

1 May 2020

Re: Latest Update on COVID-19

Dear resident representatives and relatives

I would like to once again thank you for your understanding during these difficult times where our priority has been ensuring that we are focusing on the safety and well-being of our residents and customers. I understand that there has been a lot of confusion with the public announcements made by the Prime Minister, which has only added to the distress many of you are already experiencing.

This week the Chairman of Warrigals Board of Directors wrote to the Prime Minister, a copy of which can be found on our website, where he advises that "Warrigal has continued to place the interests of our residents and community front and centre, never more than now in the face of a public health crisis that targets vulnerable older people". "It should not be forgotten that the current Government general community guidelines recommend that people over 70 should take additional precautions and that family members should avoid visiting them. Given this, the call for winding back restrictions in residential aged care homes is premature to say the least".

As from today, any person entering into an aged care home needs to have had their flu vaccination. We have been closely monitoring this at all of our locations, with the small number of staff having been advised that they cannot work until this has been undertaken. This new vaccine requirement will also apply if you are entering the care home for an essential compassionate visit or when the current restrictions are no longer in place.

We have continued to recruit additional staff to ensure that we have the resources to meet the care and emotional support needs of your loved ones, with an additional 37 staff commencing at Warrigal in the past week. We have also advertised for pastoral carers who will complement the work of the existing staff in supporting the spiritual and emotional needs of residents and customers.

In addition to this the following actions have also been undertaken since the previous update:

- The planning of a Special Care Unit at Warrigal for residents who become diagnosed with coronavirus has continued, with a secure area inside the Warilla home identified as the most suitable location. Consultation has occurred with staff, residents and relatives, and work has commenced on undertaking some minor property changes to improve infection control in the area.

- The Social Connection Strategy has resulted in additional iPads being provided to three of our Care Homes. We are also planning on how we can make Mother's Day a special occasion including a "virtual wall" with messages and videos that you may want to include on our Facebook page, message boards at each home along with staff making calls to families. There will be more information provided next week.
- Today we commenced the Safe Visiting Area for families to visit their loved ones at Shell Cove. It is anticipated that the next one at Bundanoon will be completed next week, and with the learnings from these two locations that will be installed at all of our homes.

Over the last week, I have had the opportunity to talk to many family members and have received many emails, and I sincerely thank you for your understanding of these difficult circumstances. This week our Chief Clinical Advisor, our CEO and myself met with representatives from one of the three Public Health Units covered by Warrigal, and are hoping to meet with the others next week. Their feedback was very encouraging regarding the actions that have been implemented and our Chief Clinical Advisor will be meeting with the Clinical Nurse Specialists they have to determine what additional support can be provided.

I will continue to keep you updated regularly. If you have any further enquiries, please call our Customer Relations Information Line on 1800 927 744, now extended to operate seven days a week between 9am to 9pm. You can also email us at warrigal@warrigal.com.au or alternatively for more general COVID19 advice please contact the 24-hour National Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080.

Yours Sincerely,

Craig Smith
Executive Leader - Service Integrated Communities