



When behaviour impacts on dementia care it can be challenging.



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Locked down but not out – the importance of streamlining access to aged care facilities: Opinion

By: David Erczmán in Industry & Reform, Top Stories June 16, 2021 0

The past 18-months has seen COVID-19 perpetuate dramatic change. With that change has come a seismic shift in expectation that has driven a different approach to how things are done. Life pre-COVID is now a distant memory of days gone by.

Australia’s aged-care sector has not been immune from COVID’s ravages and challenges either.

Lockdowns fuelled by outbreaks have become an inevitable part of life. How governments react toward containing and managing the spread of COVID, along with a vaccine program designed to ensure Australians are vaccinated, forms the basis of a new existence.

Building a protective wall around Australia’s most vulnerable has seen the emotional impact separation has had on residents, their families and the isolation and fear imposes a heavy psychological burden for them and aged-care operators.

Heartbreaking devastation carries with it a reasonable description of the mental anguish that has been on show and the agonising pain and sorrow that has affected different families.

It has been a strenuous time for the aged-care sector around how it and its members manoeuvre through a minefield, where every step they take is laden with consequences if the wrong move is made.

Looking from the outside in, it is hard not to feel for what a challenging time it continues to be for everybody who works in or has anything to do with the aged care sector.

Keeping aged care facilities operational and ensuring the safety and wellbeing of residents, staff and contractors is critical. If facilities cease to engage contractors – it is a disaster waiting with impending consequences.

Aged-care facilities need to continue to operate and allow contractors to have access to sites and ensure they keep the maintenance of essential services across facilities functioning as though they were not in lockdown.

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The welfare of residents and staff continue to remain paramount regardless of whether lockdowns are imposed.

If anything, ensuring safety should be heightened. Resident and employee safety does not take a holiday because of lockdown enforcements – it is an unavoidable fact aged care facilities must come to terms with.

Guaranteeing the operational maintenance of items and services like fire and suppression systems, HVAC, clinical device servicing, allied health care operators, along with the other services that exist within aged care, play critical and vital roles in safety and how efficiently aged care facilities function.

Aged care facilities must be fully functional, and to ensure they are, contractors still need to have access regardless of a lockdown being enforced.

Mitigating the risk of spread of infection of COVID amongst aged-care residents is a priority concern for aged care operators. How they mitigate the containment of any potential spread also gets back to managing time spent by contractors who are on site and knowing where they are.

Planning by management around time and minimising every contractor's presence on site has to be an implementable policy enforced where staff and contractors understand the policy of what 'on-site presence' really means.

Time spent on-site for contractors can be limited by enforcing policy that ensures contractors do what they're meant to do, rather than undertaking a face-to-face induction process. Contractors can safely induct online, away from an aged care facility and ensure when they arrive on-site, they are compliant and ready to start work.

It's simplifying a process that eliminates the unnecessary time taken to induct – where adopting an almost strike-team like approach serves a purpose of guaranteeing efficiency but reducing any potential spread of COVID infecting an entire facility.

Smart policies and implementing intelligent systems where technology plays a critical role is an investment and strategy worth adopting.

Integrating technology where contractors or allied health professionals sign into aged care facilities that are capable of undertaking compliance checks simultaneously is available now.

It's a strategy aged care operators must consider adopting in a COVID world that has changed how everything is done and the way we now live.

David Erczmann is general manager of LinkSafe.



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