

COVID-19 update

First, we confirm that Abbeyfield Australia is not aware at this time of any confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) within our resident, committee, staff and volunteer Abbeyfield Australia community.

Abbeyfield Australia continues to monitor the developing and rapidly changing situation surrounding the COVID-19 outbreak in Australia, particularly for our Abbeyfield residents, who are amongst the most vulnerable in the community.

The health and safety of our Abbeyfield residents, staff, committee members and volunteers is of paramount importance and we are all doing everything we can to be proactive and prepared to prevent, detect and contain the spread of COVID-19.

The situation and guidelines with regard to containment recommendations for COVID-19 are evolving and changing daily.

This morning, Prime Minister, Scott Morrison stated the following measures specifically for aged care facilities:

"The following visitors and staff, including visiting workers should not be permitted and will not be permitted to enter an aged care facility: Those who have returned from overseas in the last 14 days. Those who have been in contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the last 14 days. Those with fever or symptoms or acute respiratory infection, symptoms, those who haven't been vaccinated against influenza after the 1st of May.

The facilities must also implement the following measures for restricting visits and visitors to reduce the risk of transmission to residents. Limiting visits to a short duration. Limiting visits to a maximum of two visitors at one time per day. These may be immediate social supports, family members, close friends or professional service or advocacy workers.

Visits should be conducted in a resident's room, outdoors or in a specific area designated by the facility, rather than communal areas where the risk of transmission to other residents is greater. There should be no large group visits or gatherings, including social activities or entertainment to be permitted at this time."

Although we operate in the community housing sector (and are not aged care), our residents are older people and adults with disabilities - we recommend that all Abbeyfield houses also implement these measures.

Abbeyfield house visits and meetings

We further recommend that Abbeyfield houses take these precautions to help protect residents, staff, committee members and volunteers, these include:

- Only essential visitors enter an Abbeyfield house **on a restricted and limited basis**. Essential visitors are immediate social support people, family members, close friends or professional service workers. Visits should not be conducted in the common area, kitchen, lounge or dining room and best be held in the resident's room or outside/court yard area and be in a small group.
- Carers and community assistance providers will also have their own protocols in place. However, we ask that any essential visitors wash and / or sanitise their hands on entry.

They should not enter if they are unwell, have been overseas or have been in contact with a confirmed case.

- All non-essential visitors should not attend an Abbeyfield house. We have provided a poster for the entrance to the house.
- Face to face committee meetings and resident meetings should be avoided. Committee meetings should be held over the phone or communication via email or smaller groups following social distancing protocols. Resident meetings, if required, may be split to smaller groups as appropriate with recommended social distancing protocols.
- Committees and housekeepers may also consider staggering dinner and lunch, ie have two sittings, rather than having all the residents in the common dining room at one time. We recommend that there is flexibility and if appropriate, a resident also be able to have their meal in their room.

Limited resident social activity and self-isolation

During this difficult period, and although it is not in accordance with our Abbeyfield principles of independent community housing and living - residents should be encouraged to limit interactions and engagement with others outside of the house, and remain at an Abbeyfield house and be asked to self-isolate as much as possible. Residents should avoid large gatherings, busy areas and follow social distancing protocols and adhere to previously recommended personal hygiene standards.

If a resident has recently travelled overseas, or has been in contact with someone who has contracted COVID-19, they should self-isolate themselves in their room for 14 days.

During this time, meals should be delivered to the resident's room. The housekeeper should avoid close contact with the resident and should wear gloves when handling the resident's meal tray, plates and cutlery, and wash their hands before and after wearing gloves.

- If a resident develops symptoms, phone the National Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080. If they need to visit their GP or an emergency health centre, they should phone ahead of their visit and mention that they may have COVID-19.
- If they develop serious symptoms such as difficulty breathing, you should call 000 and ask for an ambulance, and tell the operator that they may have COVID-19.

Abbeyfield housekeepers, staff, committee illness and isolation

Likewise, outside of the Abbeyfield work environment, housekeepers, staff and active committee members and volunteers should avoid large gatherings, busy areas and follow social distancing protocols.

- If a housekeeper has recently travelled overseas or been in contact with someone who has contracted COVID-19, they should let the house committee know and self-isolate themselves in their own home for 14 days.
- Housekeepers who have symptoms of COVID-19 should let the house committee know immediately and seek advice from their GP or an emergency health centre, they should phone ahead of their visit and say they might have COVID-19.
- They should also record their illness on the staff sickness register.



Abbeyfield Australia must also be immediately notified of any suspected or actual COVID-19 outbreak or case of a resident, housekeeper, committee member or volunteer

Contingency planning

Abbeyfield Australia is also considering next steps and contingency planning in case of a COVID-19 outbreak, incident or case occurs at an Abbeyfield house.

Each situation and house will differ and we will be guided by government and health authorities' specific advice in case this occurs.

Measures may include individual hospitalisation, lockdown of the entire house, emergency relief housekeepers, delivery of meals to the house - any situation will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Shortage of essential supplies

We understand that some Abbeyfield houses are running low on some basic and essential supplies. Abbeyfield Australia is assisting to help those houses with access to supplies.

If you have an oversupply of any item that you can share among the Abbeyfield house family, please let Nancy know and she can coordinate.

If your Abbeyfield house is struggling for supplies, please contact Nancy.

Where can I get more information?

Visit the Australian Government Department of Health homepage at www.health.gov.au

Call the National Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080.

Contact your state or territory public health agency:

- ACT call 02 5124 9213 during business hours or (02) 9962 4155 after hours
- NSW call 1300 066 055
- SA call 1300 232 272
- Tas call 1800 671 738
- Vic call 1300 651 160

18 March 2020