

Media Release

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TLC TO COMMENCE MANDATORY RAPID ANTIGEN TESTING



TLC Healthcare's CEO, Lou Pascuzzi

From September 9, TLC Healthcare (TLC) will be introducing a rapid antigen testing program at their 11 residential aged care homes located across Melbourne and Geelong. This program is a critical step in preparing for the changes that will be introduced when 80% of the Australian population is vaccinated against COVID-19.

TLC will be the first aged care provider in Australia to rapid antigen test every visitor to their homes, with the test taking around 10-15 minutes to complete. The rapid antigen test that TLC will utilise is 95% effective and has been approved by the TGA in Australia, and the FDA in the United States.

Any staff or contractors that are ineligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine will also take a test at the beginning of each shift, in addition to their fortnightly PCR test.

TLC's CEO, Lou Pascuzzi, says that this program will once again position them as the aged care industry leaders in the management of COVID-19.

"In the absence of any guidance on how the aged care sector should deal with the challenges of living with COVID-19 come November, TLC will once again be taking the initiative upon itself to implement proactive measures.

"TLC has been taking a measured and innovative approach to managing COVID-19 that has resulted in no staff or resident cases of COVID-19 in our residential aged care homes.

"Our approach has allowed TLC homes to welcome visitors for much of the pandemic; when there were no restrictions imposed by the Department of Health and it was safe to do so. This is despite 75% of TLC's locations being in Victoria's COVID-19 hot-spot areas.

"Rapid antigen testing of every visitor to a TLC home is a new concept, and it may take some getting used to, but we see this as an invaluable tool in minimising the risk of a COVID-19 outbreak amongst our very vulnerable residents. It will also allow TLC to minimise lockdowns, promoting

increased levels of safe access for family members to residents and a positive mental health influence on our residents and staff.”

Pascuzzi is also concerned about the absence of any detailed modelling on the risk faced by the 300,000 aged care residents across Australia when the community re-opens.

“The re-opening of Australia can’t come soon enough for many people. The Doherty Institute Modelling Report for National Cabinet forms the basis of the country’s road to recovery, but doesn’t specifically address the residential aged care sector.

“The report doesn’t take into consideration the high acuity, co-morbidities, and susceptibility to COVID-19 of the 300,000 Australians living in residential aged care; vaccinated or not.

“There is ambiguity in the report around effects of current and future variants of COVID-19, and the disease severity assumptions that don’t cater to high-risk environments such as residential aged care.

“I would urgently recommend that a more detailed report be compiled that contains modelling and recommendations specific to residential aged care, and the broader healthcare sector,” says Pascuzzi.

TLC has been at the forefront of COVID-19 management since the beginning of the pandemic. Their innovative approach has included:

- being the only residential aged care provider approved by the Department of Health to directly administer the COVID-19 vaccine to their residents, staff, and contractors
- achieving full double dose COVID-19 vaccination of all its eligible 2,000 staff and 1,600 residents by April 2021
- subsequently being appointed by the Department of Health to vaccinate thousands of aged care residents at other homes across Melbourne and Geelong
- the first Australian company to mandate COVID-19 vaccinations for all its eligible staff and contractors in March 2021
- eliminating staff working across multiple aged care homes and providers
- mandating influenza vaccinations for all eligible staff, contractors and visitors to TLC homes
- commencing a mandatory fortnightly asymptomatic COVID-19 PCR testing regime for all staff and contractors in April 2020
- mandating face masks for all TLC staff, contractors, and visitors from April 2020; despite AHPPC advice at the time conveying masks were ineffective
- reinforcing their supply chain for high-quality consumables and PPE, acquiring 6 months’ worth of stock in advance
- implementing a staff training regime to ensure that TLC COVID-19 management protocols are clearly understood and strictly adhered to
- implementing an effective contact tracing and hands-free temperature checking system, to identify anyone visiting a TLC location as of March 2020

- introducing a thermal camera imaging system and CCTV infrastructure that eliminated any black spots
- limiting third-party visits to TLC Aged Care homes to the Aged Care Quality & Safety Commission (ACQSC) only under strict entry criteria

“The National Ageing Research Institute report titled ‘Lessons learnt from the second wave of COVID-19 outbreaks in Victorian aged care services’ has highlighted just how on-point TLC’s response to COVID-19 has been. Back in early 2020, TLC was already implementing a raft of measures that have been proven to be effective by reports of this kind.

“With our rapid antigen testing program, TLC will once again be ahead of the industry when it comes to keeping our residents, staff, and contractors safe from COVID-19,” says Pascuzzi.

TLC operates 11 residential aged care homes, medical centres and registered training facilities located across Melbourne and Geelong. In 2022, TLC will be opening their latest development in the Melbourne suburb of Mordialloc that will offer 150 residential aged care places, a community medical centre, 120 place child care centre, commercial gym, and a swimming pool; all at one location.

For more information visit tlchealthcare.com.au

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