

Illawarra Diggers COVID-19 UPDATE: 31 July 2020 - Letter to Families and Visitors

Illawarra Diggers Ongoing Closure to Visitors and Updated Staff Procedures

Friday 31 July 2020

Dear Family Member and Visitors to Illawarra Diggers

In the last 14 days you will all be aware that the situation in Victoria and in many parts of Sydney has worsened in regard to COVID-19 cases, including and most relevantly to aged care. More than 80 homes in Victoria now have outbreaks with multiple residents and staff affected.

We are receiving almost daily updates from NSW Health in regard to hotspots and areas from where people are excluded from aged care homes and we expect this will continue to grow before it eases.

This week the Board of Illawarra Diggers had a lengthy discussion on our duty of care to our residents and the systems and procedures in place. Following the meeting I discussed the current situation with members of our Clinical Governance Committee (including external health professionals) and also met with our residents to discuss the state of matters and proposed actions.

The outcomes of these discussions and consultations are as follows:

Visitors to Illawarra Diggers

1. The home will remain closed to all unauthorised visitors;
2. This will be reviewed on a daily basis with updated information from various agencies to ensure the health and wellbeing of our residents and staff;
3. I will communicate with families and residents every two weeks to update everyone on any changes;
4. As soon as we are able to re-open to visitors we will communicate this to families immediately;
5. We will continue to assess each special request case on its merits so as to ensure we keep the physical and spiritual health of our residents as our primary consideration.

Resident Appointments

1. We will continue to facilitate residents attending external medical and health related appointments that need to be attended;
2. Families need to advise the office prior to the appointment date and make the necessary arrangements, including date, time, location and duration of the appointment and a list of names and contact details of anyone who will accompany the resident.
3. Please be aware that if the correct procedure is not followed i.e. if the appointment forms are not filled out or the residents does more than just attend the appointment without full disclosure then, for the protection of the other residents and staff, the resident may be required to remain in isolation for up to 14 days on return, which absolutely none of us wants.

4. Families accompanying residents are asked to consider wearing a mask to provide additional protection to our vulnerable residents.

Staff Procedures

In line with aged care facilities in the affected zones close to Wollongong and also consistent with all state run facilities and aged care homes in NSW, from Monday 3 August our staff will be required to:

1. Complete a full disclosure questionnaire when they start each shift and have their temperatures taken and recorded by another, designated staff member. To date temp checks have been completed but not the full declaration statement each shift;
2. Wear surgical face masks in all common areas and resident private areas where there is likelihood of encountering a resident. At present staff will be permitted to remove their masks when in care stations and offices provided they are able to maintain safe distancing.

These additional measures are not yet required by NSW Health or the National Health authorities, however we believe they are an addition precaution that is needed and also there is high likelihood that it will become a requirement in the near future so we should embrace it now for the good of our residents and staff.

As previously advised, if you wish to deliver anything to your family you will need to do so, in office hours, Monday to Friday. The office staff will accept the delivery and ensure it gets to your family member.

Should you require further information regarding COVID-19, please refer to the Commonwealth Department of Health website:

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>

We will continue to update our procedures and protocols in line with government guidelines and to communicate with our residents and our families and Illawarra Diggers community.

As always, Illawarra Diggers will continue comply with all government directives and to make informed conservative decisions to ensure the best outcome for our residents and staff.

Yours sincerely,



Peter Whittall
CEO

Illawarra Diggers Aged and Community Care