

Office of the Chief Executive

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Dear colleagues

RE: VISITORS TO RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE FACILITIES

As you will be aware, the national and international situation in relation to Coronavirus (COVID-19) has been changing rapidly and there have now been a number of confirmed cases across Australia, including South Australia.

Older people are at an increased risk of both contracting COVID-19 and developing a serious illness as a result. In order to protect older Australians, on 18 March 2020, the Prime Minister announced that new restrictions on visits to residential aged care facilities will apply.

The Australian Government Department of Health has released updated information for residents of residential aged care services, their family members and visitors, which is available on their website:

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/advice-for-aged-care-facilities-and-visitors-to-residents>

As Chief Executive of the South Australian Government Department for Health and Wellbeing, I have taken the step of declaring a public health emergency in South Australia. This declaration supports the implementation of nationally agreed initiatives to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic by enabling me to issue directions that are legally enforceable in South Australia.

Accordingly, I have issued a direction in relation to visitors to aged care facilities, which applies to all providers of residential aged care in South Australia and is consistent with the restrictions announced by the Prime Minister. This direction will remain in place from 22 March 2020 until such time as I revoke or amend the direction, which will be communicated to you.

These measures are being implemented as a precaution to ensure vulnerable older South Australians continue to remain safe from COVID-19. Residents should be supported to utilise alternative ways of staying connected with their loved ones during this time, such as phone and video calls, or writing letters.

To minimise the impact of COVID-19, it is important that aged care providers continue to maintain their infection control protocols, be ready to activate their

COVID-19 Emergency Response Plans and finalise arrangements for seasonal flu vaccinations for residents, staff and volunteers.

In the event of an outbreak, SA Health will work with aged care providers to support infection control measures on site and maximise the capacity for any residents with symptoms of COVID-19 to be cared for within the facility.

The evolving status of COVID-19 across the community requires public health advice to evolve rapidly. SA Health is committed to working with both the Commonwealth Government and the aged care sector to ensure that service providers are kept informed as the situation progresses.

Yours sincerely



DR CHRISTOPHER MCGOWAN
Chief Executive

23 / 3 / 2020

Att: Direction of the Chief Executive of the Department for Health and Wellbeing: Visiting Nursing Homes