

Home care in times of COVID19

29 May 2020

Froniditha Care, the not-for-profit aged care provider, has continued to offer its services to its elderly clients at home even during the pandemic.

The knocks on the door haven't stopped.

Brighton East couple, 89-year-old Ilias and his wife Eleni, 93, worried the panic of COVID19 might mean they'd be forgotten and their home services would be cut.

But, the regular knocks at the door have kept them stable and alleviated that stress.

Outside their home, Froniditha Care's personal care worker Katerina Margariti is sanitising her hands and putting some extra masks and gloves in her bag to start her day.

She's one of the couple's regular personal care workers who helps them clean, cook, and run errands. It's a vital service for the elderly couple, who want to stay home as long as possible and not have to go into a nursing home prematurely.

Eleni lives with dementia, and Ilias is her primary carer, so the help from Katerina is a godsend. But for Eleni, it's been difficult to deal with the change when she herself struggles with her daily routine.

"They're used to you coming into their homes and saying hello with a shake of the hand or a gentle touch," Katerina says.

"When you now have to say hello from 1.5m away, it's a bit weird.

"They keep saying, "oh come sit down next to me!" And you have to say "oh just let me put my mask and gloves on".

"They look at you differently."

But like everything new, Katerina says they just get used to it.

Being overly cautious is the only way to help reduce the risk of transmission.

COVID19 is after all an invisible illness.

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Templestowe
11 Omar Street, Lower Templestowe, VIC 3107
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St. Albans
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Thornbury
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Community Services
16 Anzed Court, Mulgrave, VIC 3170
Ph (03) 9552 4100

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Katerina says her job more often than not isn't about cleaning or helping the elderly run their errands.

It's about being a connection to the outside world.

"These people above all else need connection and care," she says.

"They need a comforting word or understanding – they need someone to listen to them without being judgemental."

"It's a form of therapy, especially for those who live alone or are a little sad due to their age or circumstances."

Froniditha Care looks after approximately 400 people in their homes and is continuing all its essential services with added safety measures.

Executive Manager of Community Services Penny Hobson says people shouldn't be scared to receive services.

"Our message is it's still safe to receive services at home," she says.

"We know how important it is to stay connected, and Froniditha Care will always support our seniors during difficult times."

All the PCWs like Katerina are equipped with personal protective equipment like gloves and masks. While clients usually like going with the PCWs for their weekly shop, some have opted to have the PCWs do the shop on their own and leave the goods on the front porch.

All the PCWs are also being regularly briefed on infection control, and many of the case managers have been doing regular welfare checks on the clients to check if they're coping ok.

For more information on the community services Froniditha Care offers, please visit fronidithacare.org.au or call 03 9552 4100.

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Katerina with Home Care Package client Eleni, putting on some lipstick.



Katerina with Ilias and Eleni at the table.

Note: Guidelines say it is not necessary to wear PPE gear like masks, goggles and gloves during home visits and in residential aged care if people don't have symptoms. Like the rest of the general public, social distancing is still adhered to.

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