

Warrigal

Inspiring communities
for older people

From the desk of
**Executive
Operations**



6 OCTOBER 2023

Dear resident representatives and relatives,

While we are only a month into spring, the recent hot weather has been a timely reminder of the need to ensure that we are reviewing our Emergency Management Plans at all of our locations as we head into summer. These reviews are comprehensive and required under the Aged Care Standards, which include possible risks to staff, residents and visitors, and how to mitigate these risks particularly in the event of an evacuation. The plans will be continually reviewed with a focus on ensuring we provide care and services during an emergency.

I was hoping that with the warmer months, there would be a significant reduction in COVID-19 cases, however, the number of outbreaks in residential aged care homes and the number of reported cases within the community has remained relatively constant. The number of reported cases of COVID-19 in NSW last week was 1,118 compared with 2,197 at the beginning of the month, while the number of reported cases in the ACT has remained consistent with an average of 178 cases a week.

There are currently 142 residential care homes in Australia experiencing a COVID-19 outbreak, which has increased by 60 over the month. In the past week, there have been an additional 64 outbreaks in residential aged care. We have one COVID-19 outbreak at Warrigal that commenced on 29 September at Goulburn, and to date 7 residents have tested positive. There is also one resident who has tested positive at Warrigal Albion Park Rail, which is not classified as an outbreak, and as a result surgical masks are required to be worn throughout the home.

There will be no changes to the current protocols that were implemented from the beginning of September. The number of community transmissions and outbreaks means that the following will still apply;

- Staff and visitors will no longer be required to wear masks.
- RATs must continue to be undertaken daily by staff and visitors.
- Weekly surveillance testing of residents will continue to be undertaken.
- Staff and visitors have the option of wearing masks all the time throughout the home, even if the home is not in outbreak or had an exposure.
- If one resident tests positive, then surgical masks will be worn in all areas of the home. However, if more than one resident tests positive, this is an outbreak and N95 masks will be required for all staff and visitors.
- The Visitor Management System must be used anytime someone enters the care home.

Over the past week we have facilitated voting in the Referendum with the support of the Australian Electoral Commission for residents who are still enrolled to vote. This has occurred at 8 of our residential care homes, and arrangements have been made at Warrigal Albion Park Rail, Mt Warrigal and Bundanoon for voting next Monday and finally Goulburn on Wednesday. This has also required the support of many family members, which has been appreciated.

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Warrigal has a growth strategy that is incorporated into our 2030 Strategic Plan, and I am pleased to advise that as part of this strategy, we have entered into an agreement to purchase St Andrews Village in Canberra. The Department of Health has formally approved the transfer of bed licences, and we anticipate that the sale will be completed next week. The home has 176 single rooms all with ensuites, and there are 30 independent living units located on the site that will form part of Warrigal's community villages. This acquisition will make Warrigal the largest residential aged care provider in ACT.

During September, Dementia Awareness Week was recognised, which is focused on encouraging people to act on dementia. This year, one of the exciting projects that we are involved with in ACT is "digital life stories", where we capture the "essence" of the resident and their life journey, which is a short video presentation that staff can access through a QR code, to provide them with information about the resident. This is a partnership with academics from the University of Canberra, Local Health Districts and another provider that will involve volunteers being trained and mentored in how to capture the digital stories.

Please continue to provide us with your feedback by contacting your local management team, calling 1800 927 744 or emailing us at warrigal@warrigal.com.au. I would like to thank those families who have contacted me with feedback, which is always appreciated.

Yours Sincerely,

Craig Smith
Executive Leader – Service Integrated Communities