

Warrigal

Inspiring communities
for older people

From the desk of
**Executive
Operations**



24 September 2021

Dear resident representatives and relatives,

Our focus this week has been on preparing our roadmap for visits to commence in the homes based on several important principles, including the rate of community transmissions, the advice of Public Health Units, discussions that we continue to have with NSW Health and ACT Health, and understanding that our residents and customers have underlying health conditions that make them more vulnerable if the virus comes into the home. While there has been an easing of restrictions in the community for people that have been fully vaccinated, at the same time the number of outbreaks in Residential Aged Care Homes in NSW and ACT has increased from 47 to 54 homes in the past week.

An aged care home is considered to be a high-risk environment, and while on average 83% of our residents and customers are fully vaccinated, and a further 10% have had their first dose of the vaccine, there are still a number of residents and customers in other aged care homes that have been admitted to hospital with COVID despite being vaccinated. In the community, 2,471 people aged over 65 have tested positive to COVID in the current outbreak, with 1,126 being admitted to hospital, and sadly 148 have died, with 9 of them being fully vaccinated. This is the setting which has been considered in preparing the roadmap for visitors returning to the homes.

Visiting will recommence from 5 October 2021, initially for two people who have been fully vaccinated. Over the course of the next week, family or friends will need to determine who will be the initial two visitors, and then they will need to contact the home directly and pre-book an appointment. These visitors can change each week, as long as they are fully vaccinated. Evidence of the vaccination will need to be provided, and the maximum time of the visit will be limited to two hours. The visit can be outdoors or in the residents' or customers' room, with a face mask required to be worn. The frequency of these visits will be increased in the coming weeks and months depending on the risk from community transmissions, with the objective of having up to three visits a week. Our Property Services Team are reviewing suitable locations for marquees and/or other alternatives for shading and seating options to be provided for outdoor visits where possible.

The next stage will be for visitors that have only received one dose of the vaccine. These visits can occur now for an essential care visit or an end of life visit, with proof of the first dose being provided. As community transmissions decline, visitors with one dose will be allowed to have social visits, preferably outdoors or in a safe visiting area within the home, wearing a face mask. Visitors who have not had any vaccine doses will be required to wear full PPE for any end of life visits. In the coming months, unvaccinated visitors will be permitted to have social visits, but they will be required to have a Rapid Antigen Test undertaken at the cost of \$10 before entering the home.

The Rapid Antigen Testing Trial commenced this week at Queanbeyan and has required staff, visitors and contractors to have a Rapid Antigen Test before entering the home. There were two cases where the staff member showed a "false positive" result, and they were sent for a PCR Test which both came back negative. Once the trial is completed, we will review the learnings and then look at implementing in Wollongong and Shellharbour areas which have recently been identified as high-risk areas.

This week is Dementia Awareness Week, developed in consultation with Dementia Advocates. It is aimed at showing that people living with dementia can continue to live well for many years after their diagnosis. It is estimated that there are about 472,000 people living with dementia in Australia. Warrigal has a strong partnership with Dementia Support Australia who provides resources and training to our staff so we can

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provide better support and care to our residents and customers. Thank you to the many families who also support the residents and customers in our Memory Support Areas.

Your feedback is always welcome and is important for us, it has been valuable in the preparation of the safe visiting roadmap that has been prepared. We want to continue providing a quality service, and to continue to work closely with all residents, customers and relatives. There are many ways that you can provide this feedback including 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' or similar initials, written in a cursive style.

Craig Smith
Executive Leader – Service Integrated Communities