

Warrigal

Inspiring communities
for older people

From the desk of
**Executive
Operations**



03 June 2022

Dear resident representatives and relatives,

The past fortnight has seen COVID-19 cases in the community reduce from previous weeks, but still remain at a significant risk, particularly to vulnerable people living in residential care homes. There have been 50,660 COVID-19 cases in NSW in the past week, which is close to an average of 7,000 a day, compared to 10,000 a day which has been the case for the past few months. In the ACT, there have been 5,120 positive COVID-19 cases in the past week, compared with 6,326 the previous week. Similar to NSW, the average number of cases is reducing slightly, but remains high on an average daily basis. As these numbers continue to remain high, we need to ensure that staff and visitors continue to be tested daily with a Rapid Antigen Test prior to entering the home.

The most recent information from the Department of Health is from 27 May 2022, indicating that 4,964 aged care homes in Australia have experienced a COVID-19 outbreak, an increase of 412 in the past fortnight. The number of care homes with an active outbreak in Australia is currently 780, which has increased by 19 from the previous fortnight, and is close to 30% of all aged care homes in Australia.

Since November last year, 46% of all homes have had two or more outbreaks, and 92% of homes have had at least one outbreak since the start of the pandemic. There are currently 6,274 active cases in residential aged care homes, with 3,952 being residents and 2,322 staff. Since the beginning of the pandemic, there have been over 7.1 million cases of COVID-19 reported in Australia.

Since the previous update, the outbreak at Calwell has been declared over by ACT Health. Throughout the outbreak, there were 10 residents that tested positive for COVID-19, representing 7% of the residents in the home. With cases remaining high in the community, and with winter commencing, it is anticipated that outbreaks will continue in the foreseeable future. In the past fortnight, the outbreaks at Wollongong and Queanbeyan have continued to be managed, while there have been COVID-19 outbreaks at Albion Park Rail and Stirling. A summary of each outbreak is provided below;

Wollongong: The current outbreak commenced on 6 May 2022, and residents (48% of all residents) have tested positive in four areas of the home. The strategy of residents remaining in their rooms with visitors and support from staff is very challenging in Memory Support Areas. A significant number of the current residents in Wollongong live in the Memory Support Area. There are currently 13 residents that remain positive.

Albion Park Rail: The outbreak commenced on 24 May 2022, with 2 residents in one section of the home testing positive. Over the next few days, this increased to 21 residents (15% of the home), all within the same section of the home. Of the 21 residents, 9 of them remain positive, but it is anticipated that the outbreak will be declared over by the Public Health Unit next week if there are no further cases.

Queanbeyan: The outbreak commenced on 12 May 2022, with 4 residents testing positive in one section of the home. Since this date, there have been a total of 20 residents (16% of the home) that

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have tested positive in 5 sections of the home, and of these, one resident remains positive. We are working closely with the Public Health Unit and are hopeful that the outbreak will be finished next week.

Stirling: The outbreak commenced on 30 May 2022, with 2 residents in different sections of the home testing positive. Over the course of the week, 2 more residents have tested positive, with regular testing being undertaken on all residents and regular communication with ACT Health.

In addition to the COVID update, I have summarised below some key points regarding what is happening at Warrigal and the industry:

- The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission has completed a number of reviews in the past fortnight, including a full accreditation audit at Coniston from 24-26 May 2022, and an Infection Control Audit at Goulburn on 1 June 2022.
- In order to ensure that Warrigal continually reviews our products and services, an Older Persons Advisory Group with representation from residents and the community meets during the year with members of the Executive Team and Board. These meetings were held in Queanbeyan and Illawarra in the past fortnight, with some valuable feedback provided.
- A Star Rating System will be implemented for aged care homes designed to provide consumers with more information on homes, including staffing levels and feedback from existing consumers. The feedback will be obtained through interviews conducted by an external organisation with the information provided by the Department of Health. These interviews have commenced and will be continuing over the coming months.
- The new cabinet was announced by the Prime Minister this week, and the Department of Health will become the Department of Health & Aged Care from July, which is promising for aged care.
- It is clear that a severe flu season is upon us, with more than three times the notifications of laboratory-confirmed influenza in the past two weeks. Since the start of seasonal surveillance in April, there have been 368 hospital admissions due to influenza reported across sentinel hospital sites, of which 7.6% were admitted directly to the ICU. We will continue to facilitate influenza vaccinations for residents.
- Over the past week, contacted the Primary Health Network and some GP Clinics to arrange the Winter Vaccine for residents in our care homes. The vaccine can be given four months after the booster was administered, and many of the residents are now eligible.
- The date for staff to have received their booster vaccine to continue working in aged care was extended by a month until 30 June 2022. I am pleased to advise that 99% of Warrigal's staff working in our care homes have already received the booster with only 7 staff still to receive the booster.

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I continue to welcome your feedback and would encourage you to continue to do this 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 dark ink, appearing to be 'CS' or similar initials, written in a cursive style.

Craig Smith
Executive Leader – Service Integrated Communities