

Warrigal

Inspiring communities
for older people

From the desk of
**Executive
Operations**



17 December 2021

Dear resident representatives and relatives,

I am hopeful that this will be the final update for the year. I want to recognise how tough the year has been for everyone involved in the aged care industry, particularly the residents/customers and families, who were not able to have personal contact with each other for many months. I appreciate the patience and support that you have shown as our focus remained on safety and managing the different variants of COVID-19 as they emerged. I am sincerely grateful for your understanding and for the suggestions that have been provided throughout the year.

There were 57 positive cases in the ACT in the past week, an increase of 14 from the previous week, with 75 active cases. Unfortunately, the past week has seen a dramatic increase in the number of positive cases in NSW, with 7,700 cases, an increase of 5,282 cases, from the previous week. These numbers are clearly a cause for concern, particularly with the anticipated large number of social gatherings in the coming week, with NSW Health already updating the status of some public hospitals to “code red”, which involves restrictions on visitors. This will continue to be a significant risk that we will monitor closely in the coming weeks.

While there are positive cases in two of the Local Health Districts where Warrigal operates (Illawarra Shoalhaven and South West Sydney), there are no venues currently located near our care homes that would result in additional restrictions being implemented. I sincerely hope that this remains the case so that you will be able to visit your loved one during the festive season. NSW Health is closely monitoring the situation concerning the Omicron variant and will continue to issue regular guidance to residential aged care providers. If there are changes in the coming weeks, we will issue an updated communication at short notice to the families impacted, but at this stage it remains at two adult visitors and two children under the age of 12. Any requests for larger numbers will need to be approved by the local management team, depending on the available spaces to accommodate the visit, preferably outdoors.

The easing of restrictions in the community has not resulted in any changes with the wearing of face masks in aged care homes, which are essential for all staff and visitors. However, the significant increase in community transmissions has meant that any unvaccinated visitors wanting to visit from next Monday, need to contact the home and request special consideration for an outdoor visit for up to 2 hours, which need to be booked in with the home, and full PPE needs to be worn. At this stage these visits will be limited to one a week, and all unvaccinated visitors must have a Rapid Antigen Test at their cost.

I hope many of you have had the opportunity to use the new Visitor Management System that is now operational in our care homes. Once your vaccination status has been uploaded into the system, you can book in using the system which provides visitors with a sticker that provides evidence to the staff that you have checked into the home. It is important that you also check out when you are leaving so there is an accurate record of who is in the home at all times. Bookings

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must be made through the system, as visiting numbers may be limited in the home if the current trend with increased cases continues.

There will be a number of residents/customers that will be leaving the care home to attend family gatherings, and we understand that in some cases family members may be attending an event after returning from overseas. If that is the case, the current requirements are that the person needs to get a PCR test within 24 hours of arrival, and again on day six. We would not be allowing residents/customers to attend any gatherings if these requirements were not met given the risk involved.

The booster program continued this week with 35 residents at Mt Warrigal attending a clinic within the home. While the booster is not mandatory, the evidence from NSW Health is that it is considerably more effective particularly with the Omicron variant. If you haven't yet had the booster, please consider doing this as a matter of priority if it has been at least 5 months since you received the second dose.

If this is the final update for the year, I wish you all a safe and happy Christmas and look forward to keeping you updated in the new year. 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' or similar initials.

Craig Smith
Executive Leader – Service Integrated Communities