MEDIA RELEASE  
Friday, 21 April 2023

COVID-19 VACCINATIONS ‘ALARMINGLY LOW’: PEAK AGED CARE ADVOCATE

Australia’s peak aged care advocacy group has sounded the alarm as COVID-19 numbers have more than doubled in residential aged care in the last two months, while vaccination rates drop.

The Department of Health and Aged Care reported more than 2,000 active resident and staff cases on 13 April – up from almost 800 cases on 9 February.

As winter approaches, numbers are expected to further increase.

But in the government’s latest update, only 33 per cent (59,118) of aged care residents are estimated to have had a booster shot (or infection) in the last six months.

OPAN has released three simple reminders for aged care residents as cases increase:

1. Get your booster shot
2. Talk to your doctor about antiviral treatments
3. Remember you can have an Essential Visitor, even during lockdowns.

“These booster shot figures are alarmingly low,” OPAN CEO Craig Gear OAM said.

“Vaccination remains the best form of protection against the impacts of COVID-19.

“Service providers must work with older people and their families to ensure every aged care resident is supplied with up-to-date information and access to a booster shot.”

Antiviral treatments further reduce the risk of complications for people over the age of 70.

“We encourage older people to have a conversation with their family and health team about the treatment that is right for them,” Mr Gear said.

The National COVID–19 Community Protection Framework recommends masks and visitor RAT tests when there is high community prevalence and/or outbreaks.

But older people living in residential aged care are entitled to an Essential Visitor, even during lockdowns.

“We know older people are at higher risk of complications, but we also know they were disproportionately affected by the previous lockdowns,” Mr Gear said.

“It’s important to balance the risk of infection with the mental and physical impacts of social isolation.”

For more information, visit the OPAN website.

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When reporting about older people please refer to the media reporting guidelines and for more information or media enquiries visit our Media Centre.

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO MEDIA FOR STORIES RELATING TO OLDER PEOPLE

It is critical to provide older people with an avenue to get support when covering stories about aged care. We strongly encourage you to include the following message in your story to enable older people to seek support:

For information or support regarding aged care, please call the Older Persons Advocacy Network on 1800 700 600 or visit opan.org.au