



Australian Government

Department of Health and Aged Care

Chief Medical Officer

Dear aged care providers,

The festive season is here, and it's a special time of the year when we all look forward to being with family and friends.

Unfortunately, we are currently seeing an increase in COVID-19 transmission in the community which increases the risk to the vulnerable in our community and in higher risk settings such as aged care.

In line with the [National COVID-19 Community Protection Framework](#) for a COVID Safe Australia and the National Statement of Expectations on COVID-19 Management in Aged Care Settings, and in keeping with jurisdictional mandates and advice from your local Chief Health Officers, I encourage you to follow the strategies for higher community prevalence including:

- maintaining high standards of Infection Prevention and Control
- staff and visitor surveillance testing through rapid antigen testing (RAT) and screening for symptoms
- mask wearing (N95 or P2) when indoors or engaging with older people
- in consultation with health practitioners, facilitating in-reach PCR testing, if required
- activating and scaling up Outbreak Management Plans.

I also encourage you to reinforce the following protective actions to your staff, residents or care recipients and visitors, including

- ask visitors to wear a mask (N95 or P2) indoors and when visiting older people to reduce risk of transmission
- conduct visits outside or in well ventilated areas and be mindful of physical distancing
- advise visitors and staff to stay home if they feel unwell or test positive to COVID-19 and make another time for their visit
- have hand hygiene stations at entry and other easily accessible points for visitors and staff
- being up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations.

Early access to COVID-19 oral anti-virals can save lives so it remains important to plan ahead for these treatments. Please discuss advanced consent and assessment with your residents, families and primary care teams to help ensure rapid access to medication if required. These treatments save lives; they are safe, effective and available to all Australians aged 70 or over and those in high risk groups.

If we are all careful, we can minimise the spread of COVID-19 over the holiday season and make things as safe as possible for our older Australians.

Thank you for your continued hard work and dedication over the past three years - wishing you and your community all the best for the holiday season and the year ahead.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'PKelly', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Professor Paul Kelly
Chief Medical Officer

22 December 2022