



Monday 13<sup>th</sup> July, 2020

Dear friends,

By now you may have heard that we are suspending all non-essential visits to Harbison from 4pm on 13 July 2020. From this time until further notice our visitor policy will be the same as our policy was from 19 May 2020. Harbison is currently free of COVID-19 and this change is intended to preserve our safe-haven status.

This letter is to explain the changes and follows my letter of 10<sup>th</sup> July, 2020. It is being circulated to residents and their relatives and representatives, our workforce including our volunteers and contractors, local general practices, our company members, and the wider community.

### **Emerging evidence of community transmission near the Southern Highlands**

As you know, we have been monitoring the Victorian outbreak with concern. Closer to home, there are now clusters associated with the Picton Hotel and Crossroads Hotel at Casula. Both are within our Local Health District making them serious risks to Harbison.

We have today identified individuals linked to both local clusters. We have decided to escalate our precautions by cancelling all visits and reverting to the visitor policy that was in effect from 19 May 2020. A copy of the policy is attached to this letter and available on our website [www.harbison.org.au](http://www.harbison.org.au)

### **Mandatory testing for patrons of the Picton & Crossroads hotels**

Anyone who attended, or who has had close contact with any person who attended, the Picton Hotel or Crossroads Hotel at Casula between 5pm on 3 July 2020 and 10 July 2020 must be immediately tested for COVID-19 and must not attend Harbison in any capacity for 14 days from the date they patronised the hotel(s).

This includes representatives and relatives of our residents.

If you are a member of the Harbison workforce, you must immediately disclose your status to your manager and plan to work from home or stand down. You may not return to Harbison until you have a negative test for COVID-19, and have self-isolated for 14 days, and are free of any signs or symptoms of COVID-19.

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#### **Harbison**

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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](mailto:admin@harbisoncare.org.au)  
[www.harbisoncare.org.au](http://www.harbisoncare.org.au)

#### **Burradoo**

2 Charlotte Street  
Burradoo NSW 2576  
F 02 4868 6476

#### **Moss Vale**

36 Yarrowa Road  
Moss Vale NSW 2577  
F 02 4869 3214

The Harbison workforce includes employees, volunteers, visiting health professionals, and contractors.

All staff who can work from home will do so until further notice. Your manager will direct you if you are part of this group.

### **Other measures**

The local clusters are expected to impact staff availability. Your manager may contact you if you have annual leave scheduled and we need you to work instead. We will work with any impacted employees to minimise the inconvenience and offer alternative dates for leave.

Any employee with a second job is required to disclose that information to their manager. We will work with you to find alternatives to working more than one job because secondary employment has been demonstrated to increase transmission risk.

### **We need everyone to be on high alert**

If Victoria was not a wakeup call, events closer to home should be. In most cases, complacency is a factor in community transmission. We can only stop the spread if we work together as a community of people committed to protecting our vulnerable people. The first wave of the pandemic was characterised by mainly overseas cases. As we have seen in Victoria any second wave will be characterised by sustained community transmission, which is much harder to control and much more dangerous.

I know many people will be disappointed if they had resident visits planned. I am sorry those plans will need to be postponed.

This is not a setback. We have planned for outbreaks and are simply putting our plans into action as part of the wider health system.

To our workforce, I implore you to think about your choices when you are off duty. Pubs and clubs are high-risk. You are health professionals. You know this. I understand that we all need to socialise but think about safer alternatives. In my view pubs and clubs are not essential and are a poor choice of venue.

To representatives and relatives when visits resume, please do not visit a resident unless you are 100% sure that you do not pose a risk to anyone. Think about where you have been in the two weeks prior to your visit, who you have been in contact with, who they might have been in contact with (if you cannot answer both questions you are a risk to residents of Harbison), and whether you have any signs or symptoms that could be the virus, however mild.

It takes self-discipline, self-sacrifice, and care. We appreciate how inconvenient it can be. But any compromise does not just put one resident at risk, it puts them all at risk (not to mention you, and our workforce and their families).

I know you have heard it all before, but for the avoidance of any doubt this is how you play your part in stopping the spread:

- Maintain physical distancing (1.5m and no more than one person per 4m<sup>2</sup> of space)
- Practice regular and careful hand and cough hygiene
- Test immediately at the first sign or symptom (including children)
- Do not go to work/school/childcare etc. if you or anyone in your household has a symptom and stay home until you are symptom free and have a negative test
- Keep gatherings of family and friends small and exclude anyone who chooses not to follow the guidelines
- Avoid hugs, kisses, and handshakes
- Download the COVIDSafe App <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/covidsafe-app>
- If you have been in a location connected to active or sustained community transmission, or in contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19, stay away from Harbison (and everyone) for 14 days

Protecting vulnerable people is a serious business, and a heavy burden. Like all burdens, the more evenly it is shared the easier it is to bear. Please work together to keep everyone at Harbison safe.

