

Warrigal

Inspiring communities
for older people

From the desk of
**Executive
Operations**



22 October 2021

Dear resident representatives and relatives,

The past week has seen vaccination rates increase, with 92.7% of people aged over 16 in NSW having received one dose of the vaccine, while 83% are now fully vaccinated. In the ACT, the percentage of the population over the age of 12 fully vaccinated is now 83.1%. These rates have seen increased activity in the community as people enjoy the freedom. However, the risk of COVID still remains with 2,132 new cases in NSW over the past week and 425 active cases in the ACT.

The initial challenge of families and friends wanting to come in immediately to visit their loved ones and not always making appointments has now reduced, with appointments now being made in most cases, allowing the screening to be undertaken prior to the visit. While the number of visits has been consistent in the NSW care homes, this week, many of the families in the ACT homes were able to see their loved ones for the first time in months. There are still a number of families seeking to visit who are not fully vaccinated. While we respect the choices of individuals who are not vaccinated, at this stage, the only visitors allowed are those over 12 years of age who are fully vaccinated.

There are still a number of residents/customers that have not been vaccinated; pleasingly, the average has reduced over the past week from 5.2% to 3.75%, with the highest percentage being 8.04%, while one home is now fully vaccinated. The risk remains high for all residents, not just those unvaccinated, as many have underlying health conditions. We continue to be vigilant with any staff displaying any symptoms or attending a venue listed as one of concern being PCR tested. Over the past week, 27 staff were tested and all have returned negative results.

No changes have been made to the current visiting arrangements, which are now in place at all homes where residents/customers can now have 2 visits each week from a maximum of 2 fully vaccinated visitors. It does not need to be the same visitors each time. Masks need to be worn throughout the visit, and if you want to have a coffee or food, this should be done outside or with a distance of 1.5m maintained and then the masks need to be put back on afterwards. There are some families that have more than one relative in the same home, and in these cases, you can visit both of them up to twice a week.

It is now a requirement that all staff working in Residential Aged Care must be fully vaccinated by Monday, 25 October 2021. While most of our staff were vaccinated through in-house clinics, it was not a requirement to provide confirmation of this until recently, and there has been a lot of work undertaken this week to ensure we are compliant.

The Australian Technical Group on Immunisation (ATAGI), Australia's expert panel on vaccinations has recommended a third dose of COVID-19 vaccine for severely immunocompromised people. This is not specific to residential aged care, but for people with certain conditions that may not be fully protected by the regular two doses of the vaccine. We will be working closely with the GPs to identify those residents who would be recommended for the third dose within 6 months of the second dose.

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The policy on how we will implement Rapid Antigen Testing has been finalised and will require all staff, visitors, contractors and volunteers to be tested on random days over the course of a fortnight. These days will change over the two week period, with the intention to have three days one week and a different three days the second week. The testing needs to be supervised by a Health Practitioner that is registered with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA), and while we will be looking to recruit more resources, the implementation will be staged as resources become available.

Thank you for taking the time to send through your suggestions and comments. While I reply to most, some of the emails that offer words of encouragement are not always acknowledged immediately, but are sincerely appreciated, and sent to the relevant care home. Please continue to provide feedback 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 black ink, appearing to be 'CS'.

Craig Smith
Executive Leader – Service Integrated Communities