit, the visitor is to be escorted directly back to the reception area
 - A surgical mask is to be worn at all times
 - Hand hygiene is facilitated
 - Visits are restricted to once/day for each person
 - A maximum of two visitors at a time; children are to be closely supervised.

Measures such as phone or video calls should be made available to all residents to enable continuation of communication with family, friends or others who are not allowed to enter the facility at this time.

Please note that some residents may react with discomfort to seeing staff wearing surgical masks. Consider supporting tools to manage this (eg: show a photo with the staff member's face uncovered), should it occur in your facility.

² Suburbs: Sydney, Surry Hills, Darlinghurst, Woolloomooloo, Potts Point, Rushcutters Bay, Elizabeth Bay, Centennial Park (**removed Eveleigh, Alexandria, Beaconsfield, Rosebery and Eastlakes**)

If you would like more information, please contact your local NSW Health public health unit on 1300 066 055.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Chant'.

Dr Kerry Chant PSM
Chief Health Officer, NSW Health
9 August 2020

NSW Clinical Excellence Commission resources

Personal Protective Equipment training

<http://www.cec.health.nsw.gov.au/keep-patients-safe/COVID-19/personal-protective-equipment>

Escalation framework

http://www.cec.health.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/595754/COVID-19-Infection-Prevention-and-Control-Response-and-Escalation-Framework.pdf

Commonwealth Department of Health Resources

Infection Prevention & Control

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidelines-for-infection-prevention-and-control-in-residential-care-facilities>

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-the-health-and-aged-care-sector/personal-protective-equipment-ppe-for-the-health-workforce-during-covid-19>

Personal Protective Equipment resources – multiple languages

<https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/05/coronavirus-covid-19-when-to-use-personal-protective-equipment-in-aged-care.pdf>

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/translated/coronavirus-covid-19-when-to-use-personal-protective-equipment-in-aged-care-other-languages>

Training Modules - Specially developed for aged care

<https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/new-covid-19-e-learning-modules-now-available>

Personal Protective Equipment Videos

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/videos/coronavirus-covid-19-wearing-personal-protective-equipment-in-aged-care-video>

Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission resources

Infection Protection and Control

<https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/resources/are-you-alert-and-ready>

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/cdna-guidance-for-symptom-monitoring-in-health-and-aged-care-workers-during-the-covid-19-outbreak>