



8 May 2020

Operational Changes at Mercy Services Singleton

We acknowledge that every day, you trust us to take the best possible care of your loved one. Our dedication to meeting those expectations is unchanged in COVID19.

Because we want to keep our residents – including your loved one – as safe as possible, we are looking to adjust the way we operate to minimize risk. The longer we can keep COVID19 out of our facility (even if it's in our community) the safer your loved one will be.

We recently reached out to you about our lockdown arrangements. We did the same for our residents. So far, the overwhelming majority of our residents said they would prefer that the current arrangements to continue. There has been a similar level of support from our families for the closed doors, and there has been brilliant uptake of window visits, and an overwhelming response to our daily Facebook live videos.

Our residents remain as engaged as they ever were, and we have our community to thank for that. While the rest of us are waiting for restrictions to be lifted, residents remain able to move freely around their home, and we are planning to continue to offer some additional activities in the near future like bus rides to get out and see the world.

We are now starting to adjust a few things to further lower the risks of COVID19 entering the facility, but your loved one will continue to receive the same great care. We know you would keen to hear what is happening here, so while these changes won't impact your loved one, we want to keep you in the loop:

- For our staff, we are rearranging our teams, so that fewer staff are coming into contact with each other on shift. This will mean that if there is an outbreak, or if a staff member becomes unwell, far fewer staff will need to go into self isolation for 14 days (the mandatory period for a close contact with someone with COVID-19).
- Due to the potential for staff to go into self isolation, we have staff from our Home & Community Care team doing buddy shifts with AIN's. This will mean that if needed they can be called in and they will have at least met your loved one, and they know how we operate. These staff do the same role for Mercy Services just in people's homes.

- We are providing additional resources to staff to wear protective gowns before their shifts, to minimize the chance of their uniforms or clothing carrying the virus.
- We have arranged for regular proactive testing of staff, so that they can get tested for COVID19 despite not having symptoms. We know that people can carry COVID19 without showing symptoms, so by having this available, we have a far greater chance of catching a positive case before their next shift.

We are in regular in contact with both NSW and Commonwealth Health Departments about ongoing developments so we will continue to prepare for a potential outbreak which may mean putting in place similar things to those listed above.

Our residents know our staff. Our staff know our residents and know what our residents love, loathe, and everything in between. The longer we can keep our workforce clear of COVID19, the longer we can continue the 'normal' your loved ones know and expect.

We are acutely aware that we need to strike a balance with how we communicate with our community of residents and families. If we are telling you too much, or too little, we would appreciate the feedback. I will call each family over the next week to check in with you and answer any questions you have.

If you have any questions or concerns in the meantime, you are of course most welcome to contact me. I can be contacted on (02) 6572 2499, or email on leesa.bigham@mercyservices.org.au.

Yours sincerely



Leesa Bigham
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