

Warrigal

Inspiring communities
for older people

From the desk of **Executive Operations**



3 September 2021

Dear resident representatives and relatives

The past week has seen a significant increase in positive case numbers in both NSW and ACT. At the same time, vaccination rates have also increased substantially over the past week, with NSW now having 70% (over 7.2 million people) of the eligible population receiving the first dose of the vaccine. The vaccination rates will be critical in determining what restrictions can be eased in the coming weeks. Unfortunately, the number of venues that have been exposed continues to increase and has resulted in staff that have been at the venue, or been in contact with someone that has been at an exposure site having to be tested prior to working. The suburbs within close proximity to at least one of our care homes where there has been an exposure site includes the following:

- Shellharbour
- Albion Park Rail
- Warilla
- Moss Vale
- Figtree
- Wollongong
- Flinders
- Wanniassa
- Belconnen

As a result, we have had 24 staff tested in the past week that has all returned a negative result prior to returning to work. The number of cases in Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District has also increased significantly with 277 confirmed cases, including 123 community-acquired cases. Some of these cases have been casual contacts with our staff, who have also been tested prior to working.

There are now 24 aged care facilities with COVID outbreaks in NSW; 20 of them are in the Greater Sydney LGA and 4 in regional NSW. The outbreaks have impacted 79 residents and 45 staff.

COVID-19 Cases – NSW

In the past week, the number of positive cases continues to increase, with a record number of 8,477 cases, an increase of 2,723 from the previous week where there were 5,754 cases. The average number of cases is 1,211 a day.

There are now 979 people in hospital with 160 in Intensive Care, and 63 on ventilators. Of the 160 people in Intensive Care, 127 have not been vaccinated. This number of hospital admissions significantly impacts the option of transferring residents to hospital if they test positive. As a result, we are reviewing our outbreak management plans with representatives from the Local Health Districts to ensure that they reflect the ability to isolate residents, have clearly marked PPE stations, areas for donning and doffing PPE and how we can incorporate telehealth options.

COVID-19 Cases – ACT

The number of active cases in the ACT has increased to 255, with 18 cases in the past 24 hours. The total number of vaccinations in the ACT has now grown to 217,237. There are currently 13 patients in ACT hospitals, including 4 in Intensive Care and 2 requiring ventilation. There are over 230 current exposure locations listed, which must be checked if you have been approved for an essential care visit.

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Father's Day

Sunday is a special day for many of our residents who are fathers, grandfathers and great grandfathers, who unfortunately will not have the opportunity to have in-person visits with the current restrictions in NSW and ACT preventing these visits. We will be doing our best to make the day special and celebrate with them, and we understand that many of you will want to talk to them during the day. We have arranged for additional staff to work to be able to facilitate these calls.

I sincerely wish the circumstances were different, but we need to comply with the requirements, and I hope that every one of our residents who is celebrating this day is made to feel special. While I understand that many of you would like to drop off presents, this would not be considered essential and with case numbers still increasing, we cannot permit presents to be dropped off.

Visitor Restrictions

There have been no changes to restrictions for visitors in the past week. It is important to note that visits are only for essential care functions or if your loved one is at end of life, and under these circumstances, visits are limited to one person at a time, except for end of life.

At this stage, visits are to occur in the residents' room, however, as we are now in Spring and with warmer weather, we will be looking at accommodating outdoor visits where possible.

Vaccinations

Warrigal, as the service provider, is responsible for ensuring that vaccinations have been provided to any worker that we employ, volunteers and ancillary staff. This includes contractors that are performing cleaning, catering or laundry within the home. We are responsible for the safety of people inside the home and have a duty of care responsibility to the people that live and work at Warrigal. While there is no mandate for visitors to be vaccinated, it is anticipated that once the vaccination rates are at a level that allows the economy to begin to open, and restrictions are eased, many of these will be based on providing evidence of vaccination. To comply with our duty of care, it is likely that any visitor wanting to enter a Warrigal home will need to provide evidence of a vaccination.

The clarification provided by the Public Health Orders in NSW and ACT on the staff eligible for an exemption based on a medical contraindication has meant that we now have clarity on the small number of staff seeking the exemption. We have been focusing our efforts on staff vaccinations and communicating with staff regularly on how to receive a vaccination. We have arranged for additional clinics to be held on 13th and 14th September in Illawarra and ACT through our partnership with Company Medical Services. As of 2 September, we have 93% of our staff that have either received their first vaccination or are booked into one of the clinics before 17 September. We will continue to work closely with the remaining 114 staff in the coming week.

Your feedback is always welcome and is important for us if we are going to establish trust and provide a quality service. There are many ways that you can provide this feedback including 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