

25th August 2020

Dear Friends,

This letter follows my letter of 17th August 2020 and provides you with the latest information about our response to COVID-19.

As usual, to ensure everyone has the same knowledge we are distributing it to our residents and their families and representatives, our amazing workforce including our amazing volunteers, local general practices, our company members, and the wider community.

This letter follows a successful 'next of kin' meeting last Wednesday 19th August 2020. I would like to thank everyone who participated in our first external virtual meeting. It was valuable for me and our managers to hear directly from you, and I hope you see some of your feedback being actioned in this letter.

Changed visitor restrictions – spouses and partners

Following the latest advice from NSW Health on 21st August 2020 we have decided to resume visits for spouses and partners, provided they meet our strict screening requirements.

This change is in addition to the visits that are permitted by exceptional circumstance e.g. end of life and severe dementia, and visits by anyone to the Burradoo Visitor Pod.

The screening requirements for all visitors are designed to exclude any visitors who have been to any of the following places within 14 days prior to the visit:

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------|-----|-----------------|
| 1. | Bankstown | 9. | Hills District |
| 2. | Campbelltown | 10. | Hornsby Shire |
| 3. | Centennial Park | 11. | Liverpool |
| 4. | City of Sydney | 12. | Merrylands |
| 5. | Darlinghurst | 13. | Newcastle |
| 6. | Elizabeth Bay | 14. | Parramatta |
| 7. | Fairfield | 15. | Potts Point |
| 8. | Guildford | 16. | Rushcutters Bay |

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- 17. Surry Hills
- 18. Woollahra

- 19. Woolloomooloo

This list may change without notice, but our door monitors will screen against the latest list at the time of visit. Please respect the decision of the door monitor if they turn you away for screening reasons.

Staff and visitors who have been to Victoria in the past 14 days continue to be excluded.

There is also a list of NSW case locations, available online at <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/latest-news-and-updates>, which changes daily. Staff and visitors with any link to these locations are excluded from our homes pending clearance by the public health unit.

All staff and visitors must be free of signs and symptoms of COVID-19, wear surgical masks (not cloth masks) while inside the home, provide evidence of a current influenza vaccination, submit to a temperature checks, and practice hand hygiene. Visitors must always follow the directions of staff.

At Burradoo, all visits will be in the Burradoo Visitor Pod, unless the resident is unable to use the Pod. At Moss Vale, a room is being set up for visits in Joadja, near the temporary entrance to the home. Like Burradoo, if a resident is unable to use the visitor room other arrangements will be made.

The Burradoo Visitor Pod can be booked online at <https://harbison.org.au/visit-harbison/>

If you want to visit at a time that is not available in the online calendar, or you want to book a spouse and partner visit, please call our Contact Coordinator, Kylie Brown, on 02 4868 6200 Tuesdays to Fridays. Kylie will do her best to accommodate your request, subject to approval from Director of Nursing, Harry Varvaressos.

We will continue to monitor the risk environment and update our assessment with a view to announcing further relaxation of visitor restrictions as soon as it is safe to do so. There is still evidence of community transmission in south western Sydney, which means we remain on high alert.

I am sorry for the ongoing hurt the restrictions are causing and remind you that virtual visits can also be booked online using the same link as for the Visitor Pod. Care packages are also very welcome (no perishable food please).

Advance Care Directives – COVID-19 directions

On 3 April 2020 I wrote to you about COVID-19 and your Advance Care Directive (ACD). That information was based on three key assumptions, which have changed.

The first assumption was that aged care providers should prepare contingency plans based on 30% staff absenteeism. Based on experience at other homes, we are now required to assume 80-100% staff absenteeism in a COVID-19 outbreak.

The second assumption was that residents would be permitted visitors if they are dying from COVID-19. This is not the case. Infected people will not be permitted visitors whether they are in hospital or in an aged care home.

