



# St Basil's Homes for the Aged in Victoria

ABN: 41 070 511 616

6 August 2020

Dear Relatives, Resident Representatives & St Basils Fawkner Visitors

We write to you to advise that yesterday, at 9 AM the Facility Manager together with the Unit Managers and other key employees, mostly Registered Nurses, returned to St Basil for the FIRST time since we were forced to leave at 9AM on Wednesday 22 July 2020, when ALL staff were all placed in quarantine and self-isolation due to the fact that they were considered to be close contacts. From that date forward the home was being run by Department of Health appointed contractors until the home was evacuated on Friday 28 July and the last few remaining residents were transferred to various hospitals.

The staff who returned have now tested negative twice in the last two Sundays and in addition they have completed their quarantine and self-isolation period. The entire premises have been deep cleaned and totally sanitised by contractors who were originally engaged by the Department of Health, who we have continued to use. The premises have now been declared safe for occupation and are COVID-19 free.

Despite the fact that the premises are declared safe for occupation they are far from "the home" that we left on Wednesday 22 July! The whole place is dishevelled and turned upside down and it will take some time to get it back into shape before we can consider the return of any residents. We are working closely with the Nursing Advisor who was appointed as requested by the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission and plans are being submitted for the safe repatriation of the residents who are ready and wish to return when we are ready to receive them.

***In that respect we have been requested to clarify that no residents will return to the home until the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission ( ACQSC) is satisfied with all actions implemented.***

In addition, we have also found some other disturbing facts

- Some residents' files are missing and that was reported to us last Monday 3 July by the Nurse Advisor appointed at the direction ACQSC, who also reported it at the same time to the ACQSC. We are told that the files were "most probably" sent with the residents at the chaos that ensued when mass evacuations were undertaken, when the condition of residents deteriorated and the home was totally evacuated. We will determine which files are missing and contact the hospitals where the residents with the missing files were sent and see if they can be located.
- The drug of addiction registers are incomplete and they have not been signed off from shift to shift as it is mandated. These were all handed over to the incoming staff, when we left the home, at 9 AM on Wednesday 22 July. There may also be drugs of addiction missing as record keeping appears to have been at best haphazard. We have reported the matter to the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency and we have requested them to come in urgently and investigate the matter and report to us.
- Initial and cursory examination by our key staff and our Registered Nurses who compile residents records at every shift and every day, 365 days of the year, indicate that the care of the residents was not properly documented during the fortnight that federal government contracted agencies managed the centre commencing from 9 AM on Wednesday 22 July. This is also the opinion of the Nurse Advisor appointed at the direction ACQSC who accompanied us yesterday and has been based at the home since Sunday 26 July.
- We have received requests for documentation from the Complaints Resolution Group of the ACQSC in respect of numerous complaints lodged with them and it appears that ***almost all of the complaints relate to the period after 9 AM on Wednesday 22 July.***

In view of the foregoing we have withdrawn all staff, with the exception of some key staff, from attending the home until Monday 10 August at the earliest.

In the intervening time and commencing on Friday morning we will proceed with verification and independent certification of all residents' records and files from the period commencing from 9 AM on Wednesday 22 July.

**All** records since that date will be copied and certified to be **a full and true copy of all the records in our possession** to eliminate any doubt and avoid any accusations that we are responsible for the lack of record keeping.

We have always strenuously denied that we and our staff have done anything wrong. We followed all protocols and infection control procedures and per guidelines including wearing of masks and PPE where mandated.

We reported **the first positive case of one staff member** to the government authorities on the day that we discovered it, on 9 July 2020 and within 30 minutes of becoming aware of it and we even sent a letter to all of the residents relatives the next day on 10 July informing them of what had occurred and advising them that we had followed all of the guidelines as recommended, including isolation of all staff and all residents exposed.

The letter can be found in the link <https://stbasilsvic.com.au/communications/>

We continued to provide regular updates to all residents' relatives every two days from 15 July 2020 onwards when we had more information to disseminate. All of the letters are posted at the same **link above**.

We were one of the first aged care homes to be hit by COVID-19 but we are now told that there are more than 100 homes battling this insidious silent virus which has devastated the whole of Melbourne to the point that we are now living under a State of Disaster. We have always maintained, and this has also been independently stated by the Prime Minister, The Minister of Aged Care and Heads of Departments, that what we are facing is a second wave of the pandemic of community transmission of the infection and the virus is being transmitted in the community and is brought into the homes by staff who are **asymptomatic**

We screened all of our staff and persons allowed to enter our home, such as allied health professionals and even doctors at the entry and at the commencement of every shift for symptoms and we even rejected entry to a doctor, who had a high temperature. All of the temperature recordings are documented and are available. We have camera vision showing the process at every shift where staff were only allowed to enter from one location (increased to two locations after the increased outbreak) so that we would not miss any staff member from the screening process.

We continue to deny all allegations against St Basil's and reiterate that we did nothing wrong until 9 AM on Wednesday 22 July when we left. We are backed on that by the statements that the Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer made on that fateful morning when Professor McMillan visited our home and is being quoted as saying "... I saw only excellent standards in that facility, and many staff who were very sad and disappointed at what had happened in the facility and they were required then to go and isolate for 14 days,". That article is also posted on the link above.

We fear that our residents did not receive proper treatment between 9 AM on Wednesday 22 July when we left and when they were sent to hospital. Our opinion is based on the inadequate records that we have seen and is further reinforced by the fact that it is reported that there were 18 complaints lodged against the home. From what we have seen all but one of the complaints are related **to poor care and communications delivered by the replacement workforce for the period after 9 AM on 22 July 2020**.

We also feel that the leaking of the proposed Coronial Investigations has been strategic in origin, with the sole aim to damage St Basil's reputation and cast doubts on our level of care which we defend fully. We have always co-operated with Coroner's requests that are conducted from time to time and **we will co-operate fully with any investigation**.

We are confident that St Basil's will be completely exonerated in any enquiry, but we are still devastated by what has happened and we mourn the passing of so many of our beloved residents who were looked after our staff from the day that they arrived in our home.

Thank you for your understanding and we wish that you and your family stay safe in these difficult times

Konstantin H Kontis



Chairman of the Board of St Basil's Homes for the Aged in Victoria