

Friday 12<sup>th</sup> June, 2020

Dear friends,

This letter follows my letter dated 21<sup>st</sup> May, 2020 and is intended to keep you informed as we all adjust to living with COVID-19. The letter will be widely distributed, including to our residents and their representatives, members of our workforce including our volunteers, our self-care residents, company members and the wider community.

### **Easing restrictions in the community**

In Australia it is easy to forget that we are still in the life and death grip of the pandemic. In world terms 5 June 2020 was the worst day yet for new COVID-19 cases.

Fortunately, June has seen a hard-won, progressive reduction of restrictions in NSW. I have had enquiries from staff, residents and representatives asking why Harbison is not easing in step with the wider community.

It's because there are special public health orders in place for residential aged care services in NSW. You can read about them here

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/aged-care-faq.aspx>

While the NSW Government has begun implementing the Commonwealth's COVIDSafe framework by modifying other public health orders, the orders for residential aged care remain in place.

We are working as fast as safely possible to relax the restrictions required to protect our residents from COVID-19. The goal is to keep everyone safe while maximising quality of life for our residents.

Our regular risk assessments consider the incubation period of COVID-19. Based on the best and latest medical advice it can take up to 14 days after infection for people to show signs and symptoms. By the time they become unwell they have most likely infected other people.

Our approach is to wait at least 14 days after each change in the rules, so we can see from the data whether the risk of community transmission has increased. We are regularly consulting with the local public health authorities to ensure our approach is aligned with their advice.

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#### **Harbison**

PO Box 349

Bowral NSW 2576

T 02 4868 6200 - Burradoo

T 02 4868 6300 – Moss Vale

ACN 001 507 642

ABN 23 001 507 624

admin@harbisoncare.org.au

www.harbisoncare.org.au

#### **Burradoo**

2 Charlotte Street

Burradoo NSW 2576

F 02 4868 6476

#### **Moss Vale**

36 Yarrawa Road

Moss Vale NSW 2577

F 02 4869 3214

We will continue to take a slow and cautious approach, but we are committed to ensuring our restrictions are proportionate to the risk.

### **Easing restrictions at Harbison**

I am pleased to confirm the re-opening of Scott Hall and Café Charlotte at Burradoo. Both have been reconfigured for social distancing and strict requirements remain in place for hand and cough hygiene. If you are even slightly unwell, please do not visit either.

We will have hairdressers at both sites from Monday 15 June 2020.

The Harbison Visitor Pod at Burradoo has been operating successfully for several weeks. We have surveyed participants and received extremely positive responses. I've included some feedback at the end of this letter. You can now book a 1 hour appointment (increased from 45 minutes) online at [www.harbison.org.au](http://www.harbison.org.au) or by phoning our Connection Coordinator, Kylie Brown, on 02 4868 6200 during office hours.

From 15 June 2020 we are increasing the length of visits within the homes from 15 to 30 minutes and extending the hours available for visits. The screening process will remain in place to ensure we meet guidelines and the requirements of the public health orders. You can now book these visits (and virtual visits) online or by phone.

If you are travelling an hour or more for a visit, please contact us to request a longer visit. We will do our best to accommodate you.

### **We all share a responsibility for preventing a second wave**

As you know, the risk to residents increases as movement and access restrictions in the community decrease. We will not know until after the end of June whether recent steps (e.g. reopening pubs and gyms) have been implemented safely.

As a member of the Harbison community we strongly recommend a cautious approach to the easing restrictions. If in doubt, wait at least two weeks after a change so you know whether the new status quo is safe.

We have serious concerns about the potential health impact of recent mass gatherings. If you participated in the recent protests, or have otherwise breached current public health orders, we require that you do not visit Harbison for two weeks. This includes members of our workforce.

### **Adapting to a cashless Harbison**

Cash is a well-recognised transmission pathway for infectious diseases including but not limited to COVID-19. Harbison is now operating on a cashless basis to reduce the risk of transmission.

Residents can set up accounts to avoid needing cash to pay for services such as hairdressing or the café. If you would like to organise an account simply contact your Personal Care Manager (Rabin Joshi or Bec Glover) and they will help you with the paperwork.

