

Resident Frequently Asked Questions

7 April 2020

Additional or updated question and answers are clearly marked. As the Australian Government advice changes, we will update this document.

Site restrictions

Are children permitted into an Australian Unity retirement village at this time?

The Australian Government and each state or territory government requires everyone to practice social distancing, which means less contact between you and other people to help slow the spread of COVID-19. These requirements are legally enforceable to differing degrees, depending on where you live.

You should limit physical contact with other people, especially young children. It's possible that children and young people may be carriers of COVID-19 but show no symptoms, making it extremely difficult to tell if it's safe for them to visit an older relative.

To ensure everyone's safety within our communities, we request that residents do not allow access to their village for any children aged under 16 at this time.

Is my village closed? Can I have visitors over to my unit or apartment if I want to?

None of our villages are closed; however, the Australian Government requires everyone to practice social distancing, limiting physical contact to only those in your household or you and one other person only. From midnight on 30 March 2020, if you have visitors come to your unit, you could face on-the-spot fines if you breach the restrictions that limit gathering of more than two people (or those in your household).

What will happen if I need maintenance in my unit or apartment during this time?

All non-essential maintenance should be reconsidered at this time. If you do have urgent requirements, please speak to your village manager.

For contractors you arrange, we ask you to consider if the work is essential. If it is, please ensure you practice social distancing and clean any areas or surfaces the contractor may have.

Social isolation

How do I get my mail or get rubbish to bins in communal collection areas?

You can leave your house to go collect your mail or to dispose of rubbish in communal areas if you are well and you stay at least 1.5m away from other people. However, if you are in quarantine due to a confirmed, suspected or potential case of COVID-19, please contact your village manager by phone and we will advise you further as to how these matters can be managed.

With the village bus not operating, how will Australian Unity assist me to get my shopping and groceries?

Some supermarkets have special arrangements in place to provide home deliveries for seniors. Where possible, we will provide assistance if you do not have access to the internet, or a credit card.

Can I use the BBQ/lawn/garden areas?

The BBQ/lawn/garden areas can still be used, however, there is a strict two person (or those in your household) limit for gatherings and social distancing must be practiced.

What is Australian Unity doing about the impacts of social isolation on residents and the impacts of not being able to socialise with their friends?

These measures may be stressful for you and your loved ones, as they are for the vast majority of the Australian population. You can keep in touch via phone and video calls, send postcards, photos or artwork, or film short videos to share. We also encourage you to use public support services, like Beyond Blue or Lifeline, if you are concerned or just need to talk to someone.

Site operation

How often can we expect to get communication?

As government restrictions continue to change and escalate, we are responding and communicating as often as it is appropriate to do so.

How do we continue with our committee and sub-committee meetings? What about scheduled AGMs over the next few months and electing new committees?

Meetings required by the resident committees can be held via video or teleconferencing. Please speak to the village manager if you need assistance with this.

COVID-19

Why is this virus so dangerous for older people?

Older people (70+ years of age, or 60+ with existing health conditions, or 50+ for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples) are more susceptible to getting sick with COVID-19 (coronavirus). The risk of serious illness, and in some cases death, increases with age, particularly those who have chronic illnesses or who may have a weakened immune system.

I am an older person, what can I do?

Even if you are feeling well it is important to take steps to prevent the spread of this virus. Good hygiene and taking care when interacting with other people, are the best defences for you and your loved ones against COVID-19. This includes:

- covering your coughs and sneezes with your elbow or a tissue
- disposing of tissues immediately they are used, into a dedicated waste bin and washing your hands
- washing your hands often with soap and water, including before and after eating and after going to the toilet, and when you have been out to shops or other places
- using alcohol-based hand sanitisers where you can't wash your hands
- cleaning and disinfecting surfaces you or others have touched
- where possible, staying at least 1.5 metres away from other people
- if you are sick, avoiding contact with others.

If you start to feel unwell, phone the National Coronavirus Helpline on 1800 020 080 or your GP who will be able to provide you with further advice. Older people aged 70+ (or 50+ for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people) or people with chronic health conditions are able to seek medical support from their GPs through bulk-billed telehealth (videolink) and telephone services. Examples of possible video applications include FaceTime and Skype. Medical practitioners must be satisfied that the services they use to video link with their patients meet current standards and laws regarding privacy and information security.

Updated: What happens if a person in my village tests positive to COVID-19?

The Public Health Unit in your State will be in contact with the person directly to obtain any information they need (eg to enable tracing of close contacts) and will advise the person on any requirements (eg self-isolation and how to seek medical care if needed).

Are other vaccinations important?

It is very important that you reduce your risk of getting other illnesses while COVID-19 remains in our community. There is no vaccine for COVID-19, however it is important that you get the 2020 flu vaccination as soon as it is available from your GP or pharmacy.

Discuss with your doctor whether you should have a pneumococcal vaccination against pneumonia, which is recommended for everyone 65+. You should also discuss having a shingles vaccination.