

24 April 2020

## Re: Latest Update on COVID-19

Dear resident representatives and relatives

I would like to once again thank you for your understanding of Warrigal's visiting restrictions that are currently in place. These were reiterated this week through a message from our CEO, Mark Sewell, following comments made by the Prime Minister regarding the impact these restrictions are having on the aged care sector.

A number of families contacted myself and the manager at one of our nine Residential Care Homes following the announcement, and while disappointed that we were not changing the current protocols, most understood that they remain in place due to the high risk of this virus coming into our aged care homes as it already has in other places.

After being in a meeting today with the Minister for Aged Care and the Chief Medical Officer, may I remind you that there is no total ban on visitors at Warrigal. We will continue to facilitate compassionate visits for residents who are receiving palliative care, including for those who are not eating properly and losing weight, which is having a direct impact on their physical and mental well-being. These are considered essential care visits and in line with the government's general community restrictions that all Australians should stay at home unless with a specific essential purpose. The Manager of each home will be closely monitoring the needs of each resident, however, if you believe that there are special circumstances for you to visit, please contact the Manager of the home next week.

You can be assured that your loved one is continuing to receive 24/7 care. This may include nursing, physiotherapy, activities, meals, morning and afternoon teas, medication, medical visits, emotional support assessments and more depending on the level of needs they have. It is our hope that you believe that of all the vulnerable older people in the community across Australia you can be assured that your loved one is receiving high care residential whole of life care by a competent and kind aged care provider, something many older people don't currently have.

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

- In response to new public health regulations on March 24, Warrigal is implementing the compulsory flu vaccination program for staff and has now resulted in the majority receiving their injection at the workplace. Over 1000 staff, contractors and volunteers have been booked in to receive their vaccination which must be undertaken by 1 May 2020. This is being monitored daily.

- The planning of a Special Care Unit at Warrigal for residents who become diagnosed with the coronavirus has continued, and we are aiming to have this ready for implementation in early May.
- A Social Connection Strategy is being implemented to support residents and customers stay connected. This includes additional technology and smart devices across all of our homes and the delivery of digital training to all staff to enable social connection with you and your family online.
- We are also looking to upgrade our free Wi-Fi coverage at every location to provide better coverage and access for residents to stay connected with family and friends.
- Warrigal is creating a network of Pastoral Care staff to provide support for staff, customers and families during this difficult period. These staff will be qualified and experienced in the provision of pastoral services especially in a disaster crisis scenario like an outbreak of the virus at one or more of our homes.
- Our Property Services Team is identifying suitable locations at each home to establish Safe Visiting Areas where family members can visit and engage with their loved ones safely. This will require structural glass or Perspex installations as well as staff supervision access. This will be trialed at Bundanoon and Shell Cove very soon, and then be implemented at all homes.

Thank you once again for your understanding of these difficult circumstances. Since the pandemic was declared and the severe risks to older people became apparent, our Executive Team has appointed a Chief Clinical Advisor and is using a formal risk assessment process to make and regularly review these difficult decisions about visitor, staff and resident safety. We are delighted that despite over 80 people at Warrigal having symptoms and being tested for the virus, no one currently has contracted it because of our cautious safety measures.

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, which has now been extended to operate seven days a week between 9am to 9pm. You can also email us at [warrigal@warrigal.com.au](mailto: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