



PRESS RELEASE

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Aged care sector welcomes Covid-19 cluster review report

The New Zealand Aged Care Association (NZACA) welcomes the findings of the Independent Review of Covid-19 Clusters in Aged Residential Care Facilities released today.

The review, commissioned by Director General of Health Dr Ashley Bloomfield immediately following classification of five clusters of Covid-19 in aged residential care facilities, makes recommendations on what was effective in managing the virus and what could be improved to avoid or better manage any similar future events.

NZACA Chief Executive Simon Wallace says the review's findings and recommendations are positive and constructive for the sector and the Ministry of Health (MOH).

"We welcome the review, particularly the acknowledgement by the MOH of the substantive work done by our sector to prevent and to manage Covid-19 outbreaks.

"We are pleased with the constructive and forward-looking recommendations on how aged residential care, the MOH, District Health Boards and Public Health Units can work together more effectively to improve any future response. And we want to be part of this.

"Many of these recommendations pick up on actions we have been calling for very early on including development of a nationally co-ordinated outbreak management plan, access to supplies of PPE, support for staff, testing and more. Indeed, the 14-day isolation period for new admissions and re-admissions of residents was an NZACA initiative.

"In fact, as the review points out the MOH's initial focus with the pandemic was on hospitals rather than aged residential care. In the absence of that early support we had to take a strong leadership role and believe it is important that the MOH continues to work closely with us."

Mr Wallace says the review also acknowledges the significant psychological burden on staff with fear and uncertainty, and public aggression and stigmatisation associated with their work.

“As the review acknowledges, a source of stress for staff was uncertainty around knowing who had the virus, and we repeatedly called for testing of all staff and residents to address this, which was denied by the Ministry.

“Out of more than 36,000 residents in 650 plus facilities around New Zealand, 39 were affected by COVID-19. Tragically, 16 of these residents died, but overall, as a sector we believe we have done our best given the unprecedented nature of this event and are very keen to work with health agencies on ensuring we do even better collectively.

“We know it hasn’t been easy for residents, family and whanau during lockdown, not being able to see each other directly, and we thank them for their understanding.”

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For more information

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