

Warrigal

Inspiring communities
for older people

From the desk of
**Executive
Operations**



19 November 2021

Dear resident representatives and relatives,

The past week has seen vaccination rates again increase slowly, with 94.1% of people aged over 16 in NSW having received one dose of the vaccine. In comparison, those fully vaccinated is now over 90%, with 90.6% fully vaccinated. In the ACT, the percentage of the population over the age of 12 fully vaccinated is now 96.0%. The number of positive cases in NSW increased from the previous week by 223, with 1,694 cases in the past seven days, and in the ACT, there were 95 positive cases in the past week.

It is now only five weeks to Christmas Eve, and I am sure that many of you will want to make plans for Christmas Day, including visiting and having lunch in the care home, taking your loved one home to be with family or going out to a restaurant. All of these options will require coordination and risk assessment, and in order to make the necessary arrangements, it would be appreciated if you could advise the local management team of your plans at your earliest convenience. Unfortunately this year, we will not be able to have family members attend Christmas parties within the care home, but we will still be having a number of functions for our residents/customers.

As indicated last week, there will be a revised Industry Code for Visiting Aged Care Homes that is expected to be finalised in early December. The Code is a guide for providers to follow, and any Public Health Orders would take precedence over the recommendations in the Code. Still, we are committed to implementing the measures once they are finalised, which involve three different levels.

Code Green is the first level, where there are minimal COVID-19 cases in the Local Government Area, and fully vaccinated visitors have no restrictions on visiting, PPE would be in accordance with public health orders, and no bookings would be required. This is scalable to visitors who are not vaccinated, where they would be subject to a Rapid Antigen Test or PCR testing, visiting would be outdoors or in an infection controlled environment and bookings would still be essential.

Code Orange is the second level, where there is a heightened risk in a Local Government Area, and in those cases, fully vaccinated visitors would be required to have a Rapid Antigen or PCR Test prior to visiting. PPE would be required along with visits being booked. Unvaccinated visitors would only be permitted to enter the home for end of life visits. It is possible that local factors could result in one home in a Local Government Area being classified as orange while others may be green, such as an outbreak at a local school adjacent to the home. The change in classification could change very quickly, and we would notify residents and relatives immediately of this change.

Code Red is the highest level, where there has been an exposure or outbreak within an aged care home. In these situations, visiting would be for end of life, except for the one person who has been designated as the "Essential Visitor" who will always be permitted to visit to provide emotional care regardless of the outbreak status.

Over the past week, we have reviewed and updated our processes regarding the required actions if a staff member is notified that they are a close contact of a positive case. This involves reviewing all staff, residents and visitors that the person may have had contact within the period between contact and notification. This information will then be used to commence preventative measures, including Rapid Antigen Testing and being ready to send communications to all stakeholders. While this was being prepared, the Managers of the

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homes in Canberra were contacted by the ACT Health to advise of an outbreak at a nearby home and they were requested to provide them with information on staff working in the care homes so they were prepared to respond promptly to an outbreak.

The current arrangements for visiting will not be changing next week, which remains at five visits a week, in addition to any social outings. The requests to take loved ones out to cafes and restaurants have increased, particularly those celebrating birthdays or other events. While we have encouraged families not to attend places where social distancing would be challenging, each request would be risk assessed based on the location, with outdoor dining the preferred alternative. The local management team would undertake these assessments

The booster vaccine program was undertaken at Warilla, Queanbeyan, Calwell and Stirling this week, where a number of residents/customers and staff that were fully vaccinated at least six months ago received a booster through the in house clinics. These will continue over the next two months with the following dates confirmed.

| Home | Date |
|------------|------------------|
| Coniston | 26 November 2021 |
| Shell Cove | 30 November 2021 |
| Bundanoon | 7 December 2021 |

Thank you for taking the time to send your suggestions and comments, and your understanding of the staged approach 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,

Craig Smith
Executive Leader – Service Integrated Communities