



Senator Katy Gallagher
Chair
Senate Select Committee on COVID-19
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Senator Gallagher

I wish to provide additional information to add to the record of the hearings on 4 August 2020 of the Senate Select Committee on COVID-19 (the Committee).

Further to the advice I provided to the Committee as detailed on page 8 of the enclosed transcript, I wish to inform the Committee that I have become aware that on Friday, 10 July 2020, St Basil's Home for the Aged in Victoria (St Basil's) responded to our Assessment Contact Program (telephone survey). During this telephone call, the St Basil's representative provided information that one staff member of the service was diagnosed with COVID-19 on 8 July 2020 and the Public Health Unit (PHU) had been advised.

The Commission is not the first responder to an outbreak in an aged care facility. The telephone contact was part of a specially designed activity by the Commission to contact every residential aged care service in Victoria and metropolitan Sydney to seek assurances from providers that COVID-19 response plans had been developed and were ready for immediate activation.

The regulatory official from the Commission who made the assessment contact referred the service's responses to the Commission's COVID-19 Response Team and this information was escalated internally and recorded in the Commission's daily COVID-19 confirmed case tracker.

The Commission did not escalate the matter externally at the time because the St Basil's representative had confirmed in the interview that they had advised the PHU of the outbreak. The representative also confirmed that they had read the "First 24 hours" document.

The process required for a provider to notify of an outbreak is set out in the Commonwealth Department of Health document "First 24 hours – Managing COVID-19 in a residential aged care facility" (published on 29 June 2020). The four actions listed under "First 30 minutes" are:

1. Isolate and inform the COVID-19 positive case(s)
2. Contact your local Public Health Unit (PHU)
3. Contact the Commonwealth Department of Health
4. Lockdown the residential aged care facility.

The Commission was subsequently advised about the outbreak at St Basil's by the Commonwealth Department of Health on 14 July 2020.

To manage any risks of provider failure to notify the relevant authorities of a COVID-19 outbreak, the Commission now has arrangements in place to confirm immediately with the Commonwealth Department of Health that they have been directly notified by the affected aged care service of any outbreak at that service that comes to the Commission's attention by whatever means.

I hope this information clarifies the situation.

Yours sincerely

J. M. Anderson

Janet Anderson PSM
Commissioner

7 August 2020

Enc. Proof Committee Hansard – Senate Select Committee on COVID-19 – 4 August 2020