



Tuesday 20th April, 2021

Dear friends,

This letter follows my letter dated 23rd March 2021 and includes updates about COVID-19 and influenza vaccination at Harbison. As usual, it is being widely distributed to our residents and their representatives, our workforce, our company members, our local general practices, and the wider Southern Highlands community.

COVID-19 vaccinations – resident update

We are pleased to confirm that the first dose of the Pfizer vaccine was successfully administered to approximately 95% of our Burradoo residents just over a week ago. These residents will receive their second dose on Saturday 1 May 2021. I was very impressed by the way our residents and staff worked with the team from Sonic Clinical Services. The process took a little more than 3-hours and was free of incident. My sincere thanks to staff who gave up their Saturday to help with the vaccinations, and especially staff who interrupted their annual leave to support our residents. The team from Sonic commented on how well organised we were and how impressed they were by the teamwork between residents and staff.

Our Moss Vale residents are scheduled to receive their first Pfizer dose this Saturday, 24 April 2021. Representatives who have registered as a support person should plan to be on site from 8am, but we will contact you later this week to confirm times once they are confirmed to us. We request that outings and visits are rescheduled so we can focus on the vaccination program this Saturday. Note that residents are recommended to stay at Harbison following the dose for clinical observation. We do not recommend outings on Saturday after administration of the vaccine. Our staff will organise your consent paperwork. Please wear something comfortable that makes it easy to access your upper arm.

COVID-19 vaccinations – staff update

As everyone has seen in the media the national rollout is under review following health advice that the Pfizer vaccination is preferred for people under 50-years of age. This issue arose after the Government cancelled the in-reach vaccination program for aged care workers, effectively merging phase 1a with phase 1b of the rollout. It is significant for Harbison because 75% of our workforce is under-50 years old.

We have been advised this morning that there will be a vaccination clinic at Liverpool Hospital for Harbison staff who wish to have the Pfizer vaccine. Details of this plan are yet to be confirmed, but we will soon survey staff to assess how many staff wish to take up this option. We expect that timing will depend on availability of Pfizer doses. We will organise transport to and from the clinic.

Meanwhile, staff who are over-50 have the option to have the AstraZeneca vaccine at their local GP or respiratory clinic. Staff who choose to organise their own vaccination must provide evidence of vaccination to People & Culture Manager, Samantha Evison, so we can maintain a record of who is vaccinated for risk management purposes.

Information about the AstraZeneca vaccine is available from the Department of Health using this link <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/learn-about-covid-19-vaccines/about-the-astrazeneca-covid-19-vaccine>

If you are under-50, you can still choose to have the AstraZeneca vaccine if you consent to the risk of thrombosis and thrombocytopenia (TTS). Age is not a risk factor for TTS, but it is for COVID-19. The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) has recommended a preference for the AstraZeneca vaccine for people over 50-years old because it is available, and the risk of TTS is outweighed by the risk of COVID-19 as age increases.

If you decide to organise your own vaccination, please remember that you must allow at least 2-weeks between your influenza vaccination and your COVID-19 dose. COVID-19 vaccinations require 2-doses. Pfizer requires 3-weeks between doses and AstraZeneca requires 12-weeks, which is another disadvantage of the AstraZeneca vaccine.

I am sorry if the situation is confusing or uncertain, but we have been dependant on media reports until today while the Government develops the contingency plan for the rollout. In my view commencing phase 1b (let alone 2a) before everyone in 1a was vaccinated is a broken promise which makes a mockery of granting priority status to high-risk groups.

However, we should keep in perspective how lucky we are to have a vaccine at all, and how fortunate we are to be living in Australia where the virus has been successfully suppressed and life is relatively normal. We must continue to work together and play our part until everyone is safe.

2021 influenza vaccination – update

Harbison requires a current influenza vaccination for everyone in the workforce unless they are contra-indicated. We offer free vaccination clinics each year for our employees, contractors, and volunteers. We have run clinics at both locations this month and our last clinic will run at Burradoo on Friday 23 April 2021 from 12:30pm to 3:30pm. If you have not yet had your influenza vaccination, we strongly recommend you organise to attend the clinic. If you choose to organise your own vaccination you must provide proof of vaccination to People & Culture Manager, Samantha Evison. The census date for influenza vaccination this year is 30 April 2021.

We strongly recommend visitors organise their own influenza vaccination now in the expectation that it may become mandatory again this year. If you have any questions about your suitability for influenza vaccination, please consult your health practitioner.

Aged Care Royal Commission – update

We await the Government's response to the final report from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety. Stephen Duckett and Anika Stobart from the Grattan Institute have written an interesting opinion article published by the Sydney Morning Herald which neatly sums up the situation. You can read it using this link

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/aged-care-time-to-put-our-money-where-our-heart-is-20210419-p57kc0.html>

COVID-19 Infection prevention & control – updated visitor screening requirements

Prescribed visiting hours are no longer in force, and the Visitor Pod has been removed from Burradoo. We are progressively implementing an electronic visitor management system and now require all staff and visitors, including contractors, to sign in and have a temperature check using the system. Kiosks are located at each main entrance. Checking in with the new system is a condition of entry for everyone.

The system is designed to eventually be contactless using a QR code and an app on your mobile phone. If you use the touch screen you must practice hand hygiene before and after touching the screen. We appreciate your patience as we implement the new system and hope that it progressively makes the screening process easier for everyone.

Moss Vale refurbishment – update

The current stage of our Moss Vale refurbishment is due for completion in the week of 17 May 2021. This stage includes a 2nd lift to Mandemar, a new activity lounge and gym, new landscaping and pathways adjacent to the main entrance, and completely refurbished rooms in Joadja. We thank all the residents for their patience and look forward to welcoming residents of Joadja back to their rooms.

