

25 September 2020

### **Re: Latest Update on COVID-19**

Dear resident representatives and relatives

I am pleased to confirm that there are still currently no confirmed cases of COVID-19 at Warrigal.

In the past week, the number of residential aged care facilities in Australia with active cases has reduced from 83 to 76, and the number of residents / customers with COVID-19 has reduced by 135 with 319 residents / customers still active with COVID-19. Sadly, the number of deaths in aged care due to the virus has increased to 616 residents / customers, which means that more than one-third of residents / customers in care who contract COVID-19 have died, which is more than 36 times higher than the rest of the population.

The National Cabinet met last Friday and noted the progress on aged care preparedness at provider, local, state, and national levels. Establishing or scaling up both virtual and physical Response Centres to ensure a high level of preparedness will be undertaken, with dedicated aged care emergency response teams established within the Local Health Districts (LHDs). To support the virtual response centres, and improve the connectivity with the calls being made, we will be upgrading the Wi-Fi in our homes commencing next month. We also continue to work closely with all three LHDs in our geographical area, including a joint video being produced with the CEO of the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District and Warrigal's CEO, Mark Sewell on the strong partnership with the ISLHD and aged care providers.

As you know, we have been working very hard on preventing COVID-19 from getting into our homes, but we also hold a realistic view that this virus will continue to require a strong infection control focus for many months to come. Within our care homes we remain committed to safety, but we are also conscious of the need for social engagement and interaction, which increases the risk of cross- infection. While there is optimism that there will be a vaccine, the reality is that we need to be prepared to keep everyone safe for many months to come, while still ensuring that modified activity programs are delivered.

There are a few learnings from what is happening in Europe as a second wave is having a significant impact as the weather starts to cool. While we have commenced outdoor visits, this still requires social distancing and face masks to be worn, while visits inside the care home will remain in the Safe Visiting Areas or where compassionate visits have been approved.

Warrigal has a detailed Outbreak Management Plan that involves working closely with the Public Health Unit, and transporting any COVID-19 positive residents / customers offsite where the Public Health Unit would be able to activate their emergency plans. This would allow Warrigal to continue to focus on providing a safe and comfortable environment for the remaining residents / customers. To activate this plan, we need to ensure that the choice of the residents / customers and families are considered. While most already have an Advanced Care Directive that captures their preferences, the majority of these were prepared prior to COVID-19. We will be looking to updating these systematically in the coming months to ensure they reflect the current pandemic.

I will continue to keep you updated regularly and again thank you for your support, which is communicated through our social media and emails sent each week.

You can call our Customer Relations Information Line on 1800 927 744, operating seven days a week between 9am to 9pm, if you have any further enquiries. You can also email us at [warrigal@warrigal.com.au](mailto:warrigal@warrigal.com.au) with any feedback you might have or for more general advice you may want to contact the Older Persons Advocacy Network on 1800 700 600.

Yours Sincerely,



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