

# An update on Whiddon's response to COVID-19

The message below is taken from the video message prepared by Whiddon CEO Chris Mamarelis, available on our website and Facebook page. For your reference this update is relevant for the first week of August.



Hi Everyone,

While we have continued to send out regular updates via mail, email, text and online, given how quickly things are changing, I wanted to provide you with another video update. I also want to take this opportunity to say that our thoughts are with everyone in Victoria right now given the escalating situation, particularly everyone working in aged care, managing what is an extremely volatile and complicated situation.

Essentially, I want to bring you up to date with the latest changes in response to the COVID-19 virus and some of the actions being taken to protect all of our residents, community care clients and of course, all of our team members. *(For noting, this video is relevant as at Monday 3 August)*

I want to start by saying that to date, we have had no cases of COVID-19 reported at any of our homes. This is the result of an incredible amount of hard work by the team, difficult decisions that have been made, and of course, a lot of assistance and understanding shown by everyone connected with our homes.

Obviously the threat of COVID-19 remains a reality for all of us working and living in aged care, and their families, so we need to continue to do our best to be as proactive as we can while also responding to each and every challenge this pandemic brings.

As you are aware, we have put a number of restrictions in place in response to COVID.

Currently at our Glenfield campus, Easton Park, we have the strictest restrictions in place as directed by NSW Health. All of our team members must wear masks at all times while on duty and now Whiddon must seek authorisation from NSW Health to allow compassionate visits to occur. This policy has been applied across many homes in the region due to the number of active cases recorded in recent weeks.

In South East Queensland, due to the recent outbreak there, we have now had to implement increased restrictions on visitations and further bolster our infection control practices. Again, health directions are also being provided to Whiddon and other providers due to the increase in active cases in this area.

While these two regions are receiving a lot of focus due to the circumstances, we continue to review and modify our procedures across the entire group as circumstances change and I urge you to keep updated via our website [whiddon.com.au](https://whiddon.com.au), where you will find a COVID-19 update link on the main page.

Now with this said, all of our homes across NSW and Queensland have strict screening and visitation protocols in place. If we are in a position to support a visit to a loved one, you will require temperature checking, and be asked to undertake a series of pre-screening questions, which are extremely important given the circumstances. It's also crucial to understand that if you have any doubt about your health or potential exposure to the virus, please don't visit our homes. Our residents are extremely vulnerable to COVID-19 so we all have to work together to minimise the risk of infection.

Personal Protective Equipment or PPE, particularly surgical masks are getting a lot of attention in the media at present. So I wanted to let you know that we continue to follow the State and Federal guidelines in regard to the application of surgical masks. As mentioned earlier, in some of the higher risk areas that we service, employees in our homes and those working in Community Care must wear masks at all times. In other areas we have mandated that team members who work for other providers must also wear masks when on duty.

To support this we have received, and continue to order, thousands of additional masks to bolster our stock and keep the supply flowing. The Commonwealth is also providing access to an emergency stockpile if required.

In regards to Community Care, our team members continue to deliver our services to all of our clients and are also there for any additional assistance you may need at this time. We understand that the current situation brings with it anxiety, so please reach out to us if you require anything at all and we will also be getting in touch with you.

To all of our Village residents, please be aware of the heightened levels of risk in your particular locations as mentioned above and also remember to check for updates on our website or contact your Village Manager if you have any concerns. Again, we will be reaching out to you soon and continue to be there if you need anything at all. In line with government advice, if you live in the higher risk areas we recommend that you limit your social outings until the situation settles.

Now while a lot of these updates are concerning and focus on procedural matters, it is really important to understand that we remain very aware of the impact these changes are having on our residents and our team members as well.

Obviously COVID has brought with it a host of new issues that we have to manage daily, however as an organisation that really pioneered Relationship Based Care, we have remained focussed on our residents' wellbeing despite the circumstances.

Some of the initiatives introduced and developed during the pandemic include:

The introduction of the Checked in care App that easily supports video calls to your loved ones and we have seen a great take up of this application so please ask about it at our homes if you would like to access this service or again you can find more information on our website.

Where we cannot facilitate face to face visits we continue to support risk free visits.

At all of our homes, we continue to deliver some wonderful outcomes as at the end of the day this is what we are here for and we won't lose sight of this despite the circumstances.

We continue with our Dancewise programs across the group.

At our Glenfield campus the team have introduced the individual memoirs program to record the wonderful stories our residents have to tell.

At Narrabri, our residents are cooking up a storm as part of our Cooking Club.

At Grafton, the local school children have been corresponding with our residents, sending them messages of love and support.

We continue with exercise, cooking, gardening and internal arts and crafts programs and we are all really looking forward to a point, in the not too distant future, where we can begin working with our schools and preschools again and bring those wonderful children back into our home.

Finally I mentioned in my last update that on Friday 7th August we will celebrate **Aged Care Employee Day** - a National day created by Whiddon and now celebrated nationwide - this is a perfect time to recognise the people working in aged care. All of our team members are being sent a special gift and each service will be holding a celebration with our teams to thank them for the work they do. I urge you to get behind this special day this year more than ever. Whether you thank a team member personally, post a positive story on social media or in the paper or even call your local radio station - now is the time to recognise the incredible front line heroes who are caring for senior Australians, our loved ones, during this incredibly difficult time.

**Chris Mamarelis**  
Chief Executive Officer

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inspires and enriches lives every day.