

Wednesday 19th May 2021

Dear friends,

This letter follows my letter dated 10th May 2021. As you know we circulate these letters to a wide range of people to ensure that everyone is on the same page when it comes to the way that Harbison is responding to the risk of COVID-19 in our homes. In addition to our residents and their representatives, our workforce including our volunteers, contractors, and visiting health professionals, and our company members we make these letters accessible to local general practice doctors, other community organisations, and the wider community. If you ever have questions or feedback about the contents, please feel free to contact me on 02 4868 6200 or david.cochran@harbisoncare.org.au

COVID-19 visitor restrictions – update

I am pleased to confirm that the potential COVID-19 cluster in greater Sydney did not eventuate and we no longer require staff and visitors to wear surgical masks while on the premises. The temporary restriction of two visitors per resident per day is no longer in force. Thank you for your cooperation during the increased precautions. I am sorry for the impact on Mother's Day plans and trust that you have been able to make alternative arrangements to celebrate our mums.

Please remember that from 1 June 2021 in NSW it will be a requirement to have a current (i.e., 2021) influenza vaccination to enter a residential aged care facility. If you plan to visit and have not been vaccinated, we strongly recommend that you organise your appointment now. Residents will be vaccinated in early June, which is later than usual due to the need to complete our COVID-19 vaccination program first.

We also suggest you carefully consider your eligibility for vaccination against COVID-19. We expect that this vaccination will also become mandatory in aged care as a condition of entry, once everyone has had an opportunity to be vaccinated. If you are eligible, we strongly recommend you take advantage of your opportunity to protect yourself and those you care about.

COVID-19 resident vaccinations – update

I am pleased to confirm that all eligible residents of Harbison have now been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 with two doses of the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine (known as Comirnaty in Australia). The successful completion of this project, in partnership with Sonic Clinical Services, reduces but does not eliminate the risk to our residents. Hand and cough hygiene, social distancing, and isolating and testing when signs or symptoms of infection are present continue to be our frontline defences against an outbreak. Thank you to the staff and volunteers, support people and residents who helped make the project a success. Sonic Clinical Services provided very positive feedback about the high level of organisation and engagement at Harbison. Well done everyone!

COVID-19 workforce vaccination – update

Increasing numbers of staff have been vaccinated using a mix of spare doses from the resident clinics, vaccination clinics operated in Liverpool, Campbelltown, and Oran Park, and doses from local GPs and the respiratory clinic in Mittagong. Thank you to everyone who has journeyed to Sydney on their own time, and to the drivers who have helped run our shuttle bus to some of the clinics. Feedback about the process has been positive. Anecdotally, some staff experience mild short-term effects after their dose, but most report less effect compared to the influenza vaccine.

For staff under-50 you can register for an appointment at Liverpool or Campbelltown, and staff over-50 can register for the Oran Park clinic, using the links supplied to all staff in my Teams message on 10 May 2021. Do not forget to notify Sam Evison, our People & Culture Manager, when you have been vaccinated so we can maintain our immunisation register.

Also do not forget to leave at least two weeks between your influenza and COVID-19 vaccinations. If you are not vaccinated for either by now, you should prioritise the influenza vaccination to meet the 1 June 2021 mandatory deadline. A final free influenza clinic is being run at Burradoo this Friday 21 May 2021.

Moss Vale Refurbishment – update

I am pleased to confirm that the next stage of the Moss Vale refurbishment project was delivered on time yesterday. Joadja residents have started moving into their upgraded rooms, and can enjoy their new lounge, kitchenette, and laundry. We expect it will take two weeks to move all residents into their new rooms, and we appreciate your patience while this process is managed.

This stage also includes a new Activities Lounge and Gym, which will be opened to residents after we have relocated residents into Joadja. The second lift to Mandemar is undergoing final testing, our new storerooms are ready and will make life much easier for staff, and the entry landscaping including relocation of the rose garden is almost complete.

Wendy Tuckerman MP, Member for Goulburn, and Nathaniel Smith MP, Member for Wollondilly, toured Moss Vale yesterday for a preview of the final project. They seemed very impressed with the dramatic changes at Moss Vale and appreciated the opportunity as elected representatives to understand how Harbison is investing for the future.

We expect some temporary interruptions to power as the new generator and main distribution board is commissioned, but these should only cause minor inconvenience. The next stage of the project involves the complete refurbishment of Penrose and several rooms in Avoca and Mandemar. We are consulting individually with residents who will be impacted by that work. We expect the project to complete by October 2021.

A structure that serves our community

I am often asked what sets Harbison apart from other aged care providers in the Southern Highlands. Recently I was asked to explain what “community owned” really means. The technical answer is that we are a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee, which means we do not have shareholders in the usual sense and do not pay tax, allowing us to fully reinvest in our business. In other words, we are structured to serve our community instead of shareholders.

How does this translate into a benefit for our community? In our case the main advantage is that we provide up to half of our places to people who need them free of charge. As the largest provider in the Southern Highlands our scale means that approximately 150 places at any time are available to people who cannot afford to fund their own accommodation. If it were not for Harbison these supported places would not exist and hundreds of local families each year would face the prospect of being separated from their loved ones living in homes outside our region.

This commitment is a core part of our people and culture. We are not the same as other providers, and we do not aspire to be them. From the moment Harbison was founded almost 70-years ago our focus has been to provide support and care to anyone who needs it, regardless of means. Is it difficult? Yes, but it is what gives working at Harbison a very special sense of meaning and purpose.

We are proud of our expertise in dementia and palliative care. We see them as core business and work continuously with other community organisations and strategic partners to support our staff to achieve excellence and leadership in these fields. If you would like to know more about how we support our community, or how you can play a role in supporting or working at Harbison, please feel free to contact me any time.

A new way to provide us with feedback

As always, feedback is valued by Harbison to support accountability and continuous improvement. We have recently implemented a new system called Person Centred Feedback, which is designed to make it much easier for everyone to provide feedback to Harbison and for managers to resolve problems and acknowledge success.

You will see QR codes in our homes that will take your mobile device to the system, which is very quick and intuitive to use.

If you do not have a smart device that can process QR codes, then you can provide feedback about Moss Vale simply by clicking on this link <https://app.personcentredfeedback.com.au/feedback/9/1/NO6K15D2> and about Burradoo by clicking on this link <https://app.personcentredfeedback.com.au/feedback/9/1/ZFWYSR68>

Both links are also accessible from our website www.harbison.org.au

We expect the new system will evolve over time and we invite you to provide feedback about the new system itself. We aim to respond to feedback within 1-business-day, provided you choose to include your contact details. We do expect there will be some teething problems, as with any new system, and hope you will be patient with us as we become familiar with it.

The system is open to anyone, including staff, who wants to make a complaint (other than a workplace grievance, which has a special process), suggestion, or compliment. All feedback is treated in confidence and complaints are resolved openly and transparently with a focus on improvement instead of blame.

As you know, we welcome the chance to resolve problems when things go wrong and appreciate the opportunity to work together before a complaint is referred to an external advocate or regulator. However, if you would like to escalate a complaint to an external party then details are included in every newsletter and on our website, or you can access information from the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission using this link <https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/>

Thank you for reading this letter. My compliments to everyone for seamlessly adapting to the recent temporary visitor restrictions. Cooperation, preparation, and vigilance remain key strengths in our joint response to the pandemic. Please consider your vaccination status carefully. For proof of the high cost of complacency simply look to the unfolding and arguably preventable wave in Taiwan at the moment.

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