



Dear aged care resident and family members

I am writing to update you on the steps that your aged care provider is expected to take to keep you and other residents as safe as possible at this stage of the pandemic.

While we would all like to think that COVID-19 is no longer a threat, unfortunately that's not the case. It is true – and reassuring - that the risks to our health posed by this highly infectious virus are far more manageable now than they were two years ago. However, the risks have not been reduced to zero and experts predict more COVID-19 waves over coming months and even years as new variants of the virus spread through local communities. For that reason, we must be careful to maintain COVID vigilance and not to fall back into pre-COVID-19 habits.

We must also recognise that beyond COVID-19 there are other infectious diseases that can affect aged care residents, family members and staff. Managing COVID-19 effectively puts providers in a good position to also better manage other infectious diseases.

I have written to aged care providers this week to ensure that they continue to focus on six key areas of COVID-19 prevention and response (below) to ensure your ongoing protection:



You can expect that your aged care provider has these processes in place. You can also expect that any decisions made about infection control are communicated to you in a clear and timely manner.

Residents and family members have a right to understand what actions their aged care facility management and staff are taking to manage and reduce infection risks. There are also a number of steps that you can take to assist in this regard, helping to protect the health and safety of all aged care residents, staff and visitors.

If you are a family member planning to visit a loved one in care, it would be sensible to take precautions in the days leading up to the visit to reduce your risk of contracting the virus and carrying it into the service (where a rapid antigen test (RAT) may not pick it up on entry screening).

Pay attention to any signs or symptoms of illness. If you feel unwell, regardless of whether you have returned a positive COVID-19 test result, you should avoid interacting with others where possible. A negative RAT result is not proof that you don't have COVID-19, and COVID-19 is not the only infectious disease that can spread within aged care settings.

Keeping up to date with your vaccinations is another way to lower the risk to yourself and those around you. This includes COVID-19 boosters, as well as vaccinations for other infectious diseases that pose a risk to yourself and vulnerable members of the community.

At various stages of the pandemic, restrictions have been placed on visits to residential aged care via state and territory public health directions. All jurisdictions have now relaxed restrictions on access, however additional requirements (such as mask wearing) still apply in most places. If your aged care provider introduces special COVID-19 arrangements that you don't understand or don't support, then you should feel free to talk to the provider about this. They should have processes in place to ensure that any restrictions within the service do not impact on the wellbeing of residents and their families.

To understand more about your rights and responsibilities we encourage you to review the [Industry Code for Visiting Residential Aged Care Homes](#). The Commission has also produced a series of [Partnerships in care resources](#) to support aged care residents and their family or close friends to continue their relationships of care and companionship, even during periods of an infectious disease outbreak.

I hope the above information is useful. Thank you for your ongoing efforts to help manage and mitigate COVID-19 risks for people in residential care. Ensuring that aged care consumers are safe, protected from harm, and enjoy a good quality of life is a set of goals that we all share and take very seriously.

Yours sincerely



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