

Wednesday 22 December 2021

Dear residents, family & friends,

I am writing to update you on visiting and excursion arrangements for the following BaptistCare homes:

- Morven Gardens
- Aminya Centre
- Orana Centre
- Bethshan Gardens

Effective from 23 December 2021, we are recommencing visiting in these homes. We would like you to spend Christmas with your loved one if possible. **Please be aware, the situation at each home may change rapidly, and we may need to close a home on very short notice.**

Our recent decision to pause visiting for 72 hours was made in the face of rapidly escalating COVID-19 case numbers in the communities surrounding these homes.

Residents of aged care homes are some of the most vulnerable people in our society, even when fully vaccinated. We have been waiting for updated advice from NSW Health on the best way to keep residents safe. We are seeking to balance the safety of residents and staff with the risks posed by isolation from loved ones and the increasing risk of a COVID-19 outbreak in our homes.

Recent experience has shown that fully vaccinated residents generally have mild or no symptoms if they contract COVID-19, but this is not always the case. We must continue to take all reasonable measures to control the spread of COVID-19, including rapid antigen testing for staff and visitors, thorough screening at the point of entry, and good hygiene practices in the homes. We are pleased the vaccines are proving effective in reducing the severity of the illness, which is very reassuring.

Visiting arrangements

We ask that you consider the risks involved before deciding to visit an aged care home. If you do decide to visit in person, the following processes will be in place:

- Bookings must be made in advance through the Acuity Booking system to ensure we have sufficient staff in place to undertake the screening processes and that visitors are not all arriving simultaneously.
- Visitors must be willing to undertake a rapid antigen test at the point of entry if required.
- Only two visitors per resident per day are permitted, as governed by the current Public Health Order. A maximum of two children under 12 are also permitted, provided a fully vaccinated adult accompanies them.
- Visitors over 12 must be fully vaccinated and not experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms.
- Visitors are required to wear a mask provided by the home.
- The visit must occur in the resident's room or an outdoor area.

Visiting arrangements and home closures can be changed at very short notice. If positive cases of COVID-19 are found in the home, the Public Health teams will determine if an exposure or outbreak will be declared at the home. If an exposure or outbreak is declared, the home will be closed to visitors immediately, and we will notify you.

Care packages and gift drop offs

- You are welcome to drop off gifts at the home for your loved ones.
- Please make sure it is clearly marked with your loved one's name.
- Please only send non-perishable food that is fully sealed.

Excursion arrangements

With case numbers growing rapidly in the community, we strongly recommend residents remain within the home. We know some people plan to take their loved one out of the home over Christmas, and we ask that you consider the risks involved. Excursions from the home should only be to low-risk settings, preferably outdoors, and with good social distancing, hand hygiene and mask-wearing where possible.

If an exposure or outbreak is declared, the decision on whether or not residents can leave the home will be made by the Public Health authorities.

Current outbreaks

BaptistCare currently has two homes with active outbreaks:

- Warabrook Centre in Newcastle with residents and staff infected. At the time of writing, residents who have contracted COVID-19 have no symptoms or only mild symptoms.
- Warena Centre in Bangor with only staff infected at the time of writing.

BaptistCare has one home with active exposure:

- The Gracewood in Kellyville has been classified as an exposure site, with a single staff member testing positive at the time of writing.
- BaptistCare has also restricted visitors to the homes on the Macquarie Park site (Shalom, Coinda, and Dorothy Henderson Lodge) because of probable exposure. We are waiting on test results to confirm the position.

When an exposure or outbreak is declared at a home, routine visiting to the home ceases as steps are taken to prevent the spread of the disease.

In line with growing community transmission, we anticipate other homes will experience an exposure or outbreak in the coming weeks.

Summary

BaptistCare is doing all we can to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our aged care homes. With restrictions in the community significantly eased, case numbers are growing rapidly, and clinics providing PCR testing are under considerable pressure. We ask that you consider the risks involved when visiting or taking loved ones out of the home.

Thank you for your understanding and patience as we work through this evolving situation.

I'd like to take this opportunity to wish you all a safe and happy Christmas.

Sincerely,



Allan Waters
General Manager, Residential Services and Retirement Living