



31 March 2023

Dear resident representatives and relatives,

As we head into Easter, unfortunately we are seeing an increase in COVID-19 case numbers, in both the community and residential care homes. The concern with the current strain we are seeing in our care homes is that the infection rate across the home is higher than in previous outbreaks. Our focus is always on preventing an outbreak, but with so many cases in the community, and no requirements for masks to be worn in the community, or when residents leave for a family outing, preventing outbreaks without implementing stringent measures is not possible.

The number of individuals with COVID-19 cases within the community that have been reported has averaged 9,100 over the past two weeks in NSW and 515 in ACT. The number of Residential Aged Care Homes experiencing an outbreak has increased from 153 at the beginning of March to 205 at the end of the month, including 92 outbreaks in the past week. The current number of outbreaks includes four outbreaks at Warrigal: Shell Cove, Albion Park Rail, Queanbeyan and Wollongong.

The Easter period traditionally involves increased visiting as families understandably want to spend time with their loved ones. With the public holidays and school holidays, the number of visitors is higher, and so is the risk of an outbreak. As a result, commencing from Monday, 3 April, the following protocols will be implemented across Warrigal;

- A Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) must now be completed on every occasion a visitor comes into the care home, and every shift a staff member works.
- Surgical masks are only for homes not in an outbreak, and N95 masks are for all homes experiencing an outbreak.
- Staff and visitors will also be required to wear eye protection in addition to the N95 masks for communities/neighbourhoods within the home in an outbreak.
- Masks can be removed if sharing a meal in a large area, i.e. café or outside, but this is not recommended in shared rooms.
- No more than two visitors in shared rooms. Please plan your visits and if possible, attend outdoors and/or in larger dining spaces and/or cafes.
- Full PPE including N95 mask, eye protection, gown and gloves are required for staff and visitors when entering a room or providing direct care to a resident who has tested positive for COVID-19. It should be noted that reading glasses are not considered sufficient eye protection.
- Shared meals to be arranged prior to visiting.



31 March 2023

- The management team will risk assess any outings and monitor residents upon return to the care home.
- A minimum of weekly surveillance testing will continue across all care homes.

As indicated, there are currently four COVID-19 outbreaks across Warrigal, which are summarised below;

### **Shell Cove**

The Outbreak commenced on 25 February in the Memory Support Unit. Since then, 66 residents have tested positive across all four neighbourhoods within the home. There are currently 27 residents that remain positive, and we continue to conduct regular PCR testing on all residents that have not tested positive.

### **Queanbeyan**

The Outbreak commenced on 6 March, and since this time, 43 residents have tested positive in four of the five neighbourhoods, and 11 remain positive in three different neighbourhoods.

### **Albion Park Rail**

This outbreak commenced on 23 March and was contained within one area of the home until yesterday, when two more residents tested positive in different areas of the home. There are now a total of 15 residents that have tested positive, with 13 currently positive.

### **Wollongong**

This outbreak commenced on 29 March, and 3 residents in the memory support area of the home have tested positive.

April is a significant month with Easter and Anzac Day celebrations, and it's also the month that we focus on falls, "April Falls Month", where we look at improving balance for falls prevention, where we look at engaging and educating residents, staff and families. The month includes;

- Falls prevention quiz
- Sensory aids
- Walking aids



31 March 2023

- Appropriate footwear
- Benefits of physical activity
- Room clutter and hazards

The month is designed to have some fun and engage with residents in an area that is a high priority within aged care, and reduce the number of falls, while still respecting the rights of the individuals to exercise choice and take appropriate risks.

The number of outbreaks will impact the timing of the Booster Vaccination Program, as it needs to be administered six months after the last COVID-19 vaccine or after testing positive. However, we will be holding a number of Influenza Vaccine Programs commencing in April, and the specific details will be communicated by the local management teams in the care homes.

There has been a lot of feedback regarding the quality of meals and the dining experience in several of our homes, and this feedback is very important. We have arranged for regular meetings with Senior Management of the catering organisations and representatives from our Executive Team, including our CEO, to provide feedback and monitor actions in relation to the quality of meals. We have also arranged for a number of chefs to attend training through the Maggie Beer Foundation.

As always, I encourage you to provide us with your feedback by contacting your local management team, calling 1800 927 744 or emailing us at [warrigal@warrigal.com.au](mailto:warrigal@warrigal.com.au).

Yours Sincerely,

Craig Smith  
Executive Leader – Service Integrated Communities