

Warrigal

Inspiring communities
for older people

From the desk of
**Executive
Operations**



31 December 2021

Dear resident representatives and relatives,

It has certainly been a very challenging festive season with case numbers increasing exponentially in NSW, with 69,646 cases in the past 7 days and a significant increase in the ACT with 1,090 cases for the same period. These numbers are going to have an impact on staff and visitors with more people being exposed to the virus, through family gatherings or social events.

In the past week, we have had one resident at Warrigal Coniston test positive, while 7 of our care homes have had a staff member working in the home also test positive. The definition of an outbreak from the Commonwealth Department of Health is one resident testing positive or two staff at the same location. Warrigal Coniston is therefore considered to be in an outbreak, while other homes are being closely monitored. Fortunately, in most cases the staff members that have tested positive have not worked for a number of days, and for those that have worked, contact tracing was undertaken and tests (both PCR and Rapid Antigen) were conducted on both staff and residents/customers. These have all come back negative.

The risk of COVID-19 entering into a care home was always going to be higher with the number of residents/customers leaving the home to attend family gatherings, and our protocols of undertaking a Rapid Antigen Test on days 2, 4 and 7 after any outing was how the outbreak at Coniston was identified. All residents in the home have since had a PCR test and fortunately, no other resident has tested positive. We have established an Outbreak Management Team that have been meeting daily, including representatives from the Public Health Unit to monitor the actions that have been implemented, and we will continue to meet over the weekend.

It is difficult at the moment to have the same visiting arrangements for all care homes, as the risks are changing on a daily basis. The current criteria is that visits are limited to two fully vaccinated visitors at a time for a maximum of two hours, with outdoor visits preferred. All visits must be booked through the Visitor Management System, and a Rapid Antigen Test must be undertaken prior to the visit. This can be undertaken prior to the visit with evidence (a photo) provided, or at the home prior to entering. This would not be required if you have evidence of a negative PCR test in the previous 72 hours, however given the recent changes with testing requirements, it is understood that the numbers of people having PCR tests will be considerably reduced.

Commencing this week, it is now a requirement that all staff working in residential care must have at least 3 Rapid Antigen Tests a week prior to commencing their shift. This will be reviewed in the coming weeks as more supply becomes available, and depending on the amount of community transmissions, this may be increased to daily.

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The National Cabinet met yesterday and agreed to change the definition of close contacts as household or household-like contacts of a confirmed case. Close contacts will be defined, except in exceptional circumstances, as those who usually live with or who have stayed in the same household for more than 4 hours as a case during their infectious period. The isolation period for COVID-19 cases will be standardised regardless of vaccination status to a length of 7 days from the date of their positive test. Given that these changes were only announced yesterday, the impact that it will have on aged care is still being reviewed and a further update will be provided next week.

This is the final update for the year, and I sincerely hope that 2022 is a great year for you. 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'.

Craig Smith
Executive Leader – Service Integrated Communities