

**TO: RCH RESIDENTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS**

**FROM: CEO – Graham Reed**

**DATE: 17<sup>th</sup> April 2020**

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LHI's Pandemic Response Team met earlier this week to review recent advice and directives from our Health Authorities and to consider the effectiveness of the measures we have put in place to reduce the likelihood of an outbreak of COVID-19 within the LHI community.

The message from the World Health Organisation Director-General is clear that now is not the time to relax the restrictions that have been imposed across the world to prevent the spread of the virus. Our Prime Minister's message this week continued this theme of not being complacent even though Australia is doing much better than many other countries.

We did get a glimpse this week of just how infectious the coronavirus is with an intensive care nurse at the Royal Adelaide Hospital testing positive to the virus even though she was wearing full protective equipment. Examples such as this underline the importance of LHI's resolve to keep the virus out of our community, particularly our residential care homes, where we are caring for our most vulnerable community members.

One of the areas where there is an opportunity to change our protocol is in relation to family members being able to drop off gifts and personal items for residents. Previously we have restricted the items to flowers and cards however our clinicians have recommended that we can safely extend the list of allowable items to include freshly laundered clothing, books, toiletries and any other items that are able to be wiped down with a bactericidal wipe.

Under this new arrangement, family members can call into our reception area during business hours (8.30 am – 4.30 pm Monday to Friday) and leave items for their loved one. All items will need to be in a cardboard box or paper bag. The reception staff will accept the items and ensure that all items are wiped with a bactericidal wipe and stored safely before being delivered to the resident within 24 hours.

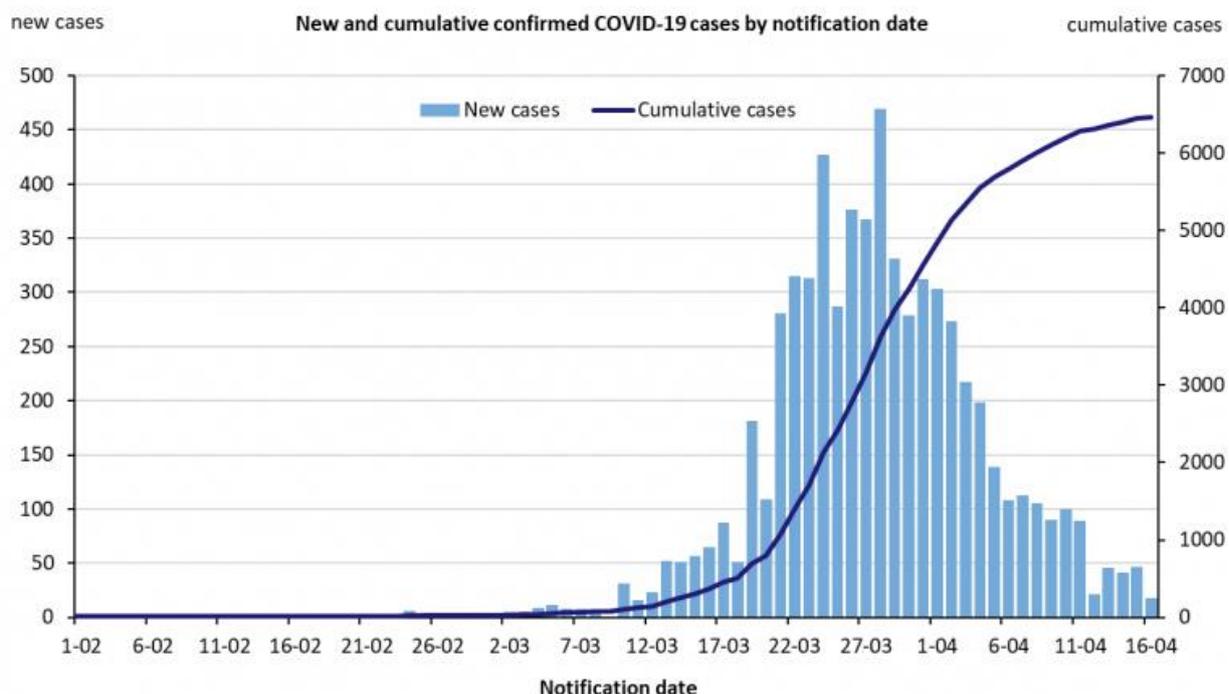
We will continue to review the restrictions on a weekly basis in line with the recommendations and Directions of our state and federal Health Authorities.

I would like to draw everyone's attention to the Department of Health Direction announced recently that all staff, visitors, health practitioners, volunteers and contractors entering a residential care home after 1<sup>st</sup> May 2020 must be vaccinated against seasonal influenza.

The only exception to this Direction applies to anyone who has a medical contraindication to the influenza vaccine (such as someone who has a history of anaphylaxis or has had Guillain-Barré Syndrome following vaccination, or who is taking check point inhibitor medication for cancer treatment).

Please ensure that you arrange to have the influenza vaccine as soon as possible as, apart from the above exceptions, no one will be allowed to enter our residential care homes even for “end of life support” without documented evidence that they have had the influenza vaccine.

One of my daily rituals in this new “COVID-19 world” is to review the Department of Health updates, particularly the chart below that reports the numbers of new and cumulative confirmed COVID-19 cases in Australia. In contrast to what is occurring in other parts of the world, it is encouraging that in Australia the daily number of new cases has been below 50 for the past 5 days, with the number trending downwards since the peak on 29<sup>th</sup> March – over two weeks ago.



On the basis of this trend, understandably, much of the conversation this week has been focussed on when the current restrictions can be lifted. The Prime Minister and Health Minister both guaranteed that the current restrictions will remain in place for at least the next four weeks. You may have heard the government’s 3 point plan to control the spread of the virus:

1. a broader testing regime
2. better contact tracing
3. containing outbreaks.

The other clear message for Australians is to continue to follow the advice of our Health Authorities for the benefit of everyone.

Personally, I have been incredibly impressed with the level of cooperation and support everyone in the LHI community, including families, have shown throughout these past few weeks. It has been a very difficult and stressful time – however I am very confident we will come out of this with a much clearer perspective on the real value of community and the significance of the relationships that give our lives meaning.

**Graham Reed**