

Warrigal

Inspiring communities
for older people

From the desk of
**Executive
Operations**



2 December 2022

Dear resident representatives and relatives,

Over the past month there has been an increase in the number of people who have tested positive for COVID-19, and this has been reflected in Residential Aged Care Homes, with the number of Care Homes experiencing an outbreak increasing from 213 at the beginning of November to 560 at the end of the month. While the number of cases continues to grow, the latest data from the Department of Health indicates that that rate of increase has slowed, so hopefully this means that the latest wave will have subsided by Christmas.

The increasing cases within the community and Residential Aged Care Homes have also been felt at Warrigal, with five outbreaks in the past month. Four of these outbreaks remain open, which are summarised below, while the outbreak at Goulburn that commenced on 16 November was closed on 30 November, with six residents testing positive during this period.

Mount Terry: The outbreak commenced on 16 November 2022, with eleven residents testing positive. There is currently one active case, and we anticipate that the outbreak will be declared over next week.

Calwell: The outbreak commenced on 27 November 2022, and there are currently five active cases.

Stirling: The outbreak commenced on 29 November 2022, and there are currently nine active cases.

Shell Cove: The outbreak commenced on 1 December 2022, and there are currently two active cases.

With the increase in COVID-19 cases, this week the Chief Clinical Advisor from the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission wrote to all Aged Care Providers to ensure that we continue to focus on six key areas of COVID-19 prevention to ensure the ongoing protection of residents. These six areas are the focus of the reviews they undertake, including one at Queanbeyan recently where we received a very positive report. The six areas are;

1. Maintain and audit infection prevention and control practices.
2. Monitor and ensure timely schedule of booster vaccinations,
3. Be attentive to screening/monitoring visitors and staff.
4. Monitor residents' clinical symptoms/status.
5. Ensure access to your GPs for antiviral prescriptions.
6. Check local pharmacy has sufficient antiviral supply.

We continue to organise vaccinations for residents, particularly new residents who may not have had the booster shots. Most care homes have over 90% of residents that have received at least three doses of the vaccine. All homes are undertaking a weekly surveillance test of residents, which is often where the outbreaks are being detected. There is however an increased risk over the festive season, and with resident Christmas parties commencing next week, the following screening and monitoring processes will be implemented from Monday, 5 December 2022.

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- Staff must now complete a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) daily for the month of December.
- Visitors going into a home with an outbreak must complete a RAT daily and wear an N95 mask. There may be additional measures implemented at the local level depending on the extent of the outbreak, but visiting will still be permitted.
- Any visitor attending a resident party or large function within the home must complete a RAT on that day.
- If a resident leaves the home to attend a large family gathering, a RAT must to be completed two days after returning.
- All visitors must still complete a RAT a minimum of every 72 hours if there is no outbreak and they are not attending a function within the home.

I am pleased to advise that we were successful in winning the state-level 'Excellence in Large Business' award at the prestigious NSW 2022 Business Awards, held on November 18. This win follows our success in the same category at the Illawarra Business Awards in October. The state award is a platform to recognise the outstanding achievements of businesses and business leaders across New South Wales. As a regional charity and non-profit organisation, Warrigal is very proud to be recognised as a large business; excelling in this award category amongst commercial nominees.

The reforms from the Aged Care Royal Commission continue to be implemented with the Code of Conduct and improved governance arrangements for providers commencing on 1 December 2022, and the STAR Rating system which allocates a rating to care homes based on clinical indicators, compliance results, consumer experience feedback and staffing minutes due to be implemented later this month.

The resident Christmas parties will commence next week, and after a very challenging year. I look forward to seeing many of you at these functions in the coming weeks. I sincerely thank you for your understanding and support of Warrigal over the past year, and look forward to continuing the communication and updates in 2023. I hope that you get to spend safe, quality time with your loved one over the festive season.

I continue to welcome your feedback and would encourage you to continue doing this 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 dark ink, appearing to be 'CS' or similar initials.

Craig Smith
Executive Leader – Service Integrated Communities