

TO: All Murrumbidgee Media

DATE: Wednesday 8 April 2020

SUBJECT: Coronavirus (COVID-19) – VISITOR RESTRICTIONS

Murrumbidgee Local Health District has further tightened restrictions around visiting hours at its hospitals and MultiPurpose Services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“In the interests of the safety of our patients, residents and staff we have made the necessary decision to restrict visitor access to our health care facilities for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Chief Executive Jill Ludford.

From Wednesday, people will be asked not to visit aged care residents in any Murrumbidgee Local Health District aged care facility.

“We are finding ways to keep families and carers connected with residents through phone, post, email, FaceTime, WhatsApp or Skype,” said Ms Ludford. “Residents with special needs or who are palliative may be able to have one consistent visitor for short periods per day. This will be considered by the Facility Manager and visitors must meet screening requirements.”

Base Hospitals and other hospitals across the District will be implementing tighter controls around visiting patients.

Visitors to acute care patients in our hospitals will be restricted to less than 60 minutes during dedicated hours, and limited to one visitor per patient. Special consideration will be made for children, maternity patients and critically ill patients.

Visitors must be over 16 years and will also need to complete a COVID-19 Visitor Assessment form.

“We ask for our communities understanding and cooperation during this time.”

REMEMBER:

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, sore throat and dry cough. Symptoms will generally appear 3-4 days after exposure to the virus but can be up to 14 days later.

Members of the public are advised to minimise travel, increase personal awareness around hand hygiene and practice social distancing.

DO YOU NEED TO BE SCREENED?

Anyone who believes they have may have contracted the COVID-19 virus (ie: who have come in contact with a confirmed case or are showing symptoms: fever, sore throat, dry cough and shortness of breath) are advised in the first instance to:

- **Call the free-call coronavirus hotline 1800 022 222** and receive advice on the best course of action depending on your symptoms and risks. Medical staff will direct people to the nearest hospital or respiratory clinic, or advise them to stay home and self-monitor, or contact their GP, or
- **Contact your GP** to arrange an appointment (let GP practice know in advance if you have symptoms) or
- Call the **Murrumbidgee COVID-19 Hotline** on 1800 831 099 for assessment (7.00 am – 11.00 pm)

TIPS to reduce potential for virus transmission

Wash your hands regularly
Stay home as much as possible
Stop shaking hands, hugging, or kissing other people
Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces regularly
Avoid visiting vulnerable people, such as those in aged care facilities or hospitals.

MLHD and MPHNS encourage members of the public who need information to visit the NSW Health website at: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/diseases/Pages/coronavirus.aspx>

EDITORS NOTE:

The NSW Government announced a \$2.3 billion health boost and economic stimulus package to help tackle the COVID-19 outbreak last week.

NSW Health will receive \$700 million to assist in doubling ICU capacity, preparing for additional COVID-19 testing, purchasing additional ventilators and medical equipment, establishing acute respiratory clinics and bringing forward elective surgeries to private hospitals.