



Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2020

Dear Friends,

This letter contains important information about coronavirus. Please read it carefully and contact us if you have any questions.

### **Fire Crisis**

It was a tense start to the year as fires threatened the Highlands from two directions. Our sympathy is with those who suffered distress and loss.

I'm very proud of the way our residents and workforce calmly weathered the storm. Many of our employees live in fire impacted areas, and some of them juggled their shifts with being on the fire line as RFS volunteers. Despite this, there were few incidents of absenteeism due to the fires, and several managers interrupted or cancelled their holidays and worked around the clock at the height of the crisis.

Harbison was one of the first organisations to provide our local RFS units with support in the form of donated supplies including masks, bottled water, sports drinks and soap. Our key suppliers generously matched our donation. Our RFS volunteers were paid their usual wages while they were on duty with the RFS.

Throughout the crisis Harbison worked with emergency services to ensure that our residents were safe. We were pleased to be able to assist some residents of Warrigal at Bundanoon who were required to evacuate due to the Morton fire. They had a lovely stay as some of the first residents of Harbison Dementia Living at Burradoo. We were also able to provide emergency respite for several people who lived in areas threatened by the fires.

### **Harbison Dementia Living, Burradoo**

Our newest service admitted the first resident on the 30<sup>th</sup> of December 2019. We are deliberately limiting the rate of new admissions to ensure that everyone settles into their new home successfully. The feedback we have received from families has been very positive, and our newest residents seem to be thriving.

The home was officially opened by the Governor of New South Wales, Her Excellency The Honourable Margaret Beazley AO QC, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of February 2020. Her Excellency and her husband, Mr. Wilson, spent time with our residents, one of whom was celebrating a birthday that day!

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#### **Moss Vale**

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## Directors of Nursing and Personal Care Managers

To support the progressive rollout of our Butterfly-based model of care we have restructured some of our care management roles. Harry Varvaressos has been appointed Director of Nursing at Burradoo, supported by Deputy Director of Nursing Leah O'Regan, and Simone Mackenzie has been appointed Director of Nursing at Moss Vale, supported by Deputy Director of Nursing Edsalyn Soon.

We have created a new position, Personal Care Manager, to assist the Directors of Nursing by closely managing non-clinical care. Rebecca Glover has been appointed Personal Care Manager of Moss Vale, and Rabin Joshi has been appointed Personal Care Manager of Burradoo. Bec and Rabin have each been with Harbison for more than five years and will take up their new roles in the next few weeks.

If you have urgent clinical concerns about a resident your first point of contact should be the RN in charge of the shift. If your concerns are not urgent, please contact the relevant Deputy Director of Nursing. If you have concerns about non-clinical care e.g. activities, meals, laundry, maintenance, cleaning etc please contact the relevant Personal Care Manager.

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## Moss Vale Refurbishment

The exciting Moss Vale refurbishment project is well underway. The new laundry has opened, and we have built several new nurse stations which are designed to look more home-like and be located closer to residents with the highest needs.

The next stage of the project involves construction of a new kitchen and relocation of the staff lounge from the ground floor to the first floor. The new lounge will provide our staff with significantly improved amenities, bring them closer to residents with higher care needs, and free up the ground floor space for the new resident's gym. We expect the project to be complete by October 2020, subject to weather and other unexpected delays.

## Coronavirus

Harbison has a good track record for infection prevention and control and is prepared to escalate our routine measures for a sustained period if our residents contract coronavirus.

Coronavirus is like a very bad 'flu and can cause pneumonitis, which is a general term for inflammation of lung tissue. People older than 60 years are more vulnerable to pneumonitis than younger people.

Coronavirus is very infectious and there is currently no treatment available. The best strategy is based on prevention, early diagnosis, and case isolation.

### Prevention:

Like most viruses the best prevention is good hygiene and avoidance of contact with an infected person. Please remember to:

- Wash your hands frequently before and after eating and after going to the bathroom
- Cover your cough/sneeze, dispose of tissues, and use alcohol-based hand sanitizer (which is very effective against coronavirus), and
- If you are unwell, avoid close contact with others

### Early Diagnosis:

There are three scenarios to be aware of:

#### Scenario 1 – suspected coronavirus:

If you have a fever and/or acute respiratory infection e.g. shortness of breath or coughing, AND you have recently traveled from or through a country of concern or been in close contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus, then you might have coronavirus and should contact a doctor immediately.