The third assumption was that NSW Health would adopt a non-transfer to hospital policy for residents of aged care homes, and that infected residents would be cared for under a 'hospital-in-the-home' (HITH) scenario. We now understand this will not be the case.

We note that the independent review into the Newmarch House outbreak concluded that (a) HITH is only appropriate for small outbreaks, and (b) residents should be transferred to hospital, considering the individual preference of the resident. A copy of the review is available at

<https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/08/newmarch-house-covid-19-outbreak-independent-review-newmarch-house-covid-19-outbreak-independent-review-final-report.pdf>

More than ever, we are focused on delivering person centered care of the highest possible quality. As unpleasant and difficult as the subject may be, we ask you to consider your wishes if you were to contract COVID-19.

We aim to provide you with the best evidence-based care, guided by your individual ACD. If you contract COVID-19, the thoughtful detail contained in your ACD will form the basis of a decision about whether to transfer you to hospital. This decision will be made by physicians working in the local health district and the public health unit, guided by your GP (if available) and your ACD.

Other than your personal preference for the type and context of medical care you receive, these other important factors could influence your medical care during an outbreak of COVID-19:

1. The severity of the infection and your usual general health status.
2. The number and severity of COVID-19 cases in the home.

3. Our capacity to provide high quality care (e.g. availability of staff, PPE, oxygen, and drugs for symptom management) considering the high burden of symptoms from COVID-19.
4. Transfer to hospital will likely be to Campbelltown or another large hospital in the South Western Sydney Local Health District.
5. Residents who cannot isolate in their rooms for the duration of an outbreak e.g. because of dementia, should transfer to hospital.

Even if your preference is not full active medical treatment, it may be preferable to transfer to hospital even if only for end of life comfort measures, or until it is safe to return to Harbison.

Our staff will be contacting residents and representatives this week to ask you to consider inserting a specific COVID-19 direction in your ACD. It is very important that we have your preference properly documented so we can do everything in our power to provide the care you desire, whether at Harbison or in hospital.

I am not providing you with health advice, simply asking you to consider the issue and decide whether you would like to document your preferences for COVID-19 treatment. I believe there is a strong case for hospital transfer, other than for residents who have a poor prognosis combined with a preference to remain at Harbison.

If you want advice, please discuss this issue with your family and GP soon. Contact our Deputy Directors of Nursing, Leah O'Regan (Burradoo) and Edsalyn Soon (Moss Vale), to arrange the paperwork for any changes or new ACDs. Like all good contingency plans, we hope we will never need to use it.

Abuse of staff – a reminder

I understand that people are feeling anxious in the current circumstances. Unfortunately, we are still experiencing incidents of abusive behaviour towards staff.

I remind everyone that this behaviour is not tolerated. If you want to get something off your chest, please direct your frustration to me. Our staff deserve respect, and it is not in anyone's interest to burden them unfairly with inappropriate behaviour.

Cases of threatening behaviour will be automatically reported to the Police.

Conversation in Isolation

I wrote last week about several options to support the mental health of residents, families, and staff during the pandemic.

A similar resource is being provided by health students who will provide regular phone support to people struggling with isolation. The program is called *Conversation in Isolation* and more information is available at

https://www.conversationinisolaton.org/?utm_source=ACSA+Weekly&utm_campaign=76b7f073b7-ACSAWeekly_20.08.2020&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_eccb4ab337-76b7f073b7-85282881

Until next time...

Thank you for reading this letter. I hope you find the information useful. Thank you to everyone who has provided us with feedback about our response to the pandemic. If you have any concerns, please let us know. We are here to help.

Remember, the annual Motiview *Road Worlds for Seniors* starts on 7th September 2020 at Burradoo. We are looking for volunteers for our support team, and you can sponsor our residents with a tax-deductible donation based on the distance achieved by an individual resident or the team. For more information contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Jill Wall, or Burradoo Personal Care Manager, Rabin Joshi.

Yours sincerely,



David Cochran

Chief Executive Officer