

High praise for Richmond Living cleaning crew in time of crisis



 Sterilisation Team member Nicholas attends to a high contact area.

The fact that family and friends are able to once again see their loved ones at Hawkesbury Living has a lot to do with the sanitisation crew working at the site, says Richmond Club Group CEO Kimberley Talbot says.

In fact, she goes so far as to say, "we would be lost" without them.

The Richmond Club Group is responsible for 140 employees across both Richmond Club and Golf Club, as well as the residential aged care facility, which has 134 residents.

Well before the forced COVID-19 lockdowns, with news of the emerging health crisis increasing, Ms Talbot's attention was turned towards the safety of all in the group's care - its patrons, employees and residents.

"My mind went straight to, 'how am I going to keep the pandemic out? How am I going to keep my workers safe? And how am I going to sanitise the place continually and still be cost-effective?'" Ms Talbot said.

By the time the pandemic was declared by the World Health Organisation on March 11, the group had a plan in place.

"First of all, we went into a lockdown [of Hawkesbury Living]," she said. "It wasn't a mandatory lockdown by government, but I consulted with our residents and families, wrote letters to the families and consulted about the fact that my biggest concern was once the pandemic got into the nursing home. I felt that it was going to spread and breed very quickly."

"Infection control is all about sanitising. I knew that if I didn't keep the team working completely on cleaning, I wouldn't have a chance of keeping COVID out of the nursing home."

On March 23, Ms Talbot formed a Sterilisation Team, comprising several existing Richmond Club staff and a pair of new workers - Nicholas and Cassandra - hired through NOVA Employment.

"We have shifts so that as soon as someone walks in, they're cleaning," Ms Talbot said.

"So far, it's been fabulously successful with no cases (of COVID-19) with employees or residents."



 Sterilisation Team member Cassandra at work at Hawkesbury Living.

When considering the task at hand, Ms Talbot said she knew to contact NOVA.

"Having worked with NOVA for probably about 15-18 years and knowing what type of jobs suit their workers, I immediately thought about the fact that I could sanitise each area of the high infection areas which are; door handles, keypads, entry-ways, where people put their hands," she said.

"NOVA has workers who have the ability to be able to do a job that's consistent."

Ms Talbot praised the local branch - NOVA Richmond - and its manager, Sharon Turnbull, for a swift turnaround.

"We had limited time with the staff at Richmond Club to be able to explain to NOVA what we wanted. It was like, 'Sharon, we need this'," said said.

"I told her [Sharon], we need people to do this job and we need it fast. And the ability to know that Sharon and the team at NOVA would listen, follow, without written instructions on how to do everything. They got it straight away - how and what we wanted to achieve."

Ms Talbot also had high praise for NOVA employees.

"You've got to be open to understanding that yes, this person might have some disabilities, but also be able to see they have so many abilities," she said.