

Warrigal

Inspiring communities
for older people

From the desk of
**Executive
Operations**



29 July 2022

Dear resident representatives and relatives,

The past fortnight has seen COVID-19 cases in the community increase from previous weeks, as the impact of the third COVID-19 wave is being felt through the community. There have been 99,413 COVID-19 cases in NSW in the past week, an increase of 23,832 from the previous update, which is close to an average of 14,300 cases daily. In the ACT, there have been 6,606 positive COVID-19 cases in the past week, a decrease of 1,696 from the last update. While the numbers have decreased, a daily average of 943 is still very high. We need to ensure that staff and visitors continue to be tested daily with a Rapid Antigen Test before entering the home, and importantly, wear face masks at all times inside the care home. Goggles or face shields must be worn at all times in any home experiencing an outbreak.

The most recent information from the Department of Health (from 22 July 2022), indicated that 6,846 aged care homes in Australia have experienced a COVID-19 outbreak, an increase of 656 in the past fortnight. The number of care homes with an active outbreak in Australia is currently 1,013, which has increased by 276 from the previous fortnight. The number of active resident cases associated with the current outbreaks is 6,118, which has increased by 2,302 in the past fortnight. The total number of resident cases related to the recent outbreaks is 12,596, which is an average of 12 residents for each outbreak.

There has been a lot of discussion about the third wave of COVID-19 in Australia, and the peak of this is expected in the coming weeks. At the beginning of this week, the National Data showed that there were 5,433 people in hospital with the virus, higher than the peak of 5,391 in January. In order to understand the reason for the impact of the third wave, I have summarised below the different strains of Omicron and the impact on the community.

- Omicron started off as three sub-variants (BA1, BA2 and BA3), a group of viruses from the same parent virus, all appearing in late November last year
 - BA1 took over from the Delta strain in Australia in January, forming a significant number of new cases, peaking at over 100,000 each day.
 - BA2 is even more transmissible than BA1, and this saw the second wave of cases which peaked in April at more than 60,000 each day.
 - BA4 and BA5 were first detected in South Africa at the beginning of the year. They are talked about together because the mutations in their protein that latch on to human cells are identical.
- The current strains are not only more contagious than previous ones, but the chance of reinfection increases, which is defined as a new infection at least 12 weeks after the first infection.

In view of the current strains being more contagious, and the likelihood that there are now tens of thousands of Australians into their second or third infections which will only increase in the coming weeks, this is why we are now classed as facing the third wave of the virus.

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Unfortunately, the only care home where an outbreak has been finalised in the past fortnight has been at Warrigal Stirling, but they now have an additional two residents that have become positive and are once again in outbreak. In addition to Stirling, Wollongong, Shell Cove and Albion Park Rail are also experiencing further outbreaks.

A summary of all current outbreaks is provided below:

Mt Warrigal: The outbreak commenced on 27 June 2022, with two residents in adjoining rooms testing positive. Since this time, there has been a gradual increase in the number of residents that have tested positive, with a total of 19 overall, and 6 currently active cases. All of these residents are on anti-viral medication. There are also 4 staff that are currently unable to work due to being positive.

Mount Terry: The outbreak commenced on 29 June 2022, with 58 residents testing positive across the four sections of the home. Three residents tested positive from the most recent PCR testing that was conducted on 26 July 2022, which means there are now 12 active cases, all of which are receiving anti-viral medication. There are currently 3 staff that are unable to work due to being positive.

Goulburn: The outbreak commenced on 29 June 2022, with 32 residents testing positive since this time. There is currently one resident who remains an active case, who is receiving anti-viral medication. There will be further PCR testing conducted today, and if there are no additional cases detected, the outbreak will be finalised next week. There are only two staff that are currently unable to work who will return early next week.

Calwell: The latest outbreak commenced on 5 July 2022, with 52 residents testing positive since this time. There are currently 6 active resident cases all receiving anti-viral medication, and a further three staff that remain COVID-19 positive. Regular PCR testing will continue every 72 hours while active cases remain in the home.

