

# COVID-19

# RURAL AND REMOTE RESPONSE

## Media release

30 July 2020

### Doctors warn families: prepare now for rural aged care lockdowns

Australia's peak rural medical bodies say now is an ideal time for families to ensure their relatives in rural aged care facilities are well prepared for potential lockdowns in the weeks and months ahead.

The Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) and Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) said while lockdowns may not eventuate, it is better for families to be prepared early.

"Families should be aware that – if coronavirus is confirmed in a rural aged care facility – that facility will likely be placed in lockdown very quickly to protect residents" **ACRRM President, Dr Ewen McPhee, said.**

"We recommend that families speak with their relative's aged care facility about how they will manage COVID-positive patients, and the clinical pathways they will have in place for these patients.

"For example, will they initially be treated in-house or will they be transferred to hospital immediately?"

"And what will happen to other residents at the facility should a fellow resident test positive?"

"It is best to have these conversations now, because communication with management will become much harder should COVID-19 be confirmed at a facility."

**RDAA President, Dr John Hall, stressed families should work now to assess their relative's needs should their facility go into lockdown...and, in the worst case, contract COVID-19.**

"For example, if they go into lockdown, do they have a laptop with broadband or a smartphone they can use to keep in touch with you...and do they know how to use it?" he said.

"Do they need a stock of handwipes and hand sanitiser they can keep in their room for their own use?"

"We would also strongly suggest residents in aged care putting in place an Advanced Care Plan to help guide their clinical management should they contract COVID-19 and need intensive care.

"While the Plan may be over-ridden by COVID-19 Public Health Directives, it may guide decisions around things like intubation and life support.

"These are difficult conversations to have, but they are important – and your local doctor is there to assist."

**Dr Hall added it was important for relatives and staff entering aged care facilities to ensure they are being incredibly thorough with hand hygiene and infection control.**

"The chance of bringing the virus into these facilities is just too high to take short-cuts" he said.

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“Please ensure you are washing your hands thoroughly before entering and while inside an aged care facility, and strongly consider wearing a mask while there (even if it is not a legal requirement).

“And it goes without saying that, if you have even the mildest of symptoms, please stay away from the facility, get tested, and isolate until you get your result.”

Resources for developing an Advance Care Plan are available at [www.advancecareplanning.org.au](http://www.advancecareplanning.org.au).

Find more information on how to protect yourself, your family and community from COVID-19 at [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au).

Find a video from the Federal Department of Health on how to properly wear a mask here: <https://publish.viostream.com/play/bfxgwognhfmnn>.

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A high resolution photo of ACRRM President, Dr Ewen McPhee, is available here:

<https://www.rdaa.com.au/documents/item/968>

A high resolution photo of RDAA President, Dr John Hall, is available here:

<https://www.rdaa.com.au/documents/item/687>

A high resolution photo of Dr Adam Coltzau is available here:

<https://www.rdaa.com.au/documents/item/712>

**Available for interview:**

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Dr Ewen McPhee - ACRRM President

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