

Dear families, friends and visitors,

No doubt you are now aware of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and will have come across the many stories, making headlines across the country every day. At Whiddon, we are committed to ensuring our residents, volunteers, families, team members and visitors live, work and visit an environment that is safe and places their interest first. In light of the current Coronavirus situation, we are listening to the experts and taking important actions to reduce the risk of exposure to the virus.

Our teams are always prepared for the flu season and understand the principles of universal infection control precautions. For years we have worked with a specialist organisation who has guided our teams and provided us with important resources in the management and prevention of outbreaks.

We will continue to work with the Department of Health and are well placed to respond to, and manage, any viral outbreaks in our homes. **The information below is very important and we ask you to take the time to read it through and share this with your family.** As a community, there are steps that we can all take together to control the spread of Coronavirus.

Important information on Coronavirus (COVID-19)

COVID-19 is a new strain of coronavirus that has not previously been identified in humans and scientists are still learning about how it is spread, its severity and other characteristics of the virus.

As the number of cases around the world continues to climb, it is important to monitor and follow advice from the Australian Government, NSW Health, QLD Health and the World Health Organisation, and take steps to control the spread of the virus.

Elderly people are vulnerable and at a higher risk of serious disease from COVID-19 and residential aged care facilities have been advised to have appropriate precautions in place to ensure residents continue to remain safe from coronavirus.

As a family member or visitor, it is important that you check the latest advice being issued by government authorities before you plan to visit an aged care home. These can be found at the following web sites:

<https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov>

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/alerts/Pages/coronavirus-faqs.aspx>

There are certain restrictions and advice in place for people who have travelled to high-risk countries or who have been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19. Please check these restrictions to see if any apply to you. Please note that these may be updated at any time, so it is important that you check the latest advice.

We ask that you help us to keep our residents, families, employees and visitors safe by taking steps such as regularly washing your hands, avoiding close contact with anyone with cold or flu-like symptoms and not visiting any aged care home if you are unwell.

As the flu season is just around the corner, we encourage you to speak with your GP early about getting a flu vaccination to protect you and your loved ones, and to continue to take precautions to control the spread of viruses.

Who is at most at risk for COVID-19?

The people most at risk of getting the virus are those who have:

- Recently been in **mainland China** or Iran (you should self-isolate for 14 days)
- **Italy or South Korea** (families, visitors and employees who have visited here, or transited through, will not be able to visit our homes for at least 14 days from the day of arrival back in Australia.
- **Japan, Mongolia** and other countries of interest, you should monitor your health for symptoms and visit your GP immediately if you develop symptoms.
- **Been in close contact** with someone who is a confirmed case of coronavirus

It is essential that you follow advice and any isolation requirements if you are at risk from any of the above.

Steps you can take to help limit the spread

- Make sure you clean your hands with soap and water, or an alcohol-based hand rub for at least 20 seconds
- Keep away from other people and cover your nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing with a tissue or a flexed elbow
- Avoid close contact with anyone with cold or flu-like symptoms
- Stay home if you are sick

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

People with COVID-19 may have a fever, cough, runny nose, shortness of breath and other symptoms. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia with severe acute respiratory distress. As always if you are unwell and concerned about your health please seek advice from a medical practitioner.

Please be advised that this communication is not meant to be alarmist, rather we just want to ensure that we are taking the best preventative steps to protect all those connected with our homes and services.