VICTORIA State Government

Tuesday, 28 July 2020

WORKING TOGETHER TO PROTECT OUR AGED CARE RESIDENTS

The stories emerging from some of Victoria's private aged care facilities in recent days have been deeply concerning and the Victorian Government and Commonwealth Government are working closely together to protect residents.

With more than 80 outbreaks and 764 active cases across private residential aged care facilities, some private providers are struggling to maintain staffing levels and basic standards of care.

State and federal government agencies are working through the Victorian Aged Care Response Centre to coordinate additional support for the sector. This will include deploying teams of public health experts and experienced nursing staff from Victorian hospitals to residential aged care facilities, ensuring there is appropriate oversight and care.

For some residents who have tested positive to coronavirus, it is no longer safe to keep them onsite and they will need to be transferred to hospitals so they can receive the care they need. Over 100 residents have already been moved to hospitals across Melbourne with plans in place for at least another 50 residents to be transferred over coming days.

In order to facilitate this increase in patients, all non-urgent Category 2 elective surgery across public and private hospitals in metropolitan Melbourne will be paused, to ensure our hospitals have the beds, equipment and staff available if aged care residents need to be transferred.

The decision on whether to transfer any aged care resident to hospital is made on a case by case basis, taking into account what is clinically best for the patient. These actions will ensure our hospitals are ready to take on more patients if that's what our on-the-ground health professionals determine is needed.

This announcement follows on from the recent decision to pause all Category 3 elective surgery in metropolitan Melbourne and reduce elective surgery lists across public and private hospitals.

There will be no changes to elective surgery in regional Victoria, but regional cases will continue to be monitored to ensure those hospitals have the resources and capacity they need to manage any increase in presentations.

Wherever possible, surgeries that have already been booked will proceed – but for the time being, only new Category 1 and the most urgent Category 2 surgeries will be booked. IVF treatments such as egg retrievals will be able to continue given the time critical nature of these procedures and minimal impact on hospital capacity.

Massive efforts across the health system mean more than 1,200 spaces for ICU and critical care beds have been created or upgraded so they are suitable for coronavirus patients. This includes almost 800 ICU beds that are ready to go, with hundreds more ready to be rapidly scaled up as needed.

Should the demand for ICU beds increase, plans are in place to convert a thousand more critical care spaces to treat coronavirus cases within our hospitals. This includes upgrading operating theatres, recovery and other ward areas, emergency department spaces, and if really required, more beds can be opened in modular facilities.

Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

"These private facilities are not run by the Victorian Government but that doesn't matter – these people are all Victorians and we will do everything we can to take care of them."

"The Commonwealth has asked for our help and that's exactly what they'll get – we will send in our public health teams, our nurses and other support staff to make sure residents are safe."

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Jenny Mikakos

"We're continuing to see high case numbers – particularly in our vulnerable elderly residents – and we need to ensure we have the beds and staff available if we need to transfer them out of aged care settings."

"Our fantastic healthcare staff will make sure anyone who needs urgent surgery will still be seen throughout this time and we'll resume our elective surgery blitz as soon as it's safe to do so, to catch up on everyone else."