

27 April 2020

Dear members of the Bethany Christian Care Family

## COVID-19 UPDATE

Last week, in response to advice from the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission I notified you that that we will be **allowing visitors** back into our aged care facilities. At that time, I advised that there will be limitations and conditions on visiting, to help protect our residents and staff from COVID-19. This letter explains those limitations and conditions, and how to make a visit.

### How have things changed in the last month?

On 27 March I wrote to you to give notice that we would be excluding visitors from our aged care facilities from 1 April. At that time the number of new daily COVID-19 cases had been increasing steeply. Today, the number of new daily cases is much lower.

Number of new daily cases	27 March 2020	27 April 2020
Australia	370	6
Queensland	62	3

### What has not changed in the last month?

Even though the number of new daily COVID-19 cases has reduced, the consequences of an outbreak in an aged care facility would still be terrible. Where aged care facilities have had a COVID-19 outbreak there have been resident deaths, full confinement of residents to their rooms, staff shortages, and no visitors. As such, we still need to take sensible precautions to avoid an outbreak of COVID-19.

### Please do not visit unless you absolutely must

The advice from the Commonwealth Department of Health, to residents and families concerning visits to aged care facilities is still:

*“If you don’t absolutely have to visit, please don’t. It’s best to keep in touch via phone and video calls, send postcards, photos or artwork, or film short videos to share.”*

Bethany Christian Care strongly endorses the Department of Health’s advice not to visit someone in an aged care facility unless you absolutely have to.

Bethany Christian Care is a not-for-profit organisation. To benefit our residents:

- Donations are tax deductible
- Our investment fund is exempt from the Centrelink/ Veterans’ Affairs deeming provisions
- We are thankful for bequests.

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*“Bear one another’s burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ.” Galatians 6:2*

## **Resident feedback**

Many of our residents have expressed that they do not want their home opened to visitors. They say that the 'no visitor' rule gave them a sense of reassurance and safety. Please be considerate of this if you are thinking of making a visit.

## **Resident choice**

All residents have the choice about whether they have visitors or not. If you are a resident or the Enduring Power of Attorney for a resident and you do not want to receive visitors at this time, please let us know.

You can choose not to receive visitors by talking to staff or contacting Bethany Christian Care Head Office (07 3737 5080; [bethany@bethanycc.org.au](mailto:bethany@bethanycc.org.au)). You can change this choice at any time.

## **When will visiting recommence?**

From Friday 1 May 2020.

## **When can visits occur?**

Visitors can enter aged care to visit a resident between 9:00am and 5:00pm Monday to Friday. Strictly limited access will also be available at 6:00pm for those who cannot come between 9:00am and 5:00pm.

To better pace the timing of visits throughout the day, visits will be available on the hour for each of the open hours. Visits must be booked one day in advance.

On the Labour Day public holiday (Monday 4 May) we will be staffing our receptions to facilitate visits between 10:00am and 2:00pm.

## **How can a visit be booked?**

In order to manage the number of visitors who are on site at the one time, we will be implementing an electronic visitor booking system. The booking site will be available from Wednesday 29 April on our website: <http://www.bethanycc.org.au/links/visiting.aspx>.

To protect the confidentiality of our residents, you will need to know the resident's house and room number to make a booking. If you do not know this information you can contact reception at the relevant site (room numbers can only be given out to contacts listed in a resident's file).

When making a booking you will be asked to complete screening questions and provide evidence that you have received the 2020 influenza vaccine.

If you do not have access to the internet to make a booking please call reception at the site you wish to visit to make a booking.

### **How can visits be arranged at other times?**

At other times “virtual visiting” is available.

### **Who can visit residents in aged care?**

Each resident can have up to one care and support visit each day, with the visit being from one person or two people together. Visitors must be direct relatives or essential support people of the resident and be over 16 years old.

You will not be able to visit if you are currently, or within the last 7 days have been, unwell or been aware of any of the following symptoms:

- fever, night sweats or chills
- cough
- runny nose
- sore or scratchy throat
- shortness of breath.

### **How does someone make a visit?**

After making a booking, all visitors must first come to the reception where they must wash their hands and have their temperature checked. From reception, visitors will be escorted into the aged care facility. Visitors may have to wait for staff to be available to escort them.

### **How long can a visitor stay?**

Visits should be kept as short as possible, and are to be no longer than two hours.

### **Where can visitors go in the aged care facility?**

Visitors are to visit a resident in the resident’s room. Visitors must not spend time in communal areas or with other residents – either on your way to or from a resident’s room. Visitors must practice social distancing during their visit. If you have questions for staff concerning a resident, please do not linger at the nurses’ station or any other communal area to talk with staff. We would prefer you ask those questions after your visit by contacting the Care Manager or Clinical Nurse.

### **How do I arrange a virtual visit?**

“Virtual visiting” is available to all aged care residents to stay in touch with friends and family. For details on how to book a time slot, please visit: <http://www.bethanycc.org.au/links/visiting.aspx>.

### **Do I need to have a flu vaccination?**

Yes. The Queensland Chief Health Officer has directed that no one may enter an aged care facility after 1 May 2020 unless they have *“an up to date vaccination against influenza, if the vaccination is available to the person”*. The Chief Health Officer’s direction only gives one example of why a vaccination is not available to a person – that is, *“the vaccination is not available to a person with a medical contraindication to the influenza vaccine”*.

After 1 May 2020, visitors will need to provide proof of vaccination or a doctor’s letter confirming the vaccination is not available to them.

### **Conclusion**

The welfare, health and safety of our residents and staff is our top priority. At all times, our decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic seek to faithfully achieve that priority.

Please remember, if you don’t absolutely have to visit in person, please don’t. Together we can reduce the risk of COVID-19 to our residents and staff.

If you have any concerns or wish to discuss this issue further, please contact Bethany Christian Care Head Office (07 3737 5080; [bethany@bethanycc.org.au](mailto:bethany@bethanycc.org.au)).

I appreciate your continued prayers for all the Bethany Christian Care Family.

Kind regards,



Rohan Reid  
CEO