

Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> July, 2021

Dear friends,

This letter follows my letter dated 28<sup>th</sup> June, 2021 and provides important information about our response to the Greater Sydney COVID-19 outbreak. As usual, this letter is being widely circulated to our residents and their families and representatives, our workforce including our contractors and volunteers, local general practices, company members, and the wider Southern Highlands community via our website ([www.harbison.org.au](http://www.harbison.org.au)) and social media.

### **Current COVID-19 restrictions**

Although Harbison is not in the lockdown areas of Greater Sydney (including the Blue Mountains, Central Coast, Wollongong, and Shellharbour), we within 50km and are in an adjacent local government area. Some staff reside within those areas. While we are not (yet) in lockdown like aged care providers in the lockdown areas, we are taking a very cautious approach to screening visitors and staff.

**In accordance with NSW Health advice, visitors and non-essential staff from the lockdown areas are excluded from Harbison.**

On request, we will consider making an exception for visits on compassionate grounds (e.g., imminent death of a loved one) or in cases where frequent and regular essential care has been provided by the visitor to a resident with e.g., advanced dementia. Any request for an exception will be determined subject to a risk assessment of the visitor and a negative COVID-19 test result within 72 hours of the visit.

**Staff who reside in the lockdown areas must not work unless they have had a COVID-19 test within 7-days prior to their shift (3-days if they live in Fairfield local government area)<sup>1</sup>.**

Staff who are subject to testing do not need to wait for their test result before they attend work, but they must be able to provide proof of their test (SMS or email addressed to them) if asked by their manager. They must also carry proof of current residential address if asked by Police.

Also excluded is anybody who:

- In the past 14 days has been to any close, casual, or monitor for symptoms locations in NSW, or any close and casual contact places of high concern in Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, or the Northern Territory. You can monitor the latest list of locations using this NSW Health link <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/case-locations-and-alerts.aspx>

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<sup>1</sup> Effective from 12.01am on Wednesday 14 July 2021

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#### **Harbison**

Gundungurra Country  
T 02 4868 6200  
reception@harbisoncare.org.au  
www.harbisoncare.org.au

PO Box 349  
Bowral NSW 2576  
ABN 23 001 507 624  
Registered NDIS Provider

#### **Burradoo**

2 Charlotte Street  
Burradoo NSW 2576  
F 02 4868 6476

#### **Moss Vale**

36 Yarrowa Road  
Moss Vale NSW 2577  
F 02 4869 3214

- Has even the mildest COVID-19 symptoms. You can learn about COVID-19 symptoms using this NSW Health link <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/health-and-wellbeing/symptoms-and-testing>
- Is a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case and are within their self-isolation period.
- Is a member of a household with anybody who is self-isolating.
- Is waiting for a COVID-19 test result.

Any permitted visit is subject to a screening on arrival (including a temperature check), a limit of two visitors per resident per day, and a requirement to wear a surgical mask (unless the resident is deaf or hard of hearing or needs to see your mouth for effective communication) and conduct the visit in the resident's room or outdoors. Visitors must provide proof of their usual place of residence and current influenza vaccination.

We strongly recommend deferring non-essential visits until the Greater Sydney lockdown is lifted and remind you that virtual visits can be scheduled online using this link <https://harbison.org.au/visit-harbison/> or via Reception during business hours on 02 4868 6200.

If you do visit, please be prepared for delays caused by the screening and risk assessment processes, and if possible please give notice of your intention to visit so we can manage the public health rules limiting the number of visits per day.

Residents are not permitted on outings unless they are essential e.g., medical appointments, or outside the lockdown areas and exclusive of people who have been in the lockdown areas in the past 14 days. We strongly recommend that residents defer all non-essential outings.

From today, everyone must register using the Service NSW QR code app when they arrive and depart Harbison. QR codes are displayed at the entrance for this purpose. This is in addition to checking-in using our temperature-checking kiosks.

It is likely that the Greater Sydney lockdown will be extended and may take months not weeks to resolve. It is also possible that the lockdown will be extended beyond the current local government areas, in which case Harbison may escalate restrictions from careful visitor screening to exclusion of visitors except on compassionate or essential care grounds.

I note a small number of complaints about restricted visitor access. We are happy to review any decision to exclude visitors and encourage you to engage with us constructively if you believe you have been unfairly excluded.

Our primary concern is the safety and welfare of everybody at Harbison. There have been several instances of people from Greater Sydney attempting to gain access to Harbison in contravention of public health orders, and too many instances of abusive behaviour towards our staff. If you are frustrated with the system or circumstances, please direct your frustration at me. I am accountable for the steps we are taking to prevent the introduction of COVID-19 to Harbison, and our staff are simply doing their job by enforcing the rules. I will not tolerate abusive behaviour from anyone.

#### **Staff COVID-19 vaccination – update**

All Australian aged care workers are required to have at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine by September 2021.

As of 7 July 2021, we estimate that 35% of staff at Burradoo and 50% of staff at Moss Vale have had at least one dose of vaccine. Access to the vaccine is expected to be expanded in the next few weeks, including an on-site Pfizer clinic at Burradoo this Wednesday.

Until we achieve full vaccination our residents are at higher risk of infection from un-vaccinated staff and in any outbreak, care may be seriously impacted if we are required to stand down the unprotected workforce.

We strongly urge un-vaccinated staff to take advantage of the on-site clinic this week.

**Welcome to Mary Elliott, Director of Clinical Care**

I am pleased to announce that Mary Elliott has joined Harbison in the role of our senior clinician. Mary will be based at Burradoo and be focused on the day-to-day care there. As a member of our Executive Leadership team, Mary also has oversight of clinical care at Moss Vale and provides a point of escalation for clinical complaints or incidents which cannot be resolved by the Moss Vale team.

Mary has more than 30-years of aged care experience and has held senior management roles in regional not-for-profit aged care providers and in other clinical settings. Please join me in welcoming Mary to Harbison.

Thank you for reading this letter. We will provide updates if circumstances change. We are working hard to minimise the risks of COVID-19 at Harbison and appreciate everybody playing their part. Communicable diseases like COVID-19 require people for transmission. COVID-19 is now preventable. The best way to break the chain of transmission is to carefully follow the health advice: limit outings to essential trips, avoid high-risk locations and activities, practice frequent careful hand and cough hygiene, wear a surgical mask and maintain social distancing, and get vaccinated.

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**