



29 April 2020

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO: STATEMENT ON WARRIGAL'S COVID-19 ACTION PLAN

As a community-based, not-for-profit organisation, Warrigal has grown into a purpose-driven group currently operating a large number of services that support older people in their own homes and in the community. Supporting older people in our care has never been more important than in today's complex and ever-changing COVID-19 landscape.

We continue to take strong precautionary actions to ensure everyone in our large community of services remains safe. Last week, we expanded our dedicated 1800 Warrigal information line, comprising dedicated personnel to support families and carers. The information line now operates 7 days a week from 9am – 9pm.

Warrigal has now developed a comprehensive COVID-19 Action Plan to prepare us for the possibility of an infection or outbreak. These action plan measures are in addition to our usual robust infection control practices and the recent restrictions put in place to limit movement of people and reduce the risk to the people in our care.

Warrigal has made provision for the establishment of **Special Care Units** to provide care and isolate any confirmed cases: initially a unit will be established in the Illawarra, however should the need arise a second would be considered for other locations. These units will operate separately to the rest of the Residential Care Homes and will be available for customers from our care homes, home services or villages who are unable to go to hospital but need special clinical care that Warrigal can provide. The timing and sequence of the activation of these units will be dependant on the needs and locations of a confirmed infection or outbreak, and will enable us to maximise isolation measures and give the best possible protection to our residents, clients and staff.

As part of this action plan, in the event of a confirmed infection or outbreak, Warrigal will also implement:

- **Additional social and mental health support** for residents in lockdown by exploring and initiating new plans to further encourage social connection
- **Warrigal's Covid-19 Management Committee** will continue to regularly review and update protection measures in collaboration with health authorities, local allied health and infectious disease experts

To date, no staff or residents have tested positive to COVID-19. There is still no evidence that any of our staff or residents have been put in harm's way or any evidence of exposure to COVID-19. The safety of our residents, customers, families and staff remain our utmost priority and we will continue to review our procedures and take strong action to ensure we keep them safe.

If you would like further information you can contact Warrigal on 1800 927 744 between 9am -9pm. Alternatively for more general COVID19 advice please contact the 24-hour National Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Yours Sincerely

Mark Sewell
CEO, Warrigal

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Frequently Asked Questions: Warrigal's Special Care Units

What is a Special Care Unit?

A Special Care Unit (SCU) is a specially designated area within Warrigal's Care Home that is created to provide special support and care, and to isolate those with the COVID-19 virus. The unit will allow Warrigal to maximise isolation measures and give the best possible protection to its residents, clients, visitors and staff.

Who will they be available for?

The SCU will be made available for customers from Warrigal's Care Homes, Home Services or Villages who cannot go to hospital but need special clinical care that Warrigal can provide.

Is the Public Health Unit aware of this?

Yes, this has been discussed with the Illawarra Public Health Unit, and they have confirmed that this approach is supported by not only them, but the Department of Health.

When and where will the SCU be located?

There will be one of these units at this stage, for anyone who needs it from the Illawarra and Southern Highlands; however the need for multiple locations will be considered based on the number, location and timing of incidents as part of Warrigal's preparedness plans should a COVID-19 outbreak occur.

A final determination is being made as to where and when the Special Care Units will operate, but the first one will be in the Illawarra and will be well located for customer, staff and Public Health access.

The Special Care Unit will operate separately to the rest of the Residential Care Home in which it is located.

Does this mean Warrigal already has had a COVID-19 infection or outbreak?

To date, no staff or residents have tested positive to COVID-19. There is still no evidence that any of our staff or residents have been put in harm's way or any evidence of exposure to COVID-19. Warrigal are simply preparing should an outbreak of the infection happen, as it tragically has in other places.

How is the SCU site being prepared for residents, staff and visitors?

Warrigal will be creating a separate external access to the Unit to limit travel through the rest of the Care Home. They are also reviewing car parking arrangements for ambulance, patient transports, residents and visitors to ensure that they mitigate any risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Other areas being created include:

- Appropriate staff and resident amenities (such as bathrooms, toilets and kitchenettes)
- Administration spaces (such as a temporary office/reception area) if required

In addition, Warrigal will also ensure that customers in the Unit have easy access to an outdoor space which is separate to the rest of the Care Home. (if allowed) They are also considering the installation of hospital-grade air conditioning filters (where possible) and the creation of staff sleep over space within the SCU if that is what staff prefer.

Who will staff the Special Care Units?

Warrigal staff will be invited to express an interest in working at this Special Care Unit. Warrigal understands that some employees will not want to work at the unit (for example, if they have someone in their household who is immunosuppressed), and in this case will try to accommodate an employee's preferences wherever possible. Others may have experience in these types of care units and look forward to the opportunity to do this very important work.

No one will be forced to work there unless they want to.

Will staff get extra training to work in the SCUs?

Yes, extra training, support, and personal protective equipment for those working in the unit will be provided. This knowledge, practice and equipment have been proven to be effective in protecting staff from infectious diseases.

Special rostering arrangements will also apply to create close cohesive teams that apply best practice aged care.

Will there be any special protocols that apply when entering the SCU?

As with all our care homes, strict infection control procedures will apply at all times for everyone enters the unit.

Accommodation and meals will be provided by Warrigal for staff working within the Special Care Unit who have people at home in their household that they do not want to be potentially exposed to the possibility of transmission.

The flu vaccination will also be mandatory for all staff working in the Unit.

What is the best way to communicate with extended family and friends who want updates on a patient?

As part of Warrigal's action plan, in the event of a confirmed infection or outbreak, Warrigal will also implement additional social and mental health support for residents in this unit, by exploring personal and pastoral support and initiating new technology and other support plans to further encourage social connection.

Who can I call if I have more questions about these SCU's?

Warrigal's Covid-19 Management Committee is meeting twice a week and will continue to regularly review and update protection measures for all customers and staff across Warrigal in collaboration with health authorities, local allied health and infectious disease experts.

You can contact Warrigal on 1800 927 744 between 9am -9pm, 7 days a week.