

Illawarra Diggers COVID-19 UPDATE: 2 April 2020 - Letter to Families and Visitors

Ongoing Quarantine and Flu Injection Update

Thursday 2 April 2020

Dear Family Member and Visitors to Illawarra Diggers

1. Restricted Quarantine Access to Illawarra Diggers Ongoing

In my letter dated 19 March, I said that we were initiating our strict access procedures for the following two weeks. Over the past two weeks we have seen a significant tightening of physical and social distancing rules around the world and, most relevantly, in Australia.

The Australian and New South Wales governments and their Departments of Health have also continued pass legislation and publish guidelines related to the broader community as well as specifically for residential aged care. Following the Prime Minister's announcements on 18 March, the NSW parliaments passed legislation on 27 March bringing these restrictions into law in NSW.

Because of this, Illawarra Diggers will continue its strict access restrictions until further notice.

These include:

- all external access doors locked 24 hours to prevent unauthorised entry;
- 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;
- any tradesperson or authorised visitor 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.

Our reception staff are authorised to refuse entry to any person if they deem them to be an infection risk based on the pre-entry criteria.

Access for family members of palliative residents is still able to be arranged provided family members comply with the entry criteria.

2. Flu Vaccines and Access to Residential Aged Care Facilities

All states and territories have released directions that set out requirements with regard to entry into and visitors to residential aged care facilities. These directions give effect within each jurisdiction to the decisions made by National Cabinet that were announced by the Prime Minister on 18 March 2020.

The state and territory directions set out specific requirements in relation to influenza vaccinations.

The following Q&A is reproduced from the Australian Government department of Health:

Does everyone entering a residential aged care service need to be vaccinated?

Yes. This applies to staff, visitors, health practitioners, volunteers and others (for example, cleaners, tradesman, gardeners, maintenance staff).

What are aged care providers' obligations regarding persons entering the service?

Under the state and territory directions, aged care providers are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure that a person does not enter or remain on the premises if they do not meet the influenza vaccination (and other) requirements set out in the relevant state and territory directions.

How will aged care providers know whether persons seeking to enter a service on an ad hoc basis (eg tradesmen) have been vaccinated?

Approved providers should seek appropriate evidence of immunisation status from individuals seeking to enter the service. Appropriate evidence may be a statement or record from a health practitioner; or an immunisation history statement available from Medicare online or the Express Plus Medicare mobile app.

How will compliance with these requirements be assessed?

State and territory law enforcement agencies will enforce these directions. Persons who fail to comply with any of the directions could face penalties including fines for individuals and for bodies corporate.

As I reported on Tuesday, we have received the vaccines for the residents from the Department of Health and we are still awaiting the delivery of the vaccines for staff.

While the legislation referred to above restricts all access to anyone who is not currently immunised, the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee has indicated that restrictions should be placed on those who have not been vaccinated against influenza after 1 May 2020.

In line with this recommendation, no staff, visitors, trades or other persons will be allowed to enter Illawarra Diggers without valid proof of vaccination from 1 May 2020. We will be communicating this to all trades that we deal with as well.

3. Additional Comfort Supplies

A number of residents have relied on their regular shopping trips to buy additional items such as clothing, magazines, lotto tickets, biscuits, etc.

Although we do provide a balanced diet across the day, these are understandable additional expectations of life.

Unfortunately our residents are unable to access some of these additional items now and so can all family and friends please give this some consideration and help to provide additional support.

Our staff are very generous with their personal time and have always picked up some extras for less mobile residents without families from time to time but these requests are now increasing and staff are being asked to buy lotto tickets, shop for wool and clothing and buy a range of different fruit and food items. This is just not possible for so many residents.

If you are able to assist with your family member by buying them a magazine subscription or delivering some special items to our office that would be greatly appreciated. These are very difficult times for everyone and we are working hard to make them as easy as possible for our residents. We will also be increasing our range in our small shop in reception to cater for some specific requests from residents.

4. Connecting with Residents

We have had quite a few residents take up our offer to facilitate skype/Face Time with their families which has been great. The email to arrange this or to leave a message for one of our residents is lifestyle@illawarradiggers.com.au .

If you want your family member to have internet access themselves for their own device or a phone in their room, please contact our admin office.

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.

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