Bundanoon: The outbreak at Bundanoon commenced on 6 July 2022, with 48 residents testing positive since this time. There are currently 5 active resident cases who are all receiving anti-viral medication, and 6 staff members that remain positive and unable to work.

Shell Cove: The outbreak at Shell Cove commenced on 19 July 2022, and has been contained to one section of the home with 6 residents testing positive since this time. There are currently two positive cases, with one of these receiving anti-viral medication. There are also 3 staff that are currently unable to work due to being positive for COVID-19.

Albion Park Rail: The most recent outbreak commenced on 19 July 2022, and is now in 4 out of the 5 areas within the home, with 33 active cases all receiving anti-viral medication. The most recent round of PCR testing was undertaken yesterday, and there were no additional cases detected. This outbreak has also caused significant staffing challenges, with 22 staff currently furloughed with the virus. This has created a number of challenges, but fortunately we have been able to secure a number of agency staff

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in addition to a number of our Warrigal staff agreeing to work additional hours. In addition to that, a number of staff from Support Services have also agreed to provide assistance to the staff, including myself, where I had the privilege to provide personal care to a number of residents along with other members of my team.

Wollongong: The most recent outbreak commenced on 19 July 2022, and is now in 4 out of the 6 areas within the home, with 14 active cases all receiving anti-viral medication. There are also 6 staff that are currently unable to work due to being positive for COVID-19.

Stirling: There have been 2 positive cases in 2 sections of the home this week, both testing positive on 25 July 2022, and both on anti-viral medications. At this stage there is only one staff member that is COVID-19 positive and unable to work.

Overall, there are 8 residential care homes with a current COVID outbreak, with 81 active resident cases. There are also 53 staff across Warrigal that are being impacted by the current wave of infections and are unable to work. As a result of the increase in transmissions, and more homes going into outbreak, we have recommenced the weekly outbreak management meetings with representatives from all care homes and Support Services to ensure that all areas of support are being considered.

The Government announced this week the extension of the support from the Australian Defence Force, with 250 personnel available to support aged care homes until the end of September. In view of the impact with so many staff unavailable at Albion Park Rail, we have requested their support for general duties staff. We also requested support for clinical staff at Mount Terry, and were successful in obtaining two Registered Nurses for 24-hour coverage over 3 days.

Thank you for the feedback that a number of families provided on our position to maintain the current visiting arrangements, despite the changes to the Public Health Order. We will, in the current environment, continue to allow unvaccinated visitors inside the home for an end of life visit, otherwise visits will need to be in the outside areas of the home. With the current number of outbreaks, there may be some local visiting arrangements implemented within the home, but unless this is communicated by the local management team, visiting arrangements remain at one visit a day for 2 fully vaccinated adults and 2 children under 12 years of age.

In addition to the COVID update, I have summarised below some key points regarding what is happening at Warrigal and the industry;

- Vaccination clinics have continued over the past fortnight, and have now commenced at all care homes. Despite the outbreak at Albion Park Rail, 45 residents who were eligible were vaccinated today.
- We have established a team to look at the Customer Experience Engagement at Warrigal, and how this can be measured and improved. There are a number of avenues where we obtain feedback, including resident/relative meetings, Older Persons Advisory Group, 'Have Your Say'

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Brochures, Social Media, and direct contact. If you feel there are other ways that we can improve our engagement, please let me know.

- This week there were two pieces of legislation introduced into the House of Representatives, relating to aged care reform and the royal commission response bill. The first would mandate Registered Nurses to be on-site at aged care homes 24/7 (which is currently in place at all Warrigal homes with the exception of Mt Warrigal), and a requirement on reporting spending figures on food, administration, and nursing.
- The second bill implements 14 recommendations from the Royal Commission, including a new funding model, a code of conduct for staff, and a star rating system for aged care homes based on a number of factors, including the Consumer Experience Feedback.

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

Craig Smith
Executive Leader – Service Integrated Communities