

3 September 2020

**COVID-19 PREPAREDNESS – A MESSAGE TO VICTORIAN RESIDENTS AND FAMILIES FROM UNITING AGEWELL CEO ANDREW KINNERSLY**

There is no doubt this has been an incredibly difficult year for all. The impact of COVID-19 has been far reaching and challenged each of us in different ways. It has been particularly difficult for those associated with residential aged care; whether as a resident, family member, staff member, volunteer or service provider. It has understandably caused anxiety, concern, distress and frustration. It has also shown us how resilient, adaptive and positive we can all be.

I want to take this opportunity to thank you all for your patience and understanding as we have implemented the changes and restrictions needed to keep the people in our care and our staff safe. It has certainly been an extreme situation, yet the overwhelming support we have received from residents and their families, and the commitment and loyalty of our staff, has been extraordinary.

All Uniting AgeWell residential care facilities have so far remained free of COVID-19. And while we have had some staff exposed through community transmission triggering an outbreak management response at five facilities, there has been no transmission to any residents or staff within those facilities which of course is a great relief to us all.

We know that other aged care facilities in Victoria and New South Wales have not been as fortunate and our thoughts and prayers go out to the residents, families and staff at those facilities. There has been significant media coverage and political debate over the outbreaks in residential aged care and whether aged care providers are adequately prepared.

The Uniting AgeWell Board and Executive made a decision very early in the pandemic to invest heavily in our infection management and control protocols, in additional staffing and training, and in technology to keep the people in our care safe and connected with family and friends. We have taken an uncompromising approach to resident health, safety and wellbeing and have invested well over and above the funding allocation received from Government to ensure this outcome. We will continue to do whatever is needed to keep everyone safe.

While I firmly believe the precautionary measures and outbreak management plans Uniting AgeWell has in place have been instrumental in our facilities remaining COVID-free to date, we continue to review and strengthen our processes and maintain our vigilant approach.

The feedback we have received from unannounced external audits specifically focussed on COVID-19 preparedness and conducted by the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission, the Department of Health & Human Services Public Health Unit and the Victorian Aged Care Response Centre (VACRC) Prevention Team, has reassuringly validated our preparations, capacity and approach.

**Corporate Services**

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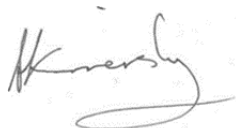
We remain hopeful that community transmission of COVID-19 will continue to decrease and that the Stage 4 restrictions in greater metropolitan Melbourne and Stage 3 restrictions in regional Victoria will be eased in the coming weeks.

These restrictions are hard for every one and as we approach Father's Day, I know many of you will be feeling this more keenly. Our hearts go out to all who will be unable to gather as a family on Sunday, but rest assured our teams will be doing everything they possibly can to make it a special and meaningful day.

As always, we encourage you to connect with your loved ones through phone calls, video calls, letters and emails. If at any time you have any queries or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact your Residential Services Manager.

Again, thank you for your ongoing support and understanding and I sincerely hope to be in a position where I can write to you to advise of eased restrictions.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kinnersly', with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

**Andrew Kinnersly**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Uniting AgeWell**