



14 September 2020

### **To family and friends of residents.**

It is pleasing to see that the number of COVID 19 cases in Victoria has reduced to double digits, and that the Victorian Government has announced the 'road map for reopening'. From 13 September 2020 in line with the second step, public gatherings of up to five people from a maximum of two households are permitted outdoors for social interaction.

Princes Court Homes acknowledges this exciting step although we still exercise cautious on our approach and we continue to ensure that our practices and processes limit the resident's exposure to COVID entering our premises. Furthermore, the Department of Health and Human services restricts us opening our premises to visitors.

I know that it has been difficult for you and also the residents, as we navigate between keeping residents safe and emotionally content, adhering to the regulatory requirements, allowing their family to continue to connect, at the same time being prepared in the event of a positive COVID case and I thank you for your patience.

The letter today is to let you know what is planned for our staged return to visitors.

### **Technology visits**

Firstly, we will still be organising communication through technology, at set times, to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to connect. This has been very popular with residents and will continue into the future, as it has allowed residents to not only communicate with local family, but also those who are located in other parts of Australia and overseas.

### **Step 2**

From Thursday 17 September 2020, we will be allowing families to see residents for pre-arranged fence visits, weather permitting. To ensure that we keep within the guidelines for Step 2 (five people in an outdoor location) and that the COVID 19 protocols remain in place with social distancing, we can facilitate no more than two family groups at the one time (no more than two people for each resident).

If you would like to visit, please book through reception on 03 50221022 or email [info@princescourt.com.au](mailto:info@princescourt.com.au). Then we can make sure that residents are available at the appropriate time.

Please only one visit per week to allow all residents to have the opportunity to see their families.

If you have already booked a technology visit and would still like to connect, you do not need to anything. If you would like to cancel this for a fence visit, please contact us.

Please ensure that you:

- Meet normal health requirements in that if you are unwell, please do not visit.
- Have not had known contact in the last 14 days with a person who is a confirmed case of coronavirus.
- Have not travelled from any of the COVID 19 hotspots.
- Make sure that you wear a mask and that hand hygiene is adhered to.
- Stay over 1.5 metres physical distance from the residents and also other families.
- Do not pass any objects through the gate.

Times will be:

- Monday, Tuesday 9.30 – 11.30 am
- Wednesday 1.30 – 3.30 pm
- Thursday, Friday and Saturday 9.30 to 11.30 am.

### **Step 3**

When the State Government announces transition to the third step, we will still provide the coordinated times above for residents and they will be taken by staff to the fence.

In addition to this, once the third step is announced, if you are able to communicate with your family member independently and assistance from staff is not required, meetings at the gate will be allowed outside the visitor times above. We do ask you to contact reception and provide the approximate time however, so we do not have too many visitors at the one time, we can be more informed and can alleviate any issues before they arise.

Like all aged care facilities, we are currently only permitted to have visitors within the facility for very limited reasons, as we are required to follow the State visitor restrictions (refer to the DHHS website for further details in relation to visitor guidelines). This is not a choice for Princes Court Homes and we appreciate that this has been difficult. As the Victoria Government release further details into the 'road map for reopening', the rules and regulations that we are governed by will change and we will adapt in line with the requirements.

### ***Extenuating Circumstances***

At times of high need for a resident, visitors will still be supported to enter Princess Court under strict regulation and supervision. This includes palliative care.

