



29th July, 2020

Dear Residents, Family and Friends,

COVID-19 UPDATE

Firstly, I wish to thank all the people (elders, family, friends, and staff) who continue to support us during these rather challenging times; your support is invaluable, and the many notes received is truly the wind beneath our wings.

Although those of us choosing the retirement and aged care sector as our career path have learned over time that our choices are subject to a vast array of press and comment both positive and negative. I do not deny that some of the negative comment and negative publicity is true and very much deserved as not all providers have historically placed our wonderful and vulnerable elders at the forefront of their business however this is a new dynamic we are all facing and it is these people who are at most risk.

Some statements in the media are disheartening and do not truly reflect the immediate impact and possible spread patterns that one positive case can have in the communal environment of aged care; this virus is incredibly virulent and in such an environment almost uncontrollable. Caring and applying the stringent infection control processes in a home of over 100 people can be problematic, requires a systematic and didactic approach and takes time to implement; time that is best provided through being able to access the public hospital and health resources and expertise.

In April I wrote the following and it remains true today:

“The NSW Chief Medical Officer has stated and I agree that treatment options for COVID-19 and the availability of acute care treatment options need to be aligned to the individual elders wishes; in our case we look to our elders wishes as outlined in their Advanced Care Plan and be assured we will also always consult at the time with nominated family members, the persons treating doctor and at JMV we involve the Rapid Response Team from RNSH also. This ensures you have the best medical advice to assist in your decision making. The Chief Medical Officer has stated that acute care will not be denied if this is the decision/option you choose.

The advice regarding caring for people within the aged care home rather than the acute care hospitals is based on the medical data that is available to us. Aged people with COVID-19 especially those over the age of 70 with existing co-morbidities have an increased likelihood of death. A devastating outcome for everyone and one that we are working tirelessly to prevent”.

As I have outlined in previous communications, we have a developed and implemented plan for the preventative strategies and actions required to minimise the risk of an outbreak at JMV and the strategies and actions required for the management of an outbreak.

We have quite a regimented regime of health checks for all stakeholders; 100% of staff are vaccinated against influenza; our staff undergo health checks daily at the commencement of shifts; COVID-19 testing 3-4 weekly; our staff do not work at other locations and are supported to remain healthy and safe; our elders undergo testing and isolation as and when required; visitors are subject to health checks and the requirement to have a current influenza vaccination.

We hold a stockpile of PPE and all staff have received and continue to receive training in the use of PPE; we have partnered contracted suppliers able to provide us with additional medical requirements and we have a nominated area that can serve as an isolation and treatment unit. The other essential factor to this plan is the full consultation with elders, family, treating doctors, public health experts and the ability for us to access the public hospital system for those people with COVID-19 as and when required.

This week has evidenced several outcomes within the aged care operative space; the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission has provided support to the aged care sector Peak Bodies Guiding Principles for Residential Aged Care – Keeping Victorian Residents and Workers Safe document (released on 22 July 2020) and has endorsed the approach to be adopted across other states and territories (the document can be sourced at the following link: https://mcusercontent.com/1108de8332cef333bc1956686/files/a3e4a0cf-b3b3-4baf-bd3c-3a8d851ce36a/Guiding_Principles_for_residential_aged_care_keeping_Victorian_residents_and_workers_safe_22_July_2020.pdf) and the Aged Care Royal Commission has released a media release outlining the details of a hearing dedicated to the responses by the aged care sector to COVID-19 and the effect of those responses on aged care services is being held from 10 to 13 August 2020 (the media release can be accessed at the following link: <https://agedcare.royalcommission.gov.au/news-and-media/hearing-examine-evolving-impact-covid-19-aged-care>).

I truly believe that the safety of elders and staff in residential aged care and retirement living is the highest priority for all Approved Providers and Operators.

Finally, can I again ask that we all maintain every day the only measures that we all have at present to minimise the risk to everyone and the spread of COVID-19; Social Distancing; Hand Hygiene and Staying Home unless attending appointments, work or exercise and please wear a mask when social distancing cannot be maintained.

Thank you and as always take care

Jennifer