

COVID-19

RURAL AND REMOTE RESPONSE

Media release

12 August 2020

Growing Victorian death toll a warning bell for aged care providers everywhere

The rapid spread of COVID-19 through aged care settings in Victoria is an early warning bell for aged care providers everywhere to urgently assess their lines of defence against coronavirus, Australia's peak rural medical bodies said today.

The Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) and Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) have warned that now is the time for aged care facilities, regardless of their location and size, to critically review their current infection control protocols.

"It does not matter whether you are a large regional aged care facility, or a small community run setting in a country town – this virus will not discriminate" **said Dr Adam Coltzau, Clinical Lead for RDAA and ACRRM's COVID-19 Rural and Remote Response.**

"It only takes one infected visitor or staff member to bring the virus into your facility, and to inadvertently infect others, and you will have a major outbreak on your hands.

"Now is the time to review your infection control protocols to make sure they are the best they can be.

"We strongly commend the Victorian Government's decision to support private aged care facilities by providing Registered Nurses to increase clinical care capability, as well as strengthen infection control measures. We encourage other states to also facilitate these arrangements where necessary."

Dr Coltzau urged aged care providers to ensure that all staff and contractors have completed, or are completing, the Federal Government's [online infection control training module](#).

"This includes everyone from kitchen hands, cleaners and care workers through to permanent nurses and visiting doctors - even administrative staff who may not have direct contact with residents" he said.

"Now is also the time to review your treatment and transfer protocols, so action can be taken quickly should a resident become infected – and it is critical to inform the families of residents about these arrangements.

"Please also remind families about the need to maintain the highest standard of hand hygiene when visiting your facility. They should also consider wearing masks, even where state laws do not currently require it.

"And please keep reminding families and staff that they must stay away from your aged care facility if they have even the slightest symptoms of COVID-19 - and ensure they get tested.

"It is also the time to ensure that, if your facility does not have tablets or laptop devices to enable residents to video-call with their family in the event of a lockdown, this service is made available.

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“Now more than ever, vigilance and early preparation is vital in ensuring your aged care facility does not become the next hotspot for COVID-19.”

Find more information on how to protect yourself, your family and community from COVID-19 at 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/bfxgwognhhfmnn>.

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

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

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>

Available for interview:

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