

*Warrigal*

Inspiring communities  
for older people

From the desk of  
**Executive  
Operations**



**1 DECEMBER 2023**

Dear resident representatives and relatives,

Welcome to summer, which signals the beginning of the festive season, with resident parties commencing from next week. These functions are an important way to celebrate with residents and families, along with representatives from the Executive Team and Board Members. We do need to be mindful that there has been an increase in COVID-19 cases over the past month as the eighth wave has impacted both NSW and ACT. Despite this, we have seen a less severe impact thanks to the protection provided by vaccinations and previous infections. I am confident that we will be able to manage Christmas celebrations in the event of an outbreak occurring.

There are currently 301 residential care homes in Australia experiencing a COVID-19 outbreak, which has increased by 75 from the end of October. In the past week, there have been 118 outbreaks in residential aged care, and currently, there are 2,214 active cases associated with the 301 outbreaks. At the beginning of the month, we had four outbreaks across Warrigal, and these were all closed during the month, with no additional COVID-19 outbreaks.

There continues to be a number of homes where residents have experienced acute respiratory infections (Influenza, Parainfluenza and Rhinovirus), and similar to the COVID-19 outbreaks, we work closely with the Public Health Units and most of these have been closed, with only one outbreak remaining at Warrigal Wollongong that commenced on 23 November, with 4 residents testing positive to Parainfluenza. We continue to undertake surveillance testing of residents on a weekly basis across all of our care homes, and everyone entering a home must continue to complete a Rapid Antigen Test daily.

On 28 November 2023, Voluntary Assisted Dying Legislation came into effect in NSW. Voluntary assisted dying means an eligible person can ask for medical help to end their life if they are in the late stages of an advanced disease, illness or medical condition. 'Voluntary' means the choice must be the person's own, and they must have decision-making capacity throughout the entire process to access voluntary assisted dying. Over the past month, we have been providing training to staff about the importance of respecting the choice of the individuals involved while also being mindful of the need to support staff.

I am pleased to advise that we have received the reports from the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission on the reaccreditation audits conducted at Warrigal Calwell and Warrigal Hughes. We are assessed on 42 different outcomes relating to choice, independence, planning, activities, clinical care, the environment, complaint management, staffing and governance. The Commission advised that we met all 42 outcomes at Warrigal Calwell and there was only one considered to be not met at Warrigal Hughes relating to governance, where we have submitted a detailed response requesting a review of the decision.

In November, a report was released by the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (the Commission) on the complaints made to them for the period 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023. There were a total of 5,077 complaints made in relation to residential aged care during this period, and with a total number of 193,793 consumers in residential care over the 12 months. This is an average of 2.6

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complaints for every 100 consumers. At Warrigal, there were a total of 36 complaints lodged for the same period, and with 2,106 consumers which is an average of 1.7 complaints for every 100 consumers. It is always good when data is presented to benchmark across the industry and identify areas for improvement. In this case, while the average number of complaints was lower, we did receive a higher proportion of complaints about food and catering, which has resulted in more frequent meetings with our catering companies and training through the Maggie Beer Foundation.

As the year draws to a close, it is an opportunity to reflect on what has happened over the past 12 months, including how we have adapted to COVID-19 outbreaks while still having a focus on resident safety. Striking the right balance between restrictions, infection protection protocols, and residents' need for choice and activities remains crucial. The reforms from the Aged Care Royal Commission continued including;

- Code of Conduct Training.
- Strengthening of key personnel requirements.
- Star Ratings being implemented.
- Registered Nurses being required in all care homes 24/7.
- Care Minutes being used to benchmark staffing levels.
- Additional Quality Indicators focused on non-clinical areas.

Looking ahead to next year, we are preparing for the changes that will come with the new Aged Care Act and new Quality Standards commencing in July, while still focusing on;

- Sustainable growth with the acquisition of St Andrews Village.
- Strong accreditation and compliance results with 7 care homes going through a reaccreditation review, and we have 20 unmet outcomes across all homes compared with 38 at the beginning of the year.
- Improving the manner in which lifestyle programs are delivered with Team Leaders in each of our homes.
- Focusing on workforce challenges with some innovative models including our undergraduate Registered Nurse Program that has 33 third year employees about to graduate.

I sincerely wish all residents and relatives the very best for the festive season, and hope that I get to meet many of you at the various functions being held over the next month. Thank you for supporting Warrigal, and as always if you have any feedback, please contact me by emailing [warrigal@warrigal.com.au](mailto:warrigal@warrigal.com.au).

Yours Sincerely,

**Craig Smith**  
**Executive Leader – Service Integrated Communities**