The final stage of the project includes refurbishment of the rooms in Penrose. We will be discussing temporary arrangements with Penrose residents soon and remind any residents who relocate during the refurbishment that they will be able to return to their refurbished room if they wish. The refurbishment is scheduled for completion in September 2021, and we hope the final stage will be less disruptive than the earlier major stages.

Some of the improvements are obvious, including new communal facilities like the dining room and café, but others are less obvious. During the project we have modernised the information technology at Moss Vale as part of a plan to place all the systems our staff use at their fingertips. You might have noticed staff carrying computer tablets and other mobile technology which allows them to access and update care records at point of care. This improves accuracy of record keeping, increases the amount of time care staff can spend with residents, and reduces the amount of time staff spend at a desk. The result is improved quality and safety. We plan to provide each staff member with their own device by the end of this year.

The tablets also link staff to our new nurse call system. Instead of intrusive bells and screens, staff are notified instantly on their device and can respond more quickly. The system detects when staff enter a room and notifies other staff that someone is present with the resident who needs help. The system is monitored by managers and collects detailed data about responsiveness. Staff can also use the tag they wear to summon help if they need it.

Also less visible is the amount of work we have done to reduce infection risk. Wherever possible we have specified antimicrobial materials to reduce the risk of transmission. The refurbished bathrooms feature antimicrobial bathroom fittings from Finland, that are also ergonomically designed to support independence and reduce the risk of falls in the bathroom.

As the refurbishment moves into the final phase, we welcome feedback from residents, visitors, and staff. Your feedback helps us resolve any teething problems and plan for future improvements. To that end, our Moss Vale team will also take the lead on rolling out a new feedback system which is designed to make it easier for everyone to have their say in how we do things at Harbison. We will be sharing more information about the new system over the next few weeks.

Continuous improvement – feedback & complaints resolution system

As you know, we encourage feedback at Harbison and use it to drive continuous improvement of our care and services. The software we use to manage our feedback register has been reviewed and we have decided to replace it with a new system that is integrated to our care management system, which is known as Person Centred Software or PCS.

The new software is easy to use and will make it easier for residents, staff, and representatives to leave comments, complete surveys, and let us know when something goes wrong. The software will be available to staff on their tablets and available to representatives online or using a simple QR code.

By making it easier to provide us with feedback we hope to increase the amount of information we can use to improve care and services or prevent recurrence of incidents. We will be providing our staff with training on the new system in the next few weeks and will provide more information to residents and consumers when the system is ready for their use.

Continuous improvement – relatives gateway

We are seeking a small number of residents and relatives to pilot a “relatives gateway” which would provide families of residents with instant access to information about their resident. This is part of our commitment to keeping residents and their families connected, and to promoting transparent care and services. If you are interested in learning more about the pilot project, please contact reception during office hours on 02 4868 6200 or reception@harbisoncare.org.au

Serious Incident Response Scheme – SIRS

On 1 April 2021, the Government introduced a new compulsory reporting system, known as SIRS, to replace the existing scheme. Information about SIRS is available using this link <https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/consumers/serious-incident-response-scheme>

SIRS is designed to reduce the incidence of abuse and neglect in residential aged care by increasing the range of incidents that are reportable to the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission. SIRS requires us to implement an effective incident management system and use it to prevent, manage, and report serious incidents including unreasonable use of force, unlawful or inappropriate sexual contact, psychological or emotional abuse, unexpected death, stealing or financial coercion by staff, neglect, inappropriate physical or chemical restraint, and unexplained absence from care.

We have been training our staff to know the protocols, processes, and standard operating procedures they are meant to use under our incident management system. We are required to report within 24-hours incidents that have caused, or could reasonably have caused, physical or psychological injury or discomfort requiring medical or psychological treatment or where there are reasonable grounds to report the incident to police. Unexpected death and unexplained absence from care must always be reported within 24-hours.

SIRS complements the Charter of Aged Care Rights and Aged Care Quality Standards to ensure we identify and respond to incidents of abuse and neglect. As always, the best way to resolve any concern you have is to raise it with us first using our feedback & complaints resolution system. If we cannot resolve your complaint then you can escalate the matter to me (02 4868 6201), our Board of Directors (PO Box 349, Bowral 2576), the Older Persons Advocacy Network (1800 700 600), or the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (1800 951 822).

Continuous improvement – new safety & quality management system

We are implementing a new system to make it easier for staff to access and follow policy and procedure. Staff will be invited to comment on the new system from this week. A new set of policies and procedures have been developed as part of the project to reflect the latest regulatory changes e.g., SIRS.

ANZAC DAY 2021

We are hosting ANZAC Day ceremonies at both homes on Friday 23 April 2021, at 10am (Moss Vale) and 11am (Burradoo). Visitors are welcome, subject to meeting COVID-19 screening requirements. Because of the pandemic, for the second year we will not be participating in public ANZAC Day ceremonies on 25 April. If you have any questions about our ANZAC Day plans, please contact your Personal Care Manager, Rabin Joshi (Burradoo) or Rebecca Glover (Moss Vale), or our Diversional Therapist, Keeden Ellis.

Thank you for reading this letter. We look forward to vaccinating our Moss Vale residents on Saturday and hope the situation for staff is clarified by the Government soon. Thank you to everyone who has helped organise the monumental logistics for the vaccination program so far. Please organise your influenza vaccination as soon as possible. If you have any questions about your suitability for either vaccine, please consult your health practitioner. My respects to our veterans, here at Harbison and throughout the community, as we commemorate ANZAC Day 2021 by remembering everyone who has sacrificed themselves for our country.

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