



Tuesday 22nd June, 2021

Dear friends,

This letter follows my letter dated 19th May, 2021 and includes important information about the Norovirus outbreak at Burradoo, the latest COVID-19 restrictions in response to the Sydney outbreak, current requirements for influenza vaccination, and the status of our COVID-19 workforce vaccination program.

Burradoo Norovirus Outbreak

As you know, two weeks ago we detected a suspected case of Norovirus in the Burradoo nursing home. The infection quickly spread to staff and residents, and eventually spread into the hostel. This is the first outbreak at Burradoo since 2018.

Norovirus is a viral infection which causes gastroenteritis, resulting in vomiting and diarrhoea. It is the leading cause of gastroenteritis and commonly occurs in residential aged care, hospitals, schools, and childcare. Anyone can become infected with Norovirus, but the normally mild symptoms can be more severe in older people or people with an underlying medical condition.

Because Norovirus is highly infectious our outbreak management plan includes closing our home to the public and confining residents to their rooms. We have been focused on providing care to unwell residents, providing daily updates to their families, and working with the public health unit which oversees the management of these events in NSW.

Based on epidemiology, we believe the infection was introduced by a visitor. In preparation for reopening, we stress the importance of good hand hygiene. Note that washing hands with soap and running water for at least 10 seconds and drying with a clean towel is the most effective precaution against Norovirus. Alcohol sanitiser is ineffective against Norovirus, but very effective against COVID-19, so should be used in combination with a rigorous soap and water regimen.

People with Norovirus are usually infectious from the start of symptoms until at least two days after symptoms stop. We are now monitoring a small number of residents with mild to moderate symptoms, and in accordance with public health guidelines will remain in lockdown for at least 72 hours after the last symptom. We do not know when that will be.

Meanwhile, residents who are well may exercise in fresh air for short periods if they wish, and we encourage virtual visits pending the resumption of actual visits at Burradoo. We will continue to provide general updates by SMS, social media, and on our website, and I have provided responses to media requests.

Our staff are working exceptionally hard. Many have worked very long hours including through the long weekend, and some have become unwell. Our processes for supplying personal protective equipment, linen, laundry, meals, and removing clinical waste have been effective. After the outbreak is declared over, we will review our outbreak management plan and use the experience to improve it. Until then, we ask everyone to remain patient as our staff work through the remaining cases to resolve the outbreak.

We review outbreak status each day, and will announce the end of the outbreak when, in consultation with public health authorities, it is safe to do so.

COVID-19 Visitor Restrictions

In accordance with public health advice all staff and visitors are required to wear surgical masks in response to the latest outbreak in Greater Sydney. In addition, visits are limited to two visitors per resident per day.

Obviously, in practical terms these visitor restrictions only apply to Moss Vale until Burradoo reopens to the public.

Please refer to the latest advice from NSW Health for details (<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/racf-latest-advice.aspx>) but anyone who has been in any NSW close or casual contact locations (excluding monitor for symptom locations for staff), or exposure sites in the ACT, or close or casual contact locations in Queensland, or places of high concern in Victoria, or anywhere in Greater Melbourne in the past 14 days must not attend Harbison.

As usual, the COVID-19 situation is dynamic and should be closely monitored.

Exclusion also applies to anyone with COVID-19 signs or symptoms or is a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case who is within their self-isolation period or lives in a household with someone who is self-isolating or is waiting for the result of a COVID-19 test.

If in doubt, do not visit or consult your manager before you attend work.

Even though most residents are vaccinated against COVID-19, most staff are not. It is critical to our ability to maintain care and services that staff do not become infected with COVID-19. In the event of an outbreak unprotected staff would need to stand down and isolate.

We are all experienced in the way that NSW Health manages outbreaks, and we hope that this outbreak is resolved quickly like previous small outbreaks so we can resume normal visitor arrangements. We all have a role to play.

Mandatory Influenza Vaccination

We remind you that since 1 June 2021 it has been mandatory for anyone attending Harbison to have a current influenza vaccination. Exceptions will be made for those who have an absolute contraindication for the vaccine, or on compassionate grounds. If you are not currently vaccinated and have not arranged an exemption, please do not visit Harbison.

Workforce COVID-19 Vaccination – update

We estimate that 30% of our workforce have now received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccination. This is a significant increase since the start of the month but is still a long way short of our 75% target for effective coverage. Harbison is offering a \$250 bonus until 30 June¹ to reward staff for the time and effort required to access the vaccine. Most staff need to attend clinics in southwest Sydney or Illawarra, which is an extra heavy burden when public transport is required. We continue to strongly encourage staff to have the vaccine as soon as they can and thank vaccinated staff for playing their part in keeping everyone at Harbison safe.

I suspect that the evolving COVID-19 situation means I will be writing to you again soon. Thank you for reading this letter.

Yours sincerely

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

David Cochran
Chief Executive Officer

¹ Conditions apply