

Warrigal

Inspiring communities
for older people

From the desk of
**Executive
Operations**



5 November 2021

Dear resident representatives and relatives,

The past week has seen vaccination rates increase slowly, with 93.8% of people aged over 16 in NSW having received one dose of the vaccine, while 89.1% are now fully vaccinated. In the ACT, the percentage of the population over the age of 12 fully vaccinated is now 94.4%. The number of positive cases in NSW has reduced from 2,074 to 1,471, and in the ACT, from 234 active cases to 125. However, there are still outbreaks present in residential aged care homes that we are updated on weekly, reinforcing the importance of vaccinations, screening all visitors and avoiding venues of high risk.

This week, the number of visits increased to three a week, and from next week, residents/customers will be able to leave the care home with families and friends. We understand that many of you will want to visit cafes and restaurants, and we would strongly recommend that at this stage, visits are restricted to family homes, but if you go to public places, then social distancing and face masks are required. We will be looking at increasing this to overnight visits as we approach Christmas, but this will depend on the impact of the current arrangements.

At each visit, residents/customers are now permitted to have two fully vaccinated visitors aged 12 years and over and two children under 12 years of age. Where visits include a child under 12 years of age, where possible these visits should be in an outdoor area, the children need to wear a mask and have a Rapid Antigen Test prior to the visit.

As the community opens up, one of the risks that the aged care sector faces is complacency, and we must continue to learn from outbreaks that have happened and continue to review our own Outbreak Management Plans. This week the Australian Government accepted the recommendations from an Independent Review of COVID-19 Outbreaks in Residential Care, which was released on 1 November 2021. We will be using these recommendations to update our plans, particularly in relation to workforce strategy, the built environment and clinical care. One of the key areas with clinical care is having Infection Control Leads at each care home, and I am pleased that while these have been in place for most of the year, we have now appointed an Infection Protection Control Coordinator who will work closely with staff at each of the homes.

Commencing next week, the Australian Government will initiate a vaccine booster program for residential care. There will be clinics undertaken at all of our homes over 12 weeks. Any resident/customer or staff member who received their second dose of the vaccine at least 6 months prior to the clinic will be eligible for the booster. As the clinics are arranged, we will be communicating with the families at the respective homes, as consent will be required for the booster to be administered.

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While there is no intention at this stage to make the booster mandatory, it will boost the immune response and provide an additional layer of protection, which is important when many residents/customers have underlying health conditions.

Thank you for taking the time to send your suggestions and comments, and for your understanding of the staged approach that we have taken. Please continue to provide feedback by contacting your local management team, calling 1800 927 744 or by emailing us at warrigal@warrigal.com.au.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'CS' or similar initials, written in a cursive style.

Craig Smith
Executive Leader – Service Integrated Communities