Close contact is defined as spending more than 15 minutes in face-to-face contact or more than two hours sharing a closed space (e.g. home, hotel room, aircraft, hospital room etc.) with someone who has a confirmed case of coronavirus.

Countries of concern currently include but are not limited to Mainland China, Iran, Italy and South Korea (high risk), and Cambodia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Singapore and Thailand (moderate risk). This list is evolving and you should monitor information updated regularly by NSW Health at

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>

In this scenario you and anyone living with you MUST NOT visit Harbison and should notify the relevant Director of Nursing immediately if you or they have visited Harbison in the 24 hours before the onset of symptoms.

#### Scenario 2 – ‘flu-like symptoms:

If you have ‘flu-like’ symptoms but do not fit the above definition for suspected coronavirus you MUST NOT visit Harbison until your GP provides you with a clearance certificate. You probably don’t have coronavirus, but you might be infectious with something else.

#### Scenario 3 – recent travel from or through risky countries OR direct contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus:

If you do not have flu-like symptoms but have travelled from or through any countries of concern OR had direct contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus in the past 14 days, please notify the Director of Nursing BEFORE visiting Harbison. You should self-isolate for 14 days to prevent the risk that you might have the virus and could spread it to other people.

Remember, if you ever have any concerns about your health please contact a doctor.

### Case isolation:

If a resident of Harbison is confirmed with a case of coronavirus, we will work with NSW Health and lockdown the home to restrict movement and access by our workforce, residents and visitors. You will need permission from the Director of Nursing to visit a resident during a lockdown.

We will immediately quarantine infected residents to slow the transmission of the virus to others. This is known as case isolation, the third element in our strategy for coronavirus. Our staff are trained in barrier nursing which allows them to provide supportive care to infected people while protecting themselves from transmission. An experienced team will be in place to care for anyone in quarantine.

All Harbison employees and contractors will be required to have the 'flu vaccination as soon as it is available this year. We encourage you to do the same because coronavirus is expected to peak during 'flu season' and you should reduce the risk of contracting both at the same time.

It is very important not to overreact to the sensational media reports about coronavirus. Our response will be proportionate and can be escalated to meet changing circumstances. We urge you to remain calm.

You can play a role in keeping our residents and community safe from coronavirus. You may wish to discuss any need to increase the stock of medicine we are holding for your resident with you GP, but we are working closely with the pharmacist to identify any likely supply problems.

Now is a good time to review Advance Care Directives if you are a guardian for someone, to ensure the care they receive is in keeping with their wishes. If you are required to self-isolate or care for someone at home the evidence suggests that regular surgical masks are just as effective as the "P" masks which are now in short supply.

As mentioned above, routine hygiene and avoiding contact with infected people are the most effective preventative measures we can all take. If in doubt, please avoid visiting Harbison until the doubt is resolved. If you have any concerns or questions about how Harbison manages infection risk, please feel free to contact your Director of Nursing. We will update our advice as circumstances change.

### **Traineeships**

The power of our not-for-profit status is demonstrated in our learning and development strategy. Harbison recently graduated our first students from our in-house Certificate III and IV course, which we run in partnership with local RTO *The Medcast Institute*. We have also engaged our first School Based Apprenticeship and Traineeship (SBAT) trainees from two local high schools. SBAT combines paid work, training and school to provide Year 11 students with a recognized qualification and credit towards their HSC or ATAR. We hope our SBAT program provides local kids with a pathway to careers in care and nursing and helps them stay at school until Year 12.

These initiatives are part of our expanded learning and development project, which aims to improve the skills and qualifications of our workforce and create new opportunities in our community. We are exploring additional options for traineeships and are committed to supporting professionalism in aged care.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. Your feedback is always welcome. It has been a busy start to the new year and despite the fires and threat of coronavirus we are excited about 2020. Please feel free to contact me any time if you have any concerns or questions.

Yours sincerely,



David Cochran  
**Chief Executive Officer**