

WINEVVS

Coronavirus cases confirmed in 17 nursing homes in Australia — here's what we know

7.30 By Anne Connolly, Suzanne Dredge and Clare Blumer, ABC Investigations

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PHOTO: Five residents of Dorothy Henderson Lodge who were diagnosed with coronavirus have died. (Supplied: BaptistCare)

There have now been 41 residents and staff in 17 nursing homes diagnosed with COVID-19, the Federal Department of Health says.

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The numbers obtained exclusively by the ABC were updated on Thursday afternoon.

The figures show a rise by seven residents and staff and four affected nursing homes over the previous two days.

Aged care facilities in all Australian states have recorded infections, but there are no cases in Northern Territory or ACT nursing homes.

Annie Butler from the Australian Nurses and Midwifery Federation said governments should make it easier to find out which homes had recorded coronavirus infections.

"The people who need to know are all the people who are involved in that particular facility, the staff definitely have a right to know, the family have a right to know," she said.

The ABC has been working to confirm whether there are any nursing homes which had recorded infections that were not yet public.

Based on the figures provided by the Department of Health, there are 10 facilities that have not been named.

State health departments told the ABC they do not disclose the names of nursing homes that have recorded only one coronavirus infection.

Here are the states' tallies based on what we know so far.

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NSW: 30 cases in 7 facilities

The highest number of infections out of one facility is well known: BaptistCare's Dorothy Henderson Lodge in Sydney has had 16 residents and five staff in total with confirmed cases of COVID-19, with seven others who had contact with them also infected. Five residents have died.

One other cluster of cases in New South Wales, confirmed by the state's Department of Health, is at Opal Bankstown, with two residents and two staff infected.

The residents are in hospital and the workers are in self-isolation at home under medical advice, a spokeswoman for Opal says.

One resident at Opal Quakers Hill, which is also in Sydney, was confirmed positive on March 22, but had since returned two negative tests last week, the spokeswoman said.

Opal said no other homes had recorded cases.

NSW Health confirmed there were four more cases in four different homes in the state but did not disclose the names of facilities with single incidents.

"In these cases, there was concluded to be no ongoing health risk to other residents," a NSW Health spokesperson said.

"NSW Health is supporting the affected facilities in various ways, including providing clinical advice, tracing close contacts of the cases, and case management through the Public Health Units of local health districts."

Victoria: 2 cases in 2 facilities

On March 30, it was revealed a carer at a north-eastern Melbourne facility tested positive five days after working with aged care residents.

The Assisi Age Care centre at Rosanna sent an email to families saying the staffer had not shown symptoms until two days after her last shift at the home.

Assisi chief executive officer Paul Cohen told the ABC the residents who came into contact with the staff member had all been tested, with all results negative so far.

The staffer was "doing well", Mr Cohen said.

He said Assisi was monitoring residents, doing additional cleaning, temperature testing and had stopped all family visits.

"We are working with the department to source additional PPE [personal protective equipment]. Supplies are a challenge for our sector and globally, but we do have sufficient stocks for the time being," he said.

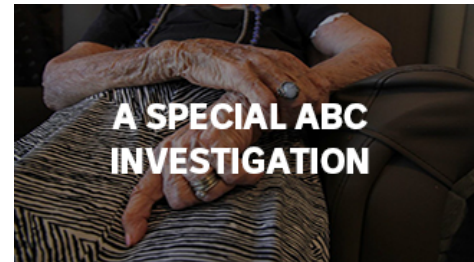
In another case in Melbourne, a visiting GP to Australian Unity facility Rathdowne Place tested positive to COVID-19.

Australian Unity told the ABC the GP was only onsite at the Carlton facility for two hours and had "minimal contact with our residents and employees".

One employee was self-isolating at home as a precautionary measure, and the home was given advice that people who had contact with the doctor "have an extremely low risk of transmission".

"The Public Health Unit also advised us that residents and employees will not require testing given the lack of close contact and as no-one is showing symptoms," the spokesperson said.

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"However, as an additional precautionary measure, we are monitoring the temperatures of all residents and employees as they commence their shifts, and we have added extra cleaning for the next few days, when it is more likely symptoms would show. "

WA: 1 case in 1 facility

The only coronavirus case recorded in a West Australian nursing home was a casual worker at the Aegis Ascot Transition Facility in Bayswater who had recently travelled to Hawaii.

After the case was confirmed, the Perth facility was locked down and residents put in quarantine for two weeks. There have been no new cases reported.

SA: 1 case in 1 facility

St Louis Aged Care in Adelaide confirmed a coronavirus case on March 20, with the facility saying the worker was asymptomatic when he came in contact with residents on his last shifts.

A statement from the facility at the time of the announcement said residents weren't showing symptoms, but would be closely monitored, with other staff in close contact with the infected worker placed in isolation for 14 days.

Queensland and Tasmania: unconfirmed cases

The Federal Department of Health reported the overall number of cases and homes implicated, and said Queensland and Tasmania had homes with infections.

Queensland Health said none of the 16 government-run aged care facilities had recorded cases of COVID-19, which means the case or cases have come from a private provider.

The department said it would not provide data for facilities it did not operate.

The Tasmanian Department of Health also did not confirm any cases in the state.

What the experts are saying about coronavirus:

- From a scientific point of view, the argument that it's a manufactured virus has been totally discredited
- "We're very lucky in the fact that the virus is pretty lousy at surviving on its own."

Topics: covid-19, aged-care, carers, health, emergency-care, infectious-diseases-other, older-people, sydney-2000, melbourne-3000, hobart-7000, brisbane-4000, adelaide-5000, perth-6000, australia