

27 March 2020

Dear residents, representatives, and Bethany Christian Care community

COVID-19 UPDATE – COMPLETE LOCK DOWN OF AGED CARE

Thank you for your understanding and patience over the last weeks, as we have increased the precautions in place to safeguard our residents in response to the COVID-19 virus.

As the COVID-19 virus situation evolves, I want to reassure you that we are implementing all appropriate means to prevent the spread of this new illness in our facilities.

You will be aware that we have recently implemented new protocols restricting visitors to our aged care facilities. However, we have now decided to initiate a precautionary complete lockdown of our aged care facilities to better safeguard the safety of every resident.

This is not a decision we have taken lightly, and we believe it is in the best interest of our residents and staff.

I imagine you have a number of questions about this, which I have endeavoured to answer below. While the details contained in this Question and Answer are current at the time of writing, they are subject to change.

1. Why have you made this decision now?

The Australian and Queensland Governments have imposed stricter conditions to isolate our community to try to contain the spread of COVID-19. While Bethany Christian Care does not have any known cases of COVID-19 at this time, and the Government has not directed a complete lockdown of aged care facilities, we believe a complete lockdown is now appropriate in order to better safeguard the health and safety of our residents and staff in a time when COVID-19 infections are increasing in the community. Like a growing number of other aged care providers, we believe that this is the most prudent decision at this time.

2. When does the complete lockdown commence?

It will commence at 5pm on Wednesday 1 April. This may change if, for example, the Government makes a directive earlier.

We understand that many relatives may want to visit their loved ones before the Wednesday deadline, however, we cannot stress enough the importance of staying away from the Facility if you are displaying COVID-19 symptoms, have entered Queensland (from overseas/ interstate) within the last 14 days, have had contact with anyone who has entered Queensland (from overseas/ interstate) within the last 14 days, or contact with anyone who has COVID-19 or has displayed COVID-19 symptoms.

3. How long is the complete lockdown?

At this stage we do not know how long the complete lockdown will last.

4. Will any visitors be allowed in during the complete lockdown?

No. However, should there be any deterioration in your loved one's condition or an end-of-life situation, we will make arrangements on a case-by-case basis.

5. Who can visit residents in aged care before the complete lockdown?

Until the complete lockdown comes into effect at 5pm on Wednesday 1 April the existing restricted visitor protocols continue to apply:

- Each resident can have one care and support visit each day, with the visit being from one person or two people together.
- Visitors must be direct relatives of the resident.
- Children under the age of 18 are not able to enter.
- Visits should be kept as short as practicable, and are to be no longer than two hours.
- Visitors can enter aged care to visit a resident between
 - 8:30am and 5:00pm Monday 30 March and Tuesday 31 March, and
 - 8:30am and 3:00pm Wednesday 1 April.
- All visitors must first come to the reception area to sign in, answer some questions and have their temperature checked.
- Visitors are to visit a resident in the resident's room or designated outside area, and not spend time in communal areas or with other residents.

6. How can I stay in contact with my loved one?

Feel free to phone your loved one. Or, if they have their own personal electronic device that enables video calling capabilities, please keep in touch with them through their device.

“Virtual visiting” is available to all aged care residents to stay in touch with friends and family who are unable to visit in person. Residents can book a time slot to have access to everything needed to “virtually visit” friends and family – a tablet with Wi-Fi and Skype set up, and access to a Skype account

We have introduced an online booking system to make this easy to organise. For details on how to book a time slot, please visit <http://www.bethanycc.org.au/links/virtual-visiting.aspx>.

7. What are you doing to help ease resident boredom during a complete lockdown?

We have increased our lifestyle staff hours so that we can provide more lifestyle activities and services to residents.

8. Can aged care residents still go out of the aged care facility?

Residents are not permitted to leave the aged care facility except to receive or access health care, or in the case of an emergency. This includes any shared village areas (such as community halls, hairdressing salons, BBQ areas, etc) which are outside of the actual aged care facility. There are exceptions for “end of life” residents (e.g. – those residents receiving palliative care).

Telehealth appointments, using video calls, are now being arranged by many doctors, specialists and other health care providers. Staff can assist residents to organise for their appointment to be conducted using telehealth.

If a resident leaves an aged care facility, upon returning they will be quarantined in their room for a period of time.

9. What about new admissions?

Because of our responsibility to provide ongoing residential aged care to the community, we are not proposing to stop admission of new residents. However, the process for admission of new residents will change, including doing facility tours via video and quarantining new admissions in their room for a period of time.

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

I thank you for your cooperation and support of this decision. Together, we can help keep one another healthy and well.

We will continue to keep you updated on current precautions and planned changes over the coming weeks. If you would like to receive these updates via email, and are not doing so already, please let us know.

At this time, I pray you will find peace and encouragement in the words of the Apostle Peter who said *“Cast all your anxiety on God because he cares for you”* (1 Peter 5:7).

I appreciate your continued prayers for all Bethany Christian Care residents and staff.

Kind regards,



Rohan Reid
CEO