



MEDIA RELEASE

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Ministry of Health rest home guidance creates confusion

Rest home providers around New Zealand are frustrated and confused by the Ministry of Health's guidance to the sector that sits outside the traffic light system, says the New Zealand Aged Care Association (NZACA).

Simon Wallace, Chief Executive of the NZACA says the Ministry's Aged Residential Care COVID-19 Response Framework released yesterday does not align with the traffic light system.

Mr Wallace says under the system the Southern District Health Board is already looking to apply the lowest level of protection (green) under the Ministry of Health's system, even though nowhere else in the country is at that level under the traffic light system.

"We are working with the Ministry of Health to remove the confusion and go to a traffic light system consistent with every other sector in New Zealand."

Mr Wallace says on a positive note, rest homes however are ready to facilitate safe visits and outings across all settings, with appropriate infection prevention protocols in place.

"We know how difficult things have been for families, especially in Auckland, the Waikato and Northland where our rest homes have been under huge pressure from people wanting to visit their loved ones.

"We want them to be able to see their loved ones and want to assure them that we can do this safely."

Mr Wallace says the sector welcomes the Government's decision to fund rapid antigen testing for the sector, which members can choose to use as part of facilitating safe visiting and as a tool for monitoring residents and staff.

"The reality is that the aged residential care sector's response has kept our residents and staff safe as evidenced by scarce transmission in our rest homes during the current outbreak.

"We have proven protocols and measures in place that will continue to apply as we work to keep New Zealand's most vulnerable older people, their families and the staff who care for them safe."

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The New Zealand Aged Care Association (NZACA) is a not-for-profit, national membership organisation representing approximately 93%, or more than 37,000 beds, from New Zealand's aged residential care sector. The services our members provide include rest home, hospital, dementia, and psychogeriatric care, as well as short-term care