



MEDIA RELEASE

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New Aged Care Visitor Access Code released for public consultation to balance Covid safety with dignity and respect

Australians are invited to consult on the revised Industry Code for Visiting Aged Care Homes, developed by 12 aged care consumer and provider organisations led by Council on the Ageing (COTA) Australia, to balance reasonable safety measures in aged care while respecting the rights of older Australians and their emotional wellbeing.

The sixth revision of the Code is informed by the National Plan to transition Australia's National COVID-19 Response and the shift towards highly targeted lockdowns.

It proposes that during a local outbreak aged care homes be classified into one of three categories, each with its own infection prevention and control measures: Code Green (minimal COVID-19 in the local government area), Code Orange (heightened risk due to COVID-19 in the local government area) or Code Red (an exposure or outbreak has occurred inside the Aged Care Home).

The Code also includes an 'Essential Visitor' policy which allows residents to designate one person who will always be permitted to visit them in person to provide essential physical and emotional care, regardless of outbreak status.

Australians can submit their feedback on the draft code by filling in the online form at www.cota.org.au/agedcarevisitors or www.agedservices.asn.au.

Ian Yates AM, Chief Executive of COTA Australia says:

"The aged care sector must find a reasonable balance between common sense safety precautions and the dignity and wellbeing of older Australians receiving care.

"Aged care consumer and provider peaks have been working throughout the pandemic to achieve a nationally consistent approach to aged care visitation, and have constantly revised the Code to respond to the latest health advice and the shifting reality of the pandemic.

"Going forward there will be Covid outbreaks across Australia, but aged care providers can't implement rolling lockdowns. I urge all Australians with experience of aged care, whether as a recipient, worker, or family member, to fill out the consultation form and have their say."

Paul Sadler, CEO of Aged and Community Services Australia says:

"COVID-19 is still circulating in the community and aged care will remain at the front line of the pandemic for some time. This makes the visitor's code extremely important to make it clear how to balance infection control measures with the kind of social supports that keep older people happy and healthy.

"Staff, older people and their friends and family must work together to keep everyone as safe as possible. We thank everyone for their understanding and hard work. It's been a huge effort through an extremely difficult period."

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