

Illawarra Diggers COVID-19 UPDATE: 23 June 2020 - Letter to Families and Visitors

Ongoing Quarantine and Flu Injection Update

Tuesday 23 June 2020

Dear Family Member and Visitors to Illawarra Diggers

Again I would like to thank all of you, our families and resident representatives for the support of our efforts to keep our residents safe and healthy during this pandemic. We have continued to isolate and test residents who present with flu-like symptoms but have continued to return negative results. A number of staff and/or their families have also taken themselves for testing and again, all have been negative.

As we have seen in some notable examples in Residential Aged Care homes, once the virus gets in, the implications are very severe. Our home would be under the control of NSW Health and it would be a containment rather than prevention issue. Our absolute best strategy is to prevent the virus entering Illawarra Diggers at all.

The legislation and Codes of Conduct in place in NSW are being applied at Illawarra Diggers.

We realise that as Covid-19 restrictions ease in the community there is an increasing expectation that things are also easing in aged care.

As noted in a previous letter, the initial NSW Covid-19 Aged Care legislation expired yesterday 22 June, and was replaced with a new gazetted piece of legislation. The Public Health (COVID-19 Aged Care Facilities) Order (No 2) 2020 under the Public Health Act 2010.

This new Order allows some relaxation in visiting protocols however quite strict requirements are still in place as the Order still deems COVID-19 to be a risk to public health.

The following details the current strategy:

Restricted Quarantine Access at Illawarra Diggers Ongoing

1. All external access doors locked 24 hours to prevent unauthorised entry;
2. **Access via the front door, only to the reception desk, between 9am and 4.30pm.** To gain access please press the intercom button to the left of the front door to speak with staff;
 - **Visitors are reminded and requested not to arrange for family members to meet them at other entries** as we are unable to monitor these points and this may expose all residents to unnecessary risk;
3. **Visitors who wish to meet with residents are requested to first ring the office and arrange a suitable time and day rather than just turn up.** Staff need to be available to undertake screening of the visitors and also we do not want multiple families in the visiting area at the same time. This also applies to weekends. Please ring during weekday office hours and the name and time will be given to the Weekend Coordinator to ensure that visitors are not delayed unnecessarily;

4. Visitors for palliative residents and some residents suffering advanced dementia may call reception to arrange for appropriate access to support their family member;
5. The requirement for flu vaccinations to be evidenced for ALL visitors remains unchanged;
6. Any authorised visitor or tradesperson is required, upon entry, to sanitise their hands, put on a face mask and then speak with the reception staff who will require the tradesperson/visitor to fill in a questionnaire and be temperature checked before entering the home;
7. Visitors of all ages are now welcome, with the 16 year age limit being lifted. Legislation still sets the maximum number of visitors to a resident at two. The limit of two visitors includes children as visitors;
8. While no group excursions are yet allowed, residents may go out on family visits, provided Illawarra Diggers is aware of where they are going and who the primary contact/person responsible during the outing is.

Our reception and care staff are authorised to refuse entry to any person if:

- they deem them to be an infection risk based on the pre-entry criteria; or
- there is no prior arranged booking and the staff are unable to accommodate the visitors at that time.

This second point has, unfortunately, been an ongoing issue for our staff with family members and friends continuing to just turn up out of hours and on weekends without prior arrangement. Staff do not have to accept visitors under these current restrictions unless ALL criteria are met. Please do not put our staff in a position of having to refuse your visit as it would create unnecessary stress for all, especially our residents.

All measures are in place for the safety and wellbeing of our residents, your family members. The residents and staff all really appreciate your support in complying with these restrictions for the time being.

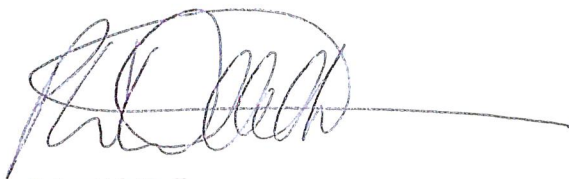
Should you require further information regarding COVID-19, please refer to the Commonwealth Department of Health website:

<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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Whittall', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Peter Whittall

CEO

Illawarra Diggers Aged and Community Care