

10 March 2022

Good afternoon residents, family members and friends,

Have you been keeping up with local case numbers? According to NSW Health, up until 9 March case numbers in our region are 1649. This is an increase of 71% from 7 March which recorded case numbers at 961.

Many of our staff have children and are receiving 4-5 alerts a week from their schools. We continue to have staff and visitors in isolation having been a close family contact or have been exposed from an unknown source. The rate the cases are increasing in our community is serious and is placing more pressure on aged care facilities across the region.

Maroba now has 2 unrelated exposures: a visitor and a staff member. This places us on higher alert and very close to the facility being closed once again. Under instruction from the Public Health Unit all approved residents and all staff on site had a PCR test today to provide a baseline of actual unidentified exposures or cases within the facility.

We will continue to monitor closely all visiting arrangements and urge everyone coming to the service for inside or outside visits to follow our guidelines. If you have been given an answer to a specific enquiry regarding your situation, please do not keep approaching other staff members till you get the response you prefer. Every staff member is not fully aware of every single scenario so cannot be expected to be able to provide you with the latest advice you have already been given. In a crisis such as a Pandemic it is vital that a chain of command is observed to ensure the safety of everyone in our service. We have one Infection Control Lead and one Outbreak Management Team Leader that ultimately determine answers to all the scenarios put before us outside of our regular Outbreak Team meetings. You may think that if you do something contrary to what has been put forward it will not be noticed or it won't affect anyone else. Please think again...one exposure has a cascading effect and ultimately impacts everyone. We are desperately trying to keep our service open and without your co-operation that will be impossible. We cannot do this alone!

Whilst we recognize that NSW Health made provision for masks to be removed for some circumstances, at Maroba we have come to realise that all our residents, including those who are hearing impaired, have managed to communicate with staff who wear heavy N95 masks very effectively. If anyone feels it is their right to remove their mask during their visit for those designated reasons, we will have to re-consider if any inside visits will take place. The Covid Virus did not get the NSW Health memo as to when a mask can be removed, it spreads freely regardless. It puts your loved one and others at risk.

Whilst masks are vital to our strategies for prevention, we are also noticing that people are forgetting other aspects to this strategy.

Remember personal hygiene and physical distancing as well as mask wearing are also effective protective measures.

Personal hygiene:

- wash your hands often for 20 seconds with soap and water
- use alcohol-based hand sanitisers when you can't use soap and water
- avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- clean and disinfect surfaces you use often such as benchtops, desks and doorknobs
- clean and disinfect objects you use often such as mobile phones, keys, wallets and work passes.
- If you have cold or flu like symptoms you should get tested for COVID-19, even if your symptoms are mild.

Physical distancing:

The more space between you and others, the harder it is for the virus to spread.

Physical distancing means:

- keeping 1.5 metres away from others wherever possible
- avoiding physical greetings such as handshaking, hugs and kisses
- practising extra care on public transport and wear your mask
- avoiding crowds and large gatherings
- practising good hygiene
- getting tested and staying at home if you have any cold or flu symptoms.

And a reminder about mask wearing, which can help protect you and those around you.

To use a mask properly you should:

- wash or sanitise your hands before putting it on or taking it off
- make sure it covers your nose and mouth and fits snugly under your chin
- avoid touching the front of your mask while wearing or removing it
- keep it in place – don't hang it around your neck or under your nose
- use a new single use mask each time
- wash and dry reusable masks after use and store in a clean dry place.

Get tested for COVID-19 if you experience any cold or flu symptoms.

<https://www.health.gov.au/health-alerts/covid-19/protect-yourself-and-others>

To other news, we would like to remind families that children are not permitted to be on site at this time. Please do not bring children and leave them to play on the playground equipment while you have a visit. We all look forward to the day that our new playground can be used to its full potential and of course we will welcome children back to Maroba.

Reminder that everyone visiting the site for an outside visit must register via the QR code at the front door or if a specific indoor visit is approved, then register on our Visitor Management System, Coolgard located at reception.

Until next time, take care and stay safe.

Yours sincerely,



Viv Allanson, CEO

