

**7 JUNE 2024**

Dear resident representatives and relatives,

The winter season has arrived, and with it, COVID-19, influenza and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) are at elevated levels within the community. The data from NSW and ACT Health indicates that COVID-19 and RSV are at high levels in the community, and influenza is at a moderate level. We continue to review our protocols monthly, and a summary of the current protocols are summarised below;

- Residents will continue to be tested with a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) weekly, and this continues to be the primary source of identifying an outbreak.
- If there is no outbreak in a care home, all staff, contractors and visitors are required to undertake a RAT on a weekly basis. If an outbreak is declared, which would involve two residents testing positive, this would increase to daily.
- In an outbreak, tests continue to be undertaken every second day on residents within the care home.
- Masks must be worn if the home has an outbreak, and in COVID-19 positive areas this must be an N95 mask.
- Our care homes are all different in layout, and Managers will undertake a risk assessment to make decisions regarding closing dining rooms in certain neighbourhoods, and reducing movements around the home, including group activities. The local management teams will communicate these decisions.

The number of COVID-19 outbreaks in residential care homes in Australia increased by 211 in May, with 469 current outbreaks. The national trend is also reflected where there are currently 7 care homes experiencing an outbreak, compared to 3 at the beginning of the month. Below is a summary of the current outbreaks at Warrigal;

- Warrigal Stirling: Outbreak commenced on 20 May. 43 residents have tested positive since this date, with 4 active cases.
- Warrigal Queanbeyan: Outbreak commenced on 22 May. 35 residents have tested positive since this date with 14 active cases.
- Warrigal Multicultural Village: Outbreak commenced on 23 May. 8 residents have tested positive since this date with 5 active cases.
- Warrigal Goulburn: Outbreak commenced on 29 May. 11 residents have tested positive since this date with 6 active cases.
- Warrigal Calwell: Outbreak commenced on 30 May. 29 residents have tested positive since this date, with 26 active cases.
- Warrigal Shell Cove: Outbreak commenced on 3 June. 11 residents have tested positive since this date and all remain active cases.
- Warrigal Coniston: Outbreak commenced on 3 June. 7 residents have tested positive since this date and all remain active cases.

It is important that the Visitor Management System, which checks visitors' temperatures and tracks visit frequency, is used on every occasion when entering a care home. While it provides the added level of protection with temperature checks, it also provides valuable information on the number of visitors going into each home and, importantly, identifies those residents who have not received any visitors.

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During the month of May, there were 12,714 visits made to residents, while 336 residents had no visits recorded. This information is used by our lifestyle team to provide any emotional support that may be required. I would like to extend a warm welcome to the 38 permanent residents who moved into Warrigal during May. There were also 59 residents that came in for respite, with a number of them choosing to stay on permanently. We understand that moving into a care home can be a challenging time for families, and if you have any feedback on how this experience could be improved, please let us know. Thank you for choosing to live at Warrigal.

There were some significant events held during May, including a workshop that was held with the Warrigal Board and Executive Team to focus on Warrigal's Strategic Plan over the short, medium and long term. The short-term focus is important given the changes being made in the sector with a new Aged Care Act and Standards, workforce challenges, and the technology that we need to invest in for the future. The medium-term will be focusing on sustained growth, with a focus on the models of care required for dementia and palliative care, while the longer-term focus is on innovation and ensuring we remain committed to our vision. The immediate impact of this will be an increased investment in technology and reviewing our models of care, beginning with dementia.

May was also the month where we celebrated and recognised volunteers with National Volunteer Week being held from 20-26 May. Volunteer Week is particularly important at Warrigal, as we were founded by volunteers and they continue to support our residents with activities, outings, social & emotional support, and fundraising for important equipment. This year our volunteers were recognised for their years of service at lunches held in the southern and northern regions, along with presentations of the Norm Rowland Awards for outstanding contributions to volunteering.

The Australian Government established the Aged Care Council of Elders as an advisory body about the aged care reforms. The Council engage with older people about the changes being made to aged care and matters relating to ageing well. They use this information to give independent advice to the Government about the aged care system and ageing well. We are pleased that one of the Council members, Val Fell, will be going to our care home at Albion Park Rail next Tuesday, 11 June, to meet with residents and family members. Val was awarded the City of Wollongong Senior Citizen of the Year award in 2020 for her volunteering work, including with Dementia Australia and Council on the Ageing. She was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for service to people with dementia in 2022, and we are pleased that she will be engaging with our residents and family members.

I sincerely wish to thank all residents and relatives for supporting Warrigal, and as always if you have any feedback, please contact me by emailing warrigal@warrigal.com.au.

Yours Sincerely,

Craig Smith

Chief of Operations