

## **‘This is an emergency situation’: aged care needs more Omicron support from National Cabinet**

Australian Aged Care Collaboration (AACC) says the exponential Omicron Covid-19 wave has knocked out a significant section of the aged care workforce. Many older Australians are dealing with anxiety and isolation, as more residential homes deal with outbreaks. Others will be put at risk by staff shortages.

AACC is calling on National Cabinet to take emergency measures:

- Consistent national rules to allow essential staff that are close contacts to provide care with appropriate PPE when alternative staff are not available.
- Increased investment in the aged care surge workforce which cannot meet current demand.
- Ensuring availability of free Rapid Antigen Testing kits for all residential and home aged care consumers, staff and their families.
- Giving all health care staff (including aged care) priority access for PCR tests.
- Updated guidelines to balance infection control and social supports so that triple vaccinated older people are not unnecessarily isolated during lockdowns.

This is an emergency situation. Two years of pandemic hardship had already put the aged care workforce on the brink, and older people at risk. The explosion in Omicron cases has left homes in lockdown and caused serious staff shortages across residential and home care.

We cannot pretend this won't have a serious effect on the older people in our care. The kind of tragedy that can eventuate from large numbers of workers being furloughed during the pandemic cannot be repeated.

Aged care providers cannot resolve this by ourselves. The federal government and National Cabinet must step in to guarantee quality care for older Australians.

The measures we have asked National Cabinet for are straightforward and realistic. There is no reason we cannot see a commitment to these measures when National Cabinet next meets.

### **About the Australian Aged Care Collaboration**

The AACC is a group of six aged care peak bodies: Aged & Community Services Australia (ACSA), Anglicare Australia, Baptist Care Australia, Catholic Health Australia, Leading Age Services Australia (LASA) and UnitingCare Australia. Together, the AACC represents more than 1,000 organisations who deliver 70 per cent of aged care services to 1.3 million Australians, either in their own homes or in communal residential settings.

The following representatives of the AACC are available for interview:

<p>Paul Sadler CEO Aged &amp; Community Services Australia (ACSA)</p> <p><b>Media contact:</b> <b>Alys Gagnon 0438 379 977</b></p>	<p>Tim Hicks General Manager Policy, Advocacy &amp; Advisory Leading Age Services Australia (LASA)</p> <p><b>Media contact:</b> <b>Kate Hannon 08 6311 7809</b></p>
--	---