

## Illawarra Diggers Family and Visitor COVID-19 UPDATE

Monday 21 December 2020

### Dear Family Members and Visitors to Illawarra Diggers

Merry Christmas to you all for this coming Friday.

Well things have changed again since I wrote on Friday 18 December, just three days ago.

On Sunday 20 December the NSW Government announced restrictions to take effect at midnight last night, restricting all visitor access to residential care homes in NSW. The same order also reinstated the need for mandatory clinical face mask wearing by all staff when dealing with residents. This also applied to any visitors who may be granted special exemption.

This is currently scheduled to be reviewed prior to the order expiring at 11.59pm on Wednesday 23/12/2020.

In regard to visitors leaving the home to attend appointment and family functions, the public health directives frustratingly did not address these matters but seemingly left it to homes to make their own determinations. The aged care peak bodies ACSA and LASA met with NSW Health this morning but were given no further direction either.

This morning we held a resident meeting to update them on emerging matters and seek their opinion on next steps for Illawarra Diggers.

In the absence of any government directive at that stage, the residents all agreed to temporarily return to our "bubble" with no visitors allowed in and no residents to leave the home unless to attend a critical medical appointment. Several residents have already cancelled trips to stay with family over Christmas and the others are waiting for more clarity later in the week.

This afternoon I logged into a Zoom conference with NSW Health executives as well as about 220+ providers to receive an update. With 80+ confirmed infections in Greater Sydney the directives of last night are holding. NSW Health was able to confirm that their jurisdiction can restrict access to residential care homes, hence the visitor access restrictions in place. They cannot, however, restrict residents from leaving residential care homes and so did not issue a directive in this regard.

When questioned however, NSW Health confirmed that any resident leaving the home for other than an essential medical or allied health related appointment, would be required to be isolated and quarantined for 14 days on return.

This is consistent with what we discussed with the residents this morning. This would be very unpalatable for the residents, staff and families, so would be a last resort. It is much better, until NSW Health change their advice regarding restricted access and the present outbreak threat, that all residents remain within Illawarra Diggers except for essential medical or allied health appointments.

We will still run "outings" on buses to get out for a drive and also plan for our Christmas Lights drives later in the week.

As a backup plan we are also catering to accommodate all residents being here for Christmas Day in case they are unable to attend family functions as currently planned. If this is the case then please be assured that all residents will be given a special Christmas her with us.

This has come at a very difficult time for everyone, both here and overseas, and is putting undue stress on families after a very tough year. Please be assured we will continue to do everything we can to support our residents at all times.

We will be meeting again with all available residents tomorrow, Tuesday 22 December, to further update them on any developments.

If you have any requests or suggestions please contact Vikki, Debra, Kayleigh or Sophie on their general email address at [lifestyle@illawaradiggers.com.au](mailto:lifestyle@illawaradiggers.com.au);

For administrative issues relating to appointments or other matters please contact [admin@illawarradiggers.com.au](mailto:admin@illawarradiggers.com.au).

As previously advised, if you wish to deliver anything to your family, you will need to do so in office hours, Monday to Saturday 8.30am to 4.30pm. The office staff will accept the delivery and ensure it gets to your family member.

Please do not deliver anything outside of these times as the admin office is not attended and care staff may be taken away from attending to residents to answer the door or they may not attend the front door if they are busy.

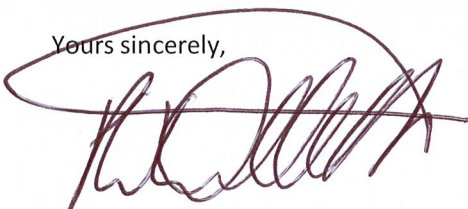
Should you require further information regarding COVID-19, please refer to the Commonwealth Department of Health website:

<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