## **What plans we have if COVID 19 positive case occurs**

The staff at Princes Court are still on full alert and taking every precaution to reduce the risk of COVID 19 entering the facility. We need to continue to be ready and fully prepared, as the potential risk of a positive coronavirus test will be present for some time to come. Apart from what we are doing internally, there are new organisations involved, additional audits have been undertaken and further planning completed. To keep you informed on this, these are:

- The leadership team continue to update the extensive outbreak plan as regulations change and more information becomes available.
- We have further consolidated the plan for the first 24 hours if a resident or a staff member's test is positive to COVID 19. We have undertaken a scenario planning exercise that helped us to determine where the gaps were and allowing staff to be ready to respond.
- We are constantly updating our processes from lessons learnt from other aged care facilities that have experienced a coronavirus outbreak.
- A communication team has been established with members of staff and also board members volunteering to be involved. We want to ensure that the information you need to know is made available and that you will be able to communicate with individuals at the facility as required, if an outbreak occurs.
- The Department of Health, both Federal and State are ready to provide assistance. An experienced representative from the Public Health Unit of Department of Health and Human Services will be available on the ground to provide valuable support if a case arises.
- The Loddon Mallee Residential Care Services & Aged Care Cluster has been established for North West Victoria to provide a more localised response. This involves residential aged care facilities and health care services who are guiding and supporting us in preparedness and will help to coordinate efforts in responding to outbreaks in aged care. They provide an agreed way to contact and work together across regional organisations to understand the capacity and resources required to manage outbreaks.
- The Victorian Aged Care Response Centre has been established as a joint arrangement between the federal and state governments, bringing together more than 80 staff from 22 agencies.

## **Staff precautions - Use of Eye protection**

I cannot thank the staff enough for the commitment and additional effort they are providing in this challenging time. As I said in the last letter, Princes Court is a home away from home for staff and an important part of their lives and they genuinely care for the residents. They are still ultra-careful to ensure hygiene habits apply both at work and away, in addition to the myriad of further processes they are now undertaking, they are wearing either visors or goggles when at the facility. This provides an additional layer of protection for the residents and also the staff individually.

## **Staff precautions – Training**

Staff continue to undertake training and development. The leadership group is constantly involved in relevant webinars and training to be ready. All staff are undertaking training in wearing protective clothing (donning and doffing PPE), procedures that would need to be followed including cleaning and stepped approaches for all areas if a positive COVID case was present.

## **Our commitment to you if case arises**

As we indicated in the last letter, if a positive COVID 19 test arises, we will keep in contact with you through:

- Text to mobile within the first 30 minutes or as soon as practical. This text will be to the Medical Power of Attorney or nominated first contact. We do not have the capacity nor the knowledge to contact the extended family. We would hope that the nominated person would act as the family spokesperson and relay communication on our behalf.
- Contacting direct family nominated person of a resident with a positive COVID result, as soon as possible.
- Endeavour to be in contact directly by telephone to every family nominated contact within the first three hours.
- We will then send a blanket update twice daily to all families

## **Please be aware:**

- There will be many people who will be trying to contact Princes Court Homes, so unless urgent, please refrain from calling.
- We will keep you informed of what is occurring.
- We will keep the residents calm, as safe as possible and informed also.
- We will be working with new personnel from Department of Health and Human Services on site at Princes Court Home. So, there will be unfamiliar people involved. Please continue to be cordial to them.
- Current staff who will need to isolate will still be connecting with the facility and communicating with you. You may receive calls from numbers that are not familiar as Princes Court Homes. The caller will identify themselves and their role.

## **We need your help to double check mobile number for text**

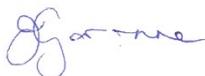
We need to make sure that your mobile phone number is absolutely correct, so a text will be sent to you soon. If you could please reply to confirm this, it would be appreciated. Those who don't respond will be followed up by phone for confirmation.

I would also like to alert or remind you all of the Older Person's Advocacy Network (<https://opan.com.au> or 1800 700 600). The organisation offers free, independent and confidential services that focus on supporting older people and their representatives. Apart from the telephone support, the organisation has been running some very informative webinars that may be of interest.

Again, if you have any concerns, or are anxious about your family member, please contact either Sue Zariko, Clinical Care Coordinator, Sianne Nicholds, Director Care Services or myself and we will be happy to discuss with you what is happening and ways that we can support you and your family member.

All the best and stay safe.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jenny Garonne'.

Jenny Garonne, CEO