



PRESS RELEASE
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Urgent national co-ordination needed on COVID-19 to support rest homes and retirement villages

An urgent nationally co-ordinated response to COVID-19 is needed to support aged residential care facilities and retirement villages in the event of an outbreak, say the New Zealand Aged Care Association and the Retirement Villages Association.

Both organisations are frustrated at the lack of responsiveness from government and District Health Boards to their requests for urgent meetings around a co-ordinated response and the supply of critical medical supplies and safety equipment to support the sector.

“COVID-19 is known to afflict older people more than any other cohort. There have already been outbreaks in overseas rest homes and this shows the need for aged care providers and DHBs to work together in a nationally co-ordinated response,” says New Zealand Aged Care Association Chief Executive Simon Wallace.

“Our providers are well prepared for a normal viral outbreak such as influenza or norovirus, but COVID-19 may be on a bigger scale and require additional staff as well as specialist medical supplies and safety equipment over and above what they are prepared for.

“It’s in the interests of DHBs and the Ministry of Health to work with us on a co-ordinated response, helping ensure we can safely manage and care for any infected residents and prevent further pressure on hospitals. We’re part of the solution and urgently want action.”

Retirement Villages Association Executive Director John Collyns says retirement villages with an aged care facility on site would need to follow the same protocols as standalone aged residential care facilities - which could include isolation across the village.

“It’s critical that we have a nationally co-ordinated response and as yet, we’ve not seen any evidence of one. If one does exist, then we’re extremely disappointed that we haven’t been consulted.”

The Retirement Villages Association and the New Zealand Aged Care Association have formed a taskforce of key members and clinical advisers to act as a conduit between the wider sector and government agencies, Ministers and MPs.

“Our sectors represent more than 38,000 people in aged residential care facilities and a further 43,000 older people living in retirement villages,” says Mr Collyns.

“This taskforce is to ensure that government agencies, officials, Ministers and MPs are aware of the impact of COVID-19 on the residents and the sector and to ensure there is a clear nationally co-ordinated response in place.”

ENDS

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