



Tuesday 17th November, 2020

Dear friends,

This letter follows my letter dated 9th November, 2020 and as usual is being widely shared with staff (including volunteers), residents and their families, our company members, and people in the wider community.

Moss Vale COVID-19 cases

We are not aware of any local transmission from the COVID-19 cases confirmed in Moss Vale almost two weeks ago. However, on 12 November 2020 NSW Health added Wingecarribee to the list of local government areas where extra precautions are required for aged care. Based on that advice we have decided to maintain visitor restrictions until Thursday 19 November 2020, from which time we intend to reinstate use of the Visitor Pod at Burradoo and Visitor Room at Moss Vale. We will consider further easing of restrictions at that time.

Our response to the local cases also required some employees and all volunteers to stand down temporarily to allow the contact tracing process time to identify close contacts of the cases. In most cases the stand down was for three days, and volunteers returned on 10 November 2020. We recognise the extra effort required by remaining staff during this time and thank them for coping with grace and good humour, not for the first time. We also thank our residents for accepting the temporary reduction to services that was necessary.

These cases are a reminder, if any is needed, that we cannot be complacent. They also demonstrate that the public health system is working well, and organisations like Harbison are highly prepared. I apologise for any distress caused by the recent precautions and commit to reopening to visitors as soon as safely possible.

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South Australian and New Zealand Cases

We are monitoring the evolving situation in New Zealand and South Australia, and advise that:

- Anyone (including staff) who has been in a contact tracing location in South Australia <https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/conditions/infectious+diseases/covid-19/testing+and+tracing/contact+tracing/contact+tracing> on or after 7 November 2020 is excluded from Harbison pending testing; and
- Anyone (including staff) who has been in a location of interest in New Zealand <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-public/contact-tracing-covid-19/covid-19-contact-tracing-locations-interest> in the past 14 days is excluded from Harbison pending testing.

These exclusions are in addition to the standing exclusions for anyone who, in the past 14 days, has been identified as a close contact of a COVID-19 case, or been in Victoria or a location designated as 'monitor for symptoms' or 'self-isolate and get tested immediately' at the times and dates specified <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/latest-news-and-updates#self-isolate-and-get-tested-immediately-if-youve-been-to-these-locations>.

The potential second wave in South Australia includes rapid transmission into aged care because of household links between several aged care and hotel-quarantine workers. This highlights the importance of monitoring the potential risks of transmission in your household, and not attending Harbison if there is any doubt that someone close to you may be at increased risk of infection. Working in hotel-quarantine or any health setting is a higher risk setting. This responsibility falls on not just our employees, but our contractors, volunteers, and visitors. Please consider whether this issue may impact you and contact us if you need further advice or clearance to attend Harbison.

Infection prevention & control (IPC) update

Everyone knows by heart the four first lines of defence against COVID-19: hand and cough hygiene, wearing surgical masks, maintaining social distance, and isolating and testing at the mildest sign or symptom. Beyond these basic but highly effective precautions Harbison, like all approved residential aged care providers, has a robust infection prevention & control system based on our aptly named 'Bug Control' manual. For several years, our staff have led the industry with 100% influenza vaccination rates, long before COVID-19 made this best practice approach a mandatory requirement.

We have provided our staff with opportunities to practice their response to an outbreak by conducting drills. We have recently received a positive assessment from the South Western Sydney Local Health District who audited our IPC at Burradoo. Both Burradoo and Moss Vale have recently been deemed to meet all IPC requirements based on unannounced visits from the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission.

Harbison has reserves of personal protective equipment (PPE) in the event of an outbreak. Some of this equipment is not required for standard IPC precautions, but is used when a case of COVID-19 is suspected or confirmed. Being proficient and confident in the use of PPE is critical to personal safety in the event of an outbreak. For this reason, we will be providing staff with opportunities to practice working in full PPE to take their skills beyond donning and doffing and to ensure they are confident using the special PPE that will be released for use in an actual or suspected outbreak. Please do not be concerned if you see staff wearing their full PPE, and keep in mind that they will be overcoming a range of challenges in performing their work while wearing the additional equipment.

We have appointed Enrolled Nurse, Leah Willis, to the role of IPC Lead. Leah is our IPC Coordinator in the Outbreak Management Team and will soon complete the *Foundations of Infection Prevention and Control for Aged Care IPC Lead* program at the Australian College for Infection Prevention and Control. This qualification will allow Leah to train IPC Champions and we have set a goal of having at least one IPC Champion rostered on every shift in every section, as soon as possible. Leah has been an outstanding leader during the pandemic and works closely with our educators to provide staff with the knowledge and skills they need to achieve best practice in IPC.

Christmas planning

Christmas planning is difficult this year because the current Public Health Order expires on 17 December 2020, which means we do not know what the rules will be for Christmas. We are working to support as many visitors as possible and hope we can support some residents attending small family gatherings. We will provide more information about this as soon as possible, but expectations should be realistic and from a safety perspective Christmas is just another day.

We strongly suggest that people spread visits across the festive season rather than expect to be able to visit on Christmas Day if that is their usual practice. There will not be a carol evening this year, but our care teams are planning smaller celebratory activities for residents. Please consider alternative ways to support your residents during the holidays, including sending care packages and booking virtual visits.

COVID-19 vaccination expectations

I have received some questions based on misunderstood news reports of a viable COVID-19 vaccine. We are encouraged by the positive early results being reported by several companies, but there is no vaccine available at this time. Based on public statements by the Minister for Health we expect the first vaccine might be available in Australia from March 2021 and health and aged care workers will be prioritised for vaccination. This is a very exciting prospect but until more information is available, we must be cautious about how long it will take for vaccines to allow us to return to a more normal life. Based on informal advice we have been told to expect the risk will remain high until at least late 2021.

Moss Vale refurbishment

The significant refurbishment of Moss Vale is approaching a major milestone under the excellent leadership of Mark Jeffery. We expect the new dining room, entrance, meeting room, salon, treatment room, café, and general store to open on or about 16 December 2020. There will be a hiatus from construction over Christmas, and then refurbishment of Joadja will commence in early January 2021. Work on the second lift for Mandemar has been delayed by wet weather, but otherwise the project is tracking closely to our planned schedule. I thank staff, residents, and visitors for their patience during this very disruptive stage of the project and hope you will enjoy greatly improved amenities in return.

Behind the scenes the project also involves the modernisation of our data network with a new fibre optic system allowing for future technologies like tele-health and on-demand streaming. We are replacing the ageing nurse call system with a more modern and reliable system that will support staff and residents with improved features, and Mark and his team are well advanced on preparing to launch a person-centred clinical care system that will allow staff to better meet the individual needs and preferences of residents and provide families with more transparency about the care of residents (subject to resident consent). We are expanding and updating the existing closed-circuit camera system to improve our risk and incident management capabilities and thereby improve workplace safety and security. No cameras are planned or permitted for private resident spaces including rooms and bathrooms.

Moss Vale's new Head Chef, Justin Woodward, has a mandate to provide residents with a dynamic new meal experience. The catering team are now using innovative food safety software, Simple Food, to manage resident meal choices and food safety. Special Burlodge trolleys have replaced the old portable Bain Marie to ensure meals arrive at the correct temperature regardless of where the meal will be served. The new dining room will be connected to the new kitchen providing staff and residents with a more social experience and ensure that meals are served fresh from kitchen to plate.

Aged Care Royal Commission

The Royal Commission has concluded hearings and is expected to produce a final report in February 2021. Extensive reform of the aged care sector is implied by the final submissions of counsel assisting, and we expect to see a response from Government by the May 2021 federal budget (although historically full implementation of Royal Commission recommendations takes years, if ever).

2020 Annual General Meeting

Tonight is the Annual General Meeting of Harbison. For the first time it will be a virtual meeting, held by video conference. You may not know, but Harbison has 'members' who represent the community ownership of our not-for-profit organisation. The members include our nine volunteer directors and other members of our community, many with a very long relationship with Harbison. We also have a Patron, who is traditionally the Mayor of Wingecarribee Shire.

We serve our community, and the annual gathering of members is an opportunity for us to account to our community for the work of the past year. A copy of our annual report will be available from tonight on our website if you are interested in seeing community ownership, transparency, and accountability in action.

Thank you for reading this letter. It contains important information. If you have any questions, please ask. We remain cautiously optimistic that COVID-19 in Australia is being very well managed. We are prepared to respond to an outbreak but obviously are prioritising prevention rather than cure. I am proud of everyone at Harbison this year and believe we have demonstrated strength and resilience in a very worthy cause. I humbly thank everyone for their help.

Yours sincerely,

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

David Cochran
Chief Executive Officer