



**Friday 20 November**

Dear aged care provider in SA

I am writing to you in the context of the recent cases of community transmission of COVID-19 in South Australia, including positive cases for residential aged care staff. These worrying developments, together with the lockdown measures announced by the South Australian Government on 18 November 2020, are a clear prompt for immediate action in the aged care sector. It is incumbent on all approved providers of aged care services to redouble their efforts to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission for aged care staff and consumers and ensure the continued delivery of quality care and safety for all consumers.

The Commission is closely monitoring the situation in South Australia and has been proactively undertaking a program of telephone assessment contacts since 16 November 2020 to check the preparedness of all residential services for COVID-19 outbreaks. This program will be extended to contacting home service providers from 20 November. Where issues and risks are identified, follow up action will be undertaken to ensure that services can rapidly rectify any deficiencies. I encourage all approved providers to refresh their understanding of outbreak management planning (guidance specific to residential services is available here: [Preparing for COVID-19 in residential aged care](#)). The thoroughness of your preparation for a possible outbreak is crucial to successful outcomes for your consumers and staff.

The telephone assessments being conducted by the Commission as the national aged care regulator complement our program of infection control spot checks at South Australian residential aged care services. To date, 75 monitoring visits have been conducted on site with providers to understand their preparedness for an outbreak of COVID-19. These monitoring visits are set to continue.

The mandatory lockdown of all residential aged care services as directed by the South Australian government is aimed at minimising the risk of transmission into services. Lockdown, however, comes with risks to the psycho-social health, nutrition and physical conditioning of frail, older people in aged care. I encourage all approved providers to understand these impacts by reading [Healthcare of older Australians impacted by COVID-19](#). I also expect that all approved providers will have in place arrangements to ensure that residents maintain contact with their families and loved ones during the lockdown period. Please review the Commission's resources for managing restrictions at [Visitor restrictions for residential aged care services](#).

The Commission is working together with the Commonwealth Department of Health and the South Australian Department of Health, including infectious disease and clinical experts, to ensure that we are jointly prepared to respond to any outbreak in South Australian aged care services. The Commission remains prepared to fully exercise our regulatory authority to mitigate the risk to residents and staff at services experiencing an outbreak. We will continue to use our powers to ensure that providers meet their obligations with respect to the Aged Care Quality Standards, and to implement all necessary steps to minimise the risks of transmission of the virus consistent with the advice of health authorities.

If there are concerns about the care of residents or the actions of specific services in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, complaints can be made via the Commission's website [www.agedcarequality.gov.au](http://www.agedcarequality.gov.au) or by calling 1800 951 822.

Yours sincerely,

Janet Anderson PSM  
Commissioner

