

Attributable to a spokesperson for the Minister for Health and Aged Care.

From the outset of the pandemic, aged care has been a major focus on support from the Australian Government and significant measures have been put in place to mitigate the risk to aged care residents.

However like the rest of the community and what occurred in previous waves of the pandemic, when there are increased cases in the population, they will be reflected in the cases in aged care.

There have been a range of measures taken to protect senior Australians.

Aged care facilities have been required to implement infection control training and it is encouraging that despite the increase in cases, there has not been the same level of increase in illness or loss of life, with most facilities indicating that the cases have been more mild at this stage.

The Australian Government has been using rapid antigen tests in aged care since last August, having delivered 7.9 million and further deliveries are underway to all outbreak sites. This is in addition to the close to 1.5 million PCR tests that have been conducted, through the dedicated aged care facility testing program.

From the National Medical Stockpile 35.4 million masks, 14.1 million gowns, 36.2 million gloves, 11.5 million goggles and face shields and 130,000 bottles of hand sanitiser have been provided to aged care facilities.

The Australian Defence Force is providing strategic logistical support to support the increased distributions from the NMS to aged care.

Supporting aged care workforce is a priority. More than 78,000 shifts have been filled by the surge workforce provided by the Australian Government.

Under the National Private Hospital Agreement, additional staff will be made available for aged care and the changes to furloughing guidance is providing additional capacity. This is on top of a successful program to recruit retired staff to return to the workforce and re-deploying staff on other aged care programs to assist with on the ground support.

99 percent of facilities across the country have received a booster clinic with remaining facilities being scheduled to be completed this week.

The approximately 1% of remaining facilities that have had impediments such as staff shortages are currently being scheduled. The Aged Care booster program is being completed approximately six weeks ahead of schedule.

To further support aged care workforce, our Government has provided more than \$600 million in bonus payments to aged care workers, including the latest \$800 bonus, made of two \$400 instalments.

The payments will be for clinical care workers and expanded to all those providing direct care, food or cleaning services in Government subsidised residential care as requested by the unions which previously described the payments as a “great initiative” (Gerard Hayes HSU)

The workforce support is in addition to the \$18.3 billion commitment made by the Morrison Government in response to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, to ensure senior Australians receive the care, respect and dignity they deserve.

This is the largest ever investment in aged care and the government remains committed to reform including increasing the dedicated minutes of care.

In line with its response to the Royal Commission, the Government will act on all requests by the Fair Work Commission to assist with the wages case and we will await the decision of this independent umpire.