



**SENATOR THE HON RICHARD COLBECK**

Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians

Minister for Youth and Sport

Dear Aged Care Providers,

Australia's aged care sector has responded incredibly well to the unprecedented challenges of COVID-19. You have all played a role in that, and I want to thank you, once again, for your hard work and continued determination to protect those in your care.

Australia's battle against COVID-19 is not yet over. We know the spread of COVID-19 presents a particular risk to senior Australians, so there is no room for complacency, even in communities where there is currently no community transmission. Without a vaccination, our best defence against COVID-19 is sustained and continued vigilance. This will be especially important as new waves of infection flare up across some postcodes.

Today I am urging all aged care providers to once again ensure your outbreak management plan is up to date and ready to be activated, if and when necessary. It is essential you remain alert to any staff or care recipients experiencing respiratory and flu like symptoms. Your workforce should be continually reminded that the best thing they can do for the vulnerable people they care for is to stay at home if they are unwell, even with very mild symptoms. In these circumstances, they should also get tested. The Department of Health (Department) has resources available to help you recognise COVID-19 symptoms and manage infection control.

I encourage you to ensure your staff complete the Department's online infection control training. It is also essential to continue to reinforce the importance of basic infection control protocols, including good hand hygiene, coughing etiquette, cleaning and disinfecting and maintaining social distancing.

While our focus is currently turned to Victoria, it is important for all of you, right across the country, to be ready to once again meet the risk of a COVID-19 outbreak. I would like to take this opportunity to remind all providers, including those grappling with the additional challenges of being in a Victorian COVID-19 hotspot, that there is a suite of resources available on the Department's website, including a new factsheet on what to do in the first 24 hours of an outbreak. In the event that you have a COVID-19 case or outbreak, the Department is here to help and support you. The new factsheet can be accessed at: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/first-24-hours-managing-covid-19-in-a-residential-aged-care-facility>.

Finally, I am very pleased to welcome the release of the updated Industry Code on Visiting Residential Aged Care Homes (Code). The Code has been revised to reflect the updated advice of the Australian Health Principal Protection Committee and community feedback. I strongly encourage you to review the updated Code, which can be found on the Council of the Ageing website at: [www.cota.org.au](http://www.cota.org.au).

Once again, thank you all for the work that you are doing in these exceptionally challenging times. By working together, and protecting our most vulnerable, we can win the fight against COVID-19.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Richard Colbeck". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

Richard Colbeck

07 JUL 2020