

*Warrigal*

Inspiring communities  
for older people

From the desk of  
**Executive  
Operations**



**8 October 2021**

Dear resident representatives and relatives,

The past week has seen vaccination rates reach the 70% double vaccination target in NSW, with ACT just over 67%. This has resulted in a number of significant changes that will occur in NSW from 11 October, while ACT residents will need to wait another week for restrictions to ease. The main changes that will take place in NSW from next Monday are that fully vaccinated adults will be allowed to gather in larger groups in outdoor public spaces, the number of visitors to households has increased to 10, and shops will be reopening. There will be more changes once the 80% double vaccination rate has been achieved.

The increased freedoms also present increased risks, with the potential for more infectious people in the community. While the number of cases has been reducing, there were still 4542 positive cases in NSW in the past week, and sadly 62 people died with COVID. In the ACT, there were a further 235 positive cases and 3 lives lost. There are still 30 residential aged care homes in NSW and ACT with active outbreaks impacting 193 residents, which is why we need to be cautious as the community opens up. The guidelines from NSW Health in relation to visiting arrangements need to be considered in consultation with the public health advice in different locations, and at a pace that minimises the possibility of an outbreak, particularly amongst residents who may be unvaccinated and many who have underlying health conditions.

These numbers and the following points have all been factors in why the number of visits to residents/customers remains at a maximum of 2 fully vaccinated visitors each week in NSW and will commence at 2 each week in ACT once the lockdown ends with bookings required to be made in advance. The most recent advice is that visitors should be waiting for 14 days after the second dose before visiting an aged care home.

- Visitors still need to be screened into the home, which creates a demand in the administrative resources within the home. These will still need to be by appointment during office hours when management and administrative support is available.
- We continue to participate in consultations with Senior Officials from NSW Health. We are waiting on public health orders and age care specific guidance documents on the recommended approach to keep everyone safe during the opening up of the communities, which will also be a compliance issue for aged care providers.
- The Federal Department of Health and the AHPPC issued helpful guidelines last week, which are national guidelines for aged care homes regarding vaccinations and visitor management, but these will be overridden by health orders issued by NSW and ACT Health.
- Case numbers remain relatively high in many areas where we operate, particularly Wollongong and Shellharbour. The Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District has expressed the need to maintain strict risk management protocols. They have requested aged care providers in the district to manage re-opening slowly and carefully.
- Personal Rapid Antigen Testing trials are continuing at Warrigal, and discussions have been held this week about the most appropriate testing regime that will be required for residents, staff and visitors. We have distributed kits to all of our homes which are ready for use by exception at the moment, but

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it is likely that this will be rolled out along with the requirements for regular PCR testing amongst visitors and staff to detect COVID infections. In the past week, we had 45 staff across Warrigal have a PCR test.

- We are tracking weekly the number of residents/customers in every home that are fully vaccinated, those that have had one dose and those who are unvaccinated. This is important, particularly as communities open up and residents are leaving the care home. At this stage, unvaccinated residents would only be leaving for medical or allied health appointments.
- The automated visitor entry system trial commenced this week, allowing staff to focus on the delivery of care with the system checking every person entering the home. The system will also allow for numbers to be capped to a manageable number to ensure safety remains a priority in the coming weeks and months.
- We are committed to opening up and having more visitors back into our homes as soon as we can in line with community opening pathways. Still, we need to manage the infection risk and care staff workload carefully, and will be looking to avoid repeated snap closures when COVID cases are detected.
- There is an executive review undertaken weekly regarding the arrangements that are in place and how these relate to the risk and safety of the residents/customers. If you have any feedback that you would like to be considered at these reviews, please send them through, and I will ensure they are tabled.

Thank you for taking the time to send through your suggestions and comments, many of which were based on requests to visit where there has been no vaccination administered. Unfortunately, based on all of the above, this is not possible at this stage. Please continue to provide feedback by contacting your local management team, calling 1800 927 744 or by emailing us at [warrigal@warrigal.com.au](mailto:warrigal@warrigal.com.au).

Yours Sincerely,

Craig Smith  
Executive Leader – Service Integrated Communities