

Warrigal

Inspiring communities
for older people

From the desk of
**Executive
Operations**



17 September 2021

Dear resident representatives and relatives

Today marks a significant milestone in the aged care industry, with all staff working in residential care now required to have had at least the first dose of the COVID vaccine. This has required a significant amount of coordination with vaccination clinics at all of our homes supported by General Practitioners that have a relationship with Warrigal with staff attending vaccination hubs. We also submitted a request through the Department of Health to partner with Company Medical Services to provide clinics in Illawarra and Canberra. There were four clinics held this week, and I am pleased to advise that this has enabled Warrigal with achieving first vaccination rate of 99.2% of our staff in residential care. Evidence of these vaccinations have been sent to the Commonwealth Department of Health.

Over the past month, a small number of staff have left Warrigal as they refused to be vaccinated, which has left ten staff across our 11 care homes that have not been vaccinated. None have indicated that they will be submitting a medical contraindication to continue working. Some staff will be taking leave to consider their options, while six have indicated they will not be vaccinated, which is their right. The majority of staff have received both doses of the vaccine, with 29% still to receive the second dose, which reflects the number that have been vaccinated in the past few weeks to ensure that we were compliant with the deadline.

While all staff now working have had at least their first dose of the vaccine, we are remaining vigilant in having any staff displaying symptoms or being a close or casual contact to be tested. In the past week, there was 35 staff tested from 10 different care homes.

In the past week, there have been some changes made on the areas currently under 'stay at home' orders in relation to a reasonable excuse to leave home. These changes relate to outdoor recreation. If you are fully vaccinated, you can attend an outdoor gathering in a public place of up to 5 people for exercise or outdoor recreation in your local government area, or within 5kms of your home if you cross into another local government area. This change does not impact the current visiting arrangements at Warrigal, as the public health orders still prohibit gatherings in homes or private areas.

I appreciate that many family members are becoming more distressed the longer the current restrictions remain where only one visit is permitted to a resident each week if they have advanced dementia or a mental illness that requires emotional support. I am hoping that we will be able to look at easing these restrictions in the coming weeks, and we are currently developing a policy that will incorporate a number of key principles that may be adopted in the policy including the following:

- Having a staged opening up plan that is flexible.
- Considering the arrangements in the Local Health District or Local Government Area where the home is located.

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- Using COVID safe screening practices which will incorporate the learnings from the trials that will be undertaken with Rapid Antigen Testing at Queanbeyan and electronic Visitor Management Screening at Albion Park Rail.
- Outdoor visits will be preferred along with Safe Visiting Areas with time-limited visits with masks worn and social distancing rules applied.
- NSW and ACT Health Orders and recommendations will need to be followed to minimise infection.
- Visitors that are not vaccinated will need to wear full PPE.

We need to ensure that any processes implemented continue to provide the residents with the safest environment possible and are consistent with the community guidelines.

COVID-19 Cases – NSW

In the past week, the number of positive cases declined marginally with 9,159, a decrease of 795 cases from the previous week with an average number of 1,308 each day. There are now 1,245 people in hospital, with 228 in Intensive Care.

The total number of vaccines administered in NSW is now over 8.6 million, 80.7% of the population aged over 16 years of age. There are over 5.4 million who have received the second dose, which is just under 50% of the population.

COVID-19 Cases – ACT

The number of active cases in the ACT has been reduced to 245 active cases with 30 cases in the past 24 hours. The total number of recovered cases is now up to 341 with 8 people currently in hospital. The percentage of the population that have received the first dose of the vaccine is 80.2%, while over 55% have received the second dose.

The current lockdown in ACT was extended this week for a further four weeks until 15 October 2021.

Your feedback is always welcome and is important for us if we are going to establish trust and provide a quality service. There are many ways to provide this feedback including contacting your local management team, calling 1800 927 744 or emailing us at warrigal@warrigal.com.au.

Yours Sincerely,

Craig Smith
Executive Leader – Service Integrated Communities