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Residents died neglected, scared and alone' while staff was struggling to identify them

More heartbreaking reports coming out of St Basils' inquest



Image of a body removed from St Basil's Homes for the Aged in Fawkner, Melbourne back in July 2020. Photo: AAP Image/Daniel Pockett

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As the inquest into the St Basil's Homes for the Aged tragedy continues, more harrowing testimonies from staff and relatives are being recorded.

In the 45 deaths being investigated, 35 cases have pushed the Greek Community further into grief while more evidence comes out before State Coroner John Cain.

Residents Ilias and Soula Trimbos who died within a week of each other after testing positive for coronavirus experienced complete neglect and lack of empathy while their families were seeking answers.

"They died in a horrific way – neglected, scared and all alone," Rachael Trimbos, expressing her grief for all of the 45 residents who passed from COVID-19 during Victoria's second wave outbreak.

"Residents weren't given a chance – they were let down by so many people,

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systems and politics.”

According to Ms Trimbos, after her mother tested positive on 12 July she was asymptomatic and doing well. As she was transferred to hospital on 24 July it was

revealed that her condition was dire.

She was “one of the sickest patients” in the COVID ward, a doctor at Epworth Hospital said.

Ms Trimbos also said that she had called nine times before someone even answered the phone and attempted to get someone to bring the late Mr Trimbos to his window so they could see him from outside.

Staff told the family her father been moved to hospital “for his own protection”.

Meanwhile, Glenferrie Private Hospital staff that night said that transfer paperwork showed he’d tested positive, but hadn’t received medication in five days and needed bathing, food and water.

The heartbreaking testimonies do not stop at the relatives of the residents but bleed into the claims of emergency staff, that were also affected by the facility’s mismanagement.

Nurse Angela Cox, who was transferred to lead a new team when regular staff were stood down as COVID-19 close contacts, said that the new workforce struggled to identify residents as the information provided by management was inadequate.

According to Ms Cox, director of nursing Vicki Kos refused to answer clinical questions and said she would only answer non-clinical questions – preferably by text or email – once a day.

“I did have to contact her about identifying a resident because the file didn’t represent where he was actually located in the facility and I couldn’t identify him from the photo,” told the Coroner..

Similarly, Ms Cox had to deal with staff pulling out due to “utter exhaustion” amidst fears over mismanagement and safety concerns such as plates and cutlery not being soaked before being taken back on food trolleys into the clean kitchen.

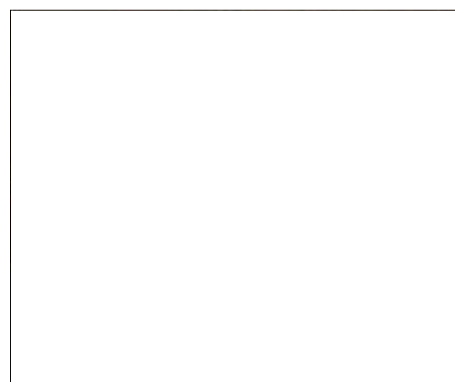
Director of Epworth’s medical services, Dr Luis Prado, took the stand later stressing that allowing end of life visitors is paramount offering his condolences to the families of five St Basil’s residents who were treated at Epworth, including the Trimbos family.

“Nobody dies alone at Epworth if we can stop it,” he said.

“There is a risk when they’re with their family of contracting COVID, but the emotional needs have to outweigh that infection control.”

“The staff remember your loved ones to this day – they told me this yesterday. They recall conversations with them and wanted to say they are thinking of your families,” Dr Prado said.

“For whatever it’s worth, its been our honour and privilege to help.”



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While Mrs Trimbos was at Epworth, her family struggled to find out what was happening to her husband who was “supposedly” still testing negative.

The inquest continues. More to come soon.

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