



Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> September 2021

Dear friends,

This letter follows my letter dated Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2021 and is being widely circulated to ensure everyone in the Harbison community has the same information. Please read it carefully, and as always, we welcome your feedback (although, read on for the exception).

### **COVID-19 update – local case information**

Since late yesterday we have been investigating a possible connection to the two cases linked to the Regal Medical Centre in Mittagong. During our investigation the salons at both homes are closed, and residents who attended the salons since 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021 are isolated, or if they live in a special dementia unit their care team is in full PPE. The small number of residents who are not vaccinated are under airborne precautions.

We hope to resolve the situation today and have not been provided with any information by public health authorities that would lead us to consider the situation high-risk. As always, we are being cautious.

The rumour mill continues to make our jobs harder than they need to be. Social media vigilantes are a menace and should be discouraged.

Recently, there have been 12 cases reported in Wollondilly, probably related and with a known source. There have been four cases reported in Mittagong, including the two linked to the Regal Medical Centre, two cases in Bowral, including an un-vaccinated male in his 60s who ignored symptoms and died at home, and a single case in Exeter which we understand may relate to an individual who is in Sydney but has an address in Exeter. As you know, last week we monitored a case linked to the Southern Medical Centre.

Of these, in our view the Regal Medical Centre is the highest risk. The practice will be closed for two weeks until 20<sup>th</sup> September 2021, and staff are in isolation. More than 200 patients are reported to be under investigation by contact tracing teams. If you attended the practice between 30<sup>th</sup> August 2021 and 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2021 inclusive you should have received advice from the practice to isolate for two weeks.

Clearly, the virus is circulating locally, and we expect a surge in cases in the next two weeks. Our thoughts are with the medical staff who are unwell, and we hope they recover fully. If you have symptoms, you must get tested at your closest testing clinics BEFORE you visit your GP, the hospital, or your pharmacy.

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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

### **COVID-19 update – visitor restrictions reminder**

Please remember that, in accordance with public health advice, no visitors are permitted