

Friday 27th August, 2021

Dear friends,

Visitor restrictions – update

The NSW Government has announced an extension of the regional lockdown for *at least* two weeks from 28th August 2021. This means that the current visitor restrictions will remain in place until *at least* 10th September 2021.

For convenience, here is a summary of the current restrictions:

- No visitors are permitted except in the following circumstances:
 - At end-of-life (may be limited to one or two visitors to represent the family)
 - On compassionate grounds if the visitor was providing regular and frequent essential care (e.g., to a resident living with advanced frailty, dementia, or mental illness) immediately prior to 13th August 2021
 - On compassionate grounds to support a resident who has been admitted to Harbison since 13th August 2021, if the resident requires support to settle into care
 - Any exceptional visits must take place in the resident's room

In most cases we will identify residents who qualify for exceptional visits and contact the family to arrange visits. If you have not been contacted, then it is unlikely that you are eligible for an exemption. Please do not harass staff about an exemption, and only contact us if you genuinely believe you qualify for an exemption.

I know this is a difficult time for residents and their families and note that hospitals on the COVID-19 frontline are not admitting visitors under any circumstances, including end-of-life. I am sorry for the anxiety these restrictions cause, but they are necessary and in accordance with current public health advice.

Before an exemption can be granted, a visitor must be screened, and risk assessed. Even if an exemption is possible because of a resident's circumstances, an exemption will not be granted if the visitor does not meet screening requirements or is otherwise deemed an unacceptable risk to residents and our workforce.

If you are not granted an exemption, please respect the decision which has been made in the best interests of everyone. In most cases, the exemption will only apply to one or two visitors for the duration of the lockdown, which means families may need to consider who will represent them.

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From 30th August 2021 we will require evidence of visitor COVID-19 vaccination status, in the form of an immunisation statement or digital certificate from the Australian Immunisation Register, as part of our risk assessment process.

Mandatory workforce vaccination – update

The *Public Health (COVID-19 Aged Care Facilities) Order 2021* (NSW) came into force on 26th August 2021. From 9am on 17th September 2021 all aged care workers are required to have had at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine. Fortunately, almost everyone working at Harbison has already been vaccinated, and we are working to support the few remaining workers through the process.

The requirement does not apply to students or health practitioners engaged by residents until 9am on 31st October 2021.

It is worth noting that in NSW it is now also mandatory for other health workers e.g., hospital, ambulance etc.

Travel permits

Anyone travelling more than 50km from Greater Sydney to work now requires a travel permit from Service NSW, and from 30th August 2021 anyone living in an area of concern (currently, local government areas of Bayside, Blacktown, Burwood, Campbelltown, Canterbury-Bankstown, Cumberland, Fairfield, Georges River, Liverpool, Parramatta, and Strathfield, and the suburbs of Caddens, Claremont Meadows, Colyton, Erskine Park, Kemps Creek, Kingswood, Mount Vernon, North St Marys, Orchard Hills, Oxley Park, St Clair and St Marys) must have a permit and at least their first COVID-19 dose to attend work. For these workers, that means the mandatory vaccination date is effectively 30th August 2021 not 17th September 2021.

To check whether you need a travel permit you can use this link:

<https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/nsw-travel-address-check>

Rapid antigen testing

We have introduced rapid antigen testing to increase our capacity to detect COVID-19 in people without symptoms. Rapid antigen tests supplement the standard PCR test, which is more accurate, but have the advantage of providing a result within minutes instead of hours or days. We may require anyone to undergo a rapid antigen test as a condition of entry.

Road Worlds for Seniors

The annual Road World for Seniors competition begins on Monday 6th September 2021 and runs until Friday 1st October 2021. This year, for the first time, we have entered teams from Burradoo and Moss Vale and will have five Motiview bikes available for our teams.

Burradoo has successfully represented Harbison (and Australia!) twice before, but this will be the first time our Moss Vale residents have competed. Last year, our team of Motiview champions was recognised by the Prime Minister!

Our goal this year is to ride 3,000km. We are grateful for the donations that have been made since last year's Road Worlds, which have been used to purchase two Motiview bikes for Moss Vale. We are also grateful to the volunteers who will support our teams during the competition.

Road Worlds is a highlight of the year at Harbison, and this year is more important than ever. The competition provides residents with meaningful physical and social activity, and our special Motiview bikes make participation possible for almost anyone regardless of functional or cognitive ability.

If you would like to know more about Road Worlds you can visit this link:

<https://www.roadworlds.com/>

Harbison is very proud to be the first aged care provider in Australia to offer Motiview, and we are excited for our residents to have the opportunity to compete with other residents from around the world. If you would like to support Road Worlds or our Motiview program with a tax-deductible donation please contact our Partnership Manager, Zac Hulm, on 02 4868 6210 or zac.hulm@harbisoncare.org.au

Moss Vale refurbishment – update

The final stage of the refurbishment of Moss Vale is on schedule despite the regional lockdown. The new lift to Mandemar has been commissioned, and the old lift is being refurbished. Residents from Penrose will soon be able to return to their newly refurbished rooms if they choose. Subject to any delays, we expect to take possession of the new rooms in Penrose, Wingello, Mandemar, and Avoca by early October. We look forward to celebrating completion of this major project with our residents.

Burradoo refurbishment

The Board of Harbison has approved a smaller project to upgrade the nurse call system in the Burradoo Nursing Home. We are also refurbishing two rooms in Lindsay and constructing external ramp access at the northern end of the building to improve the way we can manage outbreaks, when wings are isolated from each other. The external doors to the resident lounges and the northern exit from the dining room will also be replaced to provide residents with safer and easier access to the gardens.

This work is expected to start soon, but the nurse call upgrade is not expected to commence until December. We do not expect the work to create any major disruptions, but if you have any concerns, please let us know so we can take immediate steps to fix the problem.

I am sorry for the hardship caused by COVID-19, but I remain optimistic that we will come through this together. Australia remains well placed when compared to other countries. In NSW, high vaccination and testing rates, including world-beating vaccination rates in some areas of concern, demonstrate that as a community, we are stepping up and doing what must be done to protect the vulnerable and create a world where we can live with the virus. The Southern Highlands has one of the best vaccination rates in NSW, and our local aged care providers have all achieved very high rates of workforce vaccination despite the extra challenges we have faced to access the vaccine compared to the cities. At Harbison, most residents are vaccinated, and we are well prepared to respond to an outbreak. However, we remain focused on prevention and finding ways to maintain the most normal and comfortable life possible inside our homes.

The Harbison workforce is amazing. Despite severely limited resources, the additional pressure from the fragmented and overlapping patchwork of jurisdictions in which we operate, the work-life challenges of home-schooling, movement restrictions, and isolation from normal support networks, a frequent need to work in full PPE, and the underlying uncertainty of aged care reform, they turn up every day and just get on with it.

Thank you for reading this letter. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us. We are here to help.

Yours sincerely



David Cochran
Chief Executive Officer