### **Abuse will not be tolerated**

We recently had an extreme case of verbal abuse directed towards one of our receptionists by a relative. I will not tolerate this behaviour any more than I would tolerate abuse of a resident.

I understand the anxiety and frustration people are feeling. Direct it to me, not my staff. I will ban anyone who behaves inappropriately towards members of our workforce. Respect is a core value at Harbison, and it is a two-way street.

If you are feeling anxious, stay calm and ask us for help. We have very talented people on our team who are here to help. Whether you are a resident or relative, or a member of the workforce, help is at hand. In addition to our internal resources staff can access our free Access EAP program anytime.

Thank you for reading this letter. I am sorry to everyone who will be inconvenienced or distressed by the escalation of precautions. We will continue to work closely with the local health authorities and NSW Health to monitor the risk and take appropriate action. We will be compassionate in the implementation of our protocols but ask that you respect the rules and recognise that they are in everyone's best interests.

Our staff are busy contacting everyone to confirm cancellation of appointments, and to offer alternatives including virtual visits and the Burradoo Visitor Pod. Essential visits will be arranged in accordance with our policy.

If you have any questions about the health of a resident please contact the Deputy Director of Nursing, Leah O'Regan (Burradoo) or Edsalyn Soon (Moss Vale), in the first instance. We welcome your feedback about the steps we are taking to keep Harbison COVIDSafe. During restricted access you can provide feedback using the form on our website [www.harbison.org.au](http://www.harbison.org.au) or feel free to provide feedback directly to me at [david.cochran@harbisoncare.org.au](mailto:david.cochran@harbisoncare.org.au)

Yours sincerely

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

David Cochran

**Chief Executive Officer**

**Encl.**

## COVID-19 Visitor Policy

Harbison is currently closed to the public and is restricting access to our premises to protect our vulnerable residents from COVID-19.

Residents are subject to the same restrictions on leaving their home at Harbison as any other person in NSW. Excursions are not permitted and like any person over the age of 70 (or over 60 for those with existing health conditions or co-morbidities, or over 50 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders) residents are required to self-isolate at home to the maximum extent practicable.

Wherever possible you should investigate other options to maintain contact with residents such as phone or video calls and social communication apps (virtual visits). We will assist you as much as possible to support these options.

If you wish to visit a resident in person, you must make an appointment and meet the following conditions:

- you are someone who provides close health and social support to the resident e.g. family, close friend, health professional, or advocate
- you do not have a temperature of 37.5 degrees or higher or any acute respiratory symptoms, however mild
- you have provided us with evidence of a current influenza vaccination prior to your visit
- you have not been overseas or in contact with a COVID-19 case or unwell in the past 14 days
- you are over the age of 16 years
- you meet screening requirements on arrival and practice hand hygiene and social distancing (minimum 1.5m) throughout the visit
- you accept supervision, and follow all directions, from staff during the visit


Visits are limited to:

- a maximum of 15 minutes per visit<sup>1</sup> or 45 minutes in the visiting pod at Burradoo
- a maximum of 2 visitors per visit
- a maximum of 1 visit per resident per day
- 2pm to 4pm each day
- resident rooms or outdoor areas

Priority will be given to:

- end-of-life visits,
- residents who have been assessed by our psychologist as facing severe hardship due to social isolation,
- residents who are living with severe dementia,
- residents who enjoyed highly frequent visitor support immediately prior to 23 March 2020,
- residents who are transitioning into residential care for the first time,
- visitors who must travel more than one hour for a visit, and
- residents who are having birthdays or anniversaries.

<sup>1</sup> The Director of Nursing may authorise exceptions to any duration and frequency limits for end-of-life visits provided each visitor spends less than a cumulative 2 hours in the building each visit

File number	Authorised by	Created by	Issued On	Location	Version No	Review Date	
Covid-19 Visitor Policy	CEO	CEO	19.5.20	S/Policies	5	2021	

At this time only a very small number of essential visits will be authorised. You will be required to sign a declaration and have your temperature tested each time you visit. We are promoting and supporting virtual visits between 10am and Midday each day. We are promoting the use of the COVIDSafe app.


The Director of Nursing may refuse entry to any person in their absolute discretion.

The screening and approval process can take time, so we request that you organise visits at least 72 hours in advance, where possible.

To request an appointment please contact your Deputy Director of Nursing (below) or our Connection Coordinator, Kylie Brown on 02 4868 6200 or [reception@harbisoncare.org.au](mailto:reception@harbisoncare.org.au)

Moss Vale DDoN	Edsalyn Soon	<a href="mailto:edsalyn.soon@harbisoncare.org.au">edsalyn.soon@harbisoncare.org.au</a> 02 4868 6349
Burradoo DDoN	Leah O'Regan	<a href="mailto:leah.o'regan@harbisoncare.org.au">leah.o'regan@harbisoncare.org.au</a> 02 4868 6295

**David Cochran**  
**Chief Executive Officer**

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