### **Changes for Reception**

We have completed modifications to the Burradoo Reception desk, and I am pleased to confirm that it reopened on 9 June 2020. The modifications involved installing Perspex screens to improve infection prevention.

The maintenance team has done a great job in a short time, but I acknowledge that the look is not consistent with our homelike approach. I am sorry for that but believe the aesthetic disadvantage is outweighed by having receptionists back on site.

Unfortunately, the reopening of Burradoo reception coincides with the closure of Moss Vale reception. Our reception team will still be available by phone, but the office will eventually be demolished to make way for the new Residents' Lounge. Until then, Personal Care Manager Bec Glover will be available most weekdays to help in the absence of a receptionist.

### **Announcing a new manager for Moss Vale**

I am pleased to announce that we have recruited a new manager for Moss Vale from HammondCare, a not-for-profit charity specialising in dementia and palliative care.

Mark Jeffrey will take up the role of Facility Manager of Moss Vale by early July 2020, after he finishes his current quality & safety role at HammondCare. Mark has previously held operational and human resource roles at HammondCare and is excited by the opportunity to lead our Moss Vale team through the refurbishment and into the future.

Harry Varvaressos will continue as acting Director of Nursing Moss Vale until Mark commences. Please join me in welcoming Mark to the Harbison family.

### **Volunteering at Harbison**

Jill Wall is the Volunteer Coordinator at Harbison. She is a volunteer herself and sits on the Resident Advisory Committee with other volunteers and residents. Jill's role is to recruit and coordinate volunteers to ensure our volunteer program meets the needs and preferences of our residents.

Jill is currently recruiting for a wide range of volunteer roles, including additional drivers so we can expand the range of transport services for residents when movement restrictions ease. We have recently commenced scenic bus tours on a limited basis, which have been very well received.

If you would like to know more about the rewarding opportunities in volunteering at Harbison please contact Jill by email at [jill.wall@harbisoncare.org.au](mailto:jill.wall@harbisoncare.org.au)

### **Resident and next of kin meetings**

We have adapted the format of our resident meetings in response to the pandemic. We are now holding meetings in small groups and the feedback so far has been very positive.

We have been unable to host our scheduled Next of Kin Meeting because of the pandemic. We will be hosting a virtual Next of Kin Meeting soon. The meeting will be hosted remotely to allow guests to attend by video or phone. We will be sending an email invitation out in due course with the details of the meeting.

### **Feedback and annual surveys**

I am grateful to everyone who has provided us with feedback during this difficult time. It is important for us to understand your concerns and priorities so we can make good decisions. Please continue to provide us with feedback and do not hesitate to contact me directly if you feel your concerns are not being appropriately addressed by our team.

2020 has been a challenging year so far. Drought, fire, and flood muted the excitement of the opening of Harbison Dementia Living by the Governor of NSW, not to mention commencement of the long overdue refurbishment of Moss Vale.

I am proud of and grateful for the way that everyone involved with Harbison has come together. I believe we have achieved good outcomes for our residents in the circumstances but acknowledge that things have sometimes gone wrong.

When things go wrong, we are committed to apologising, being open and transparent, and acting to prevent recurrence. But we also need to know when things go right, so we understand what is working as thoroughly as we understand what is not.

To that end we ask that everyone participates in our annual surveys – of staff, residents, and representatives. The more engagement we have from you, the more quickly we can improve. The annual staff survey has just closed, and we are running the resident and representative surveys over the next eight weeks. Please use the surveys as a great opportunity to rate how Harbison is doing and help us improve.

Thank you for reading this letter. Harbison has a strong track record in infection prevention and control. The pandemic will not last forever.

Look after yourselves and stay safe.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Cochran', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

David Cochran

**Chief Executive Officer**

**Feedback on the new Visitor Pod**

*Very good job. Thank you!*

*Brilliant - 100/100 - Well done!*

*Extremely well organised. It is a credit to the staff at Harbison. Thank you!*

*Perfect! Nice staff - good coffee.*

*The staff are all wonderful - should be bottled!*

*Thank you for allowing this. Very happy to see Nan.*

*Friendly and helpful staff making a difficult situation positive. Blessings!*