

15 January 2021

Re: Latest Update on COVID-19

Dear resident representatives and relatives

I am pleased to confirm that there are still no positive cases of COVID-19 at Warrigal.

Yesterday was the first time since 6 January 2021 where there were no community transmissions recorded in NSW while there continues to be positive cases from travellers returning from overseas. The focus this week has been on Brisbane and the new strain of the virus, which again is a reminder of the need to remain vigilant in our approach to safety.

The encouraging news this week was the announcement made by the Australian Government with plans to bring forward the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine to February 2021, along with the welcome news that aged care staff and residents have been prioritised for early access to the vaccine. The decision on whether the vaccine will be mandatory for employees will be determined by State/Territory Governments, just as it is with flu vaccinations.

The advice from NSW Health is that visitors from the Greater Sydney Area should still be excluded, which includes the Wollongong LGA. The only exception would be if someone residing in one of these areas is providing an essential care function, or is visiting a resident who is being palliated. These exemptions would need to be discussed with the local management team.

While the reduction in community transmissions is encouraging, the restrictions that were implemented from the beginning of this week for all care homes in the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District will continue with some minor amendments. This includes the following;

- All staff and visitors must wear a mask in all residential care homes.
- Residents in Wollongong and Shellharbour LGAs can have a maximum of two visitors each day. Family or friends who are providing essential care functions or emotional support are in addition to the two visitors each day.
- They may have different visitors each day provided they are not from the Northern Beaches, Wollongong LGA, and Cumberland or Canterbury/Bankstown Council areas.

These arrangements will be reviewed next week with the intention of further easing the visiting restrictions if the community transmissions continue to be low.

Our screening tools have been updated to reflect all of the current “hotspots” within NSW and Brisbane, and any staff or visitors providing essential care services will not be allowed into the care home if they have been at any of the venues on the screening tool.

We have had the Outbreak Management Plans at a number of our homes reviewed by the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission recently where they have turned up unannounced, including on weekends to ensure that they are regularly being updated. This has been valuable and resulted in some additional training being coordinated for clinical staff working on weekends.

I sincerely appreciate your patience and understanding with the current arrangements, and further advice will be provided next week. I apologise for the inconvenience, but we will continue to ensure that safety is our priority, and please do not visit if you have any symptoms or are feeling unwell.

Please do not hesitate to contact Warrigal by email at warrigal@warrigal.com.au with any feedback you might have or by calling our information line on Customer Relations Information Line on 1800 927 744.

Yours Sincerely,



Craig Smith
Executive Leader - Service Integrated Communities