

Dear Whiddon residents and families,



You would have likely seen or heard information in the media around visitation in residential aged care homes in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. I am writing to provide an update on the visiting options that are available at Whiddon's care homes.

As you know, visits to our care homes have been restricted, to help protect our residents, employees and visitors from the spread of COVID-19. Everyone's health and safety is our highest priority. Many of you have provided feedback to myself, or to the Manager of the care home where your loved one lives. We thank you for your this feedback, and for your support of the measures we have taken up until this point. We know how difficult a time this is, and how important it is for the wellbeing of residents, that they stay connected to family and friends.

Update of Whiddon's visiting options and use of technology to stay connected

The Prime Minister in a statement two weeks ago, talked about providers enabling two visitors per resident a day. This has since been revised and a visiting code was circulated for consultation with providers, residents and family members. This code is expected to be finalised on 11 May and will be available on Whiddon's website at www.whiddon.com.au.

I want to reassure you that Whiddon's COVID-19 visitation policy is aligned with the principles of the new code. We are continually providing support for residents and family members to connect either on the telephone or via video calls, as often as we can.

We are also offering risk free visits, and have been facilitating these since mid-April. These visits involve meeting through a window or door space, with a fly screen or some form of non-permeable barrier in place. We have received positive feedback from family members and residents alike, that these visits have enabled them to celebrate special occasions and connect as often as possible in a safe way at this time.

In addition, we continue to offer compassionate visits to families, where residents are close to the end of life, experiencing distress due to being isolated from their family, or where family members take an active part in the daily care of their loved ones. These visits generally happen in the care home, or outside, depending on the resident's health status and preference.

We have introduced a booking system and visiting times for all our different types of visit, as we need to ensure that team members are available to assist your call or visit, to make it as enjoyable an experience as possible. We are also required to restrict the number of visitors to our homes at any one time. Please try and book well in advance so that we have the best chance of offering you the requested time and day of your visit. You can do this by contacting the care home directly, or by phoning our 1300 738 388 to be connected to the care home.

Please let the care home know if you can only visit out of visiting hours, and we will do our best to accommodate you. **With Mother's Day this weekend, if you haven't already booked a visit, please do so, to ensure our care home can manage the visit safely.**

To discuss these visiting options, please speak with the Manager of your care home if you have not been contacted about the options that are available. Please note that compassionate visits are limited to no more than two adults, for an appropriate duration. Risk free visits can include children if the care home can accommodate this, however, compassionate visits cannot include children under 16 years of age except under special circumstances, as this is a government directive.

New Checked In Care App

We are excited to launch a new app this week, called Checked In Care, as another important tool for residents and families to stay in touch. The app is free to use and available for smartphone and tablet devices. Once you have been registered, which you can do through Whiddon's website, you can share your latest family news and photos, and enjoy a video call with your loved one. Residents with devices can download the app and use it to make video calls, and if they don't have an appropriate device, we will help them access the app through one of our devices.

Screening measures and influenza vaccination requirements

Please also be aware that there are screening requirements for all visitors before they can enter our care homes. These obviously do not apply to virtual visits (through Skype, FaceTime or other forms of technology), but do apply to risk free visits, and in particular to compassionate visits, where visitors enter the care home.

There are a number of screening requirements for visitors to residential aged care homes, some of which have been legislated by the government. This includes the requirement for any visitor, employee or contractor to have had a 2020 flu vaccination as of 1 May 2020. Under the directives issued by all states and territories, combined with the decisions made by the National Cabinet, the Prime Minister announced on 18 March 2020, that all employees, visitors, health practitioners, contractors and volunteers must have an annual influenza vaccination. You can find further information around this legislative requirement on our website.

As previously advised, any visitors are required to show evidence of their vaccination status and will be issued with a Whiddon vaccination record card once their vaccination evidence documentation has been sighted. If you are unable to have an influenza vaccination for medical reasons, you will need to provide evidence of this from your GP and discuss this with the Manager of the care home.

Like many other providers, we have implemented screening measures for employees and visitors, to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in our care homes. This includes asking a series of risk related questions, such as if they have been in contact with someone with COVID-19, and if they are feeling unwell. To further strengthen this screening process, we have implemented temperature screening. Anyone with a temperature greater than 37.5 degrees will not be able to enter the home and asked to see their general practitioner.

This is an important measure to help keep everyone safe during these times - we thank you for your cooperation with these measures. If you are visiting our care homes, please help us keep everyone safe by adhering to social distancing guidelines and ensure you practice hand-washing rules. We can all make a difference together. We hope these visits bring you comfort and joy during this time and look forward to relaxing visitation restrictions as soon as it is safe to do so.

As the pandemic continues to evolve, we continue to review the situation and respond to government directives. I encourage you to regularly check our COVID-19 page on our website, along with our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/WhiddonCare/>, for our latest updates. If you have any questions on the above, please speak with the Care Manager.

Please stay safe and well,



Chris Mamarelis
Whiddon Chief Executive Officer