

Tuesday 13 July 2021

Dear Family Members and Carers,

On Monday, 28 June 2021, the National Cabinet endorsed a decision to mandate the COVID-19 vaccination as a condition of employment for all residential aged care workers in aged care homes.

As a result of this decision, BaptistCare expects the NSW Government to issue a Health Order requiring all residential aged care workers to receive a first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine before Friday, 17 September 2021.

BaptistCare is strongly supportive of this decision, as we believe vaccination is an effective line of defence to protect vulnerable residents and staff from becoming seriously unwell from COVID-19.

As reported widely in the media, there are several reasons why vaccination rates in Australia have been slow to increase. Pleasingly we are starting to see an increase in vaccination uptake, with the Federal Government reporting just over 32% of the population at least partially vaccinated (at least one dose). Unfortunately, the aged care sector vaccination rate is reflective of the rates in the community. This is primarily due to the workforce not being prioritised for vaccination. As a result, staff are experiencing the same difficulties as the general population, including difficulty booking or getting to a vaccination centre, low supply, etc.

BaptistCare is actively working with staff to get vaccinated, and currently, 32% of our residential staff are vaccinated (first or second dose received).

We are pleased over 86% of our residents are fully vaccinated. Almost all residents have expressed a willingness to be vaccinated, and we are working with the government to finalise the vaccination process. We know a high vaccination rate among residents is a critical defensive mechanism in preventing serious illness should they contract COVID-19. With the anticipated Health Order from the NSW Government, we are looking forward to attaining the same high level of vaccination rates for our staff.

I would like to update you on the practical steps BaptistCare is taking to keep our homes as safe as possible for residents and staff.

### **1. Extra Personal Leave**

We have given all full-time and part-time staff an extra day of paid personal leave to enable them to receive the vaccination and manage any side effects after their vaccination.

We have given all casual staff one additional paid shift to enable them to receive the vaccination and manage any side effects after their vaccination.

## **2. Inhouse Vaccination Clinics**

We are delighted the recently announced Federal Government Roving In-Reach Service has confirmed they will visit two of our homes in the next fortnight. This service will vaccinate both residents and staff and is a positive move. We will continue to advocate for a broadening of this Federal Government initiative.

We are making enquiries with other providers regarding the possibility of joining in-house vaccination clinics in specific Sydney suburbs.

## **3. Reminders to Staff**

We continue to actively engage with and encourage all our staff to be vaccinated and inform us of their vaccination date.

We will keep you updated over the next few weeks on the progress of additional initiatives that may support a faster vaccination program for staff.

As always, if you experience any COVID-19 or flu-like symptoms, it is very important you do not visit the home. Get a COVID-19 test and self-isolate until you receive a negative test result and your symptoms resolve.

I encourage you to stay vigilant in all your hand hygiene and social distancing measures. Please continue wearing a surgical facemask inside our aged care homes and a facemask whenever you go out in public. Your health and safety are important to us, and we want you to stay safe.

Kind regards,



Allan Waters  
General Manager – Residential Services and Retirement Living