

Monday 21st December 2020

Dear friends,

NSW Health directives for residential aged care - update

This letter follows my letter dated 18th December 2020. It provides important information about changes to visitor policy in response to new directives from NSW Health. The increased alert level for residential aged care signals that the pattern of the Sydney outbreak is not yet understood, and the risk of transmission because of Christmas travel and gatherings is high.

As notified by SMS last evening, we are closed to all visitors until at least 23:59 on Wednesday 23rd December 2020. This includes visitors with approved visitor status. End of life visits require permission on a case-by-case basis from the public health unit, which Harbison will manage for anyone in that situation.

All visitor outings, including for small family gatherings, are cancelled. Essential medical appointments require permission from the public health unit, which we will manage for affected residents. Extended social leave is still permitted for those families who can provide appropriate care for a resident on an extended basis, including COVID-19 prevention. If this option is of interest, please contact our Admissions team via admissions@harbisoncare.org.au of 02 4868 6200 and they will coordinate your request with the relevant manager.

NSW Health intend to provide updated residential aged care directives on Wednesday 23rd December 2020.

I have received several challenges from representatives questioning the need for escalated visitor restrictions in the Southern Highlands. Do not confuse the community restrictions which apply to Greater Metropolitan Sydney or the special restrictions for the Northern Beaches local government area with state-wide restrictions on visiting residential aged care facilities.

Currently Burradoo and Moss Vale are not subject to increased community restrictions, but we strongly urge everyone, including our workforce, to defer non-essential travel to Sydney and avoid non-essential gatherings. Everyone should be wearing a mask in public. The message is clear: COVID-19 complacency has no place in NSW.

Continue to monitor case location alerts from NSW Health

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/case-locations-and-alerts.aspx>.

Anyone who has been in a 'self-isolate and get tested' or 'monitor for symptoms' location at the specified times is excluded from Harbison. Members of the workforce who undertake

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recreational travel and become linked to one of these locations may not be entitled to paid pandemic leave.

We share your frustration and disappointment with these changed circumstances. We were so close to a 'normal' Christmas. Note that while we are closed to visitors we are not in lockdown. Residents have freedom of movement within their homes and activities and services are running normally. Our volunteer program continues to operate. Non-essential contractors are being deferred, and tele-health will be used wherever possible to minimise visits by medical practitioners.

If you feel the need to express your frustration, please direct it to me. It is not appropriate to add to the burden of responsibility that each member of our workforce is carrying. We all understand the individual hurts that these restrictions are causing so close to Christmas, but the health and safety of everyone is the higher priority. I am confident that the NSW public health system will contain the Sydney outbreak, and there is still a chance that Christmas in the Southern Highlands can be saved for our residents and their families.

We will keep you informed of any changes. I apologise to everyone who is suffering but assure you that there is no need for concern. Harbison is well organised, and we are working calmly and carefully to keep everyone safe. We will lift restrictions as soon as NSW Health advise us that it is safe. Thank you for reading this letter, and please remember the importance of hand and cough hygiene, social distancing, using the COVIDSafe app, shopping online, staying away from case locations and confirmed COVID-19 cases, and isolating and testing if you or anyone in your household shows the mildest signs or symptoms.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Cochran', written in a cursive style.

David Cochran
Chief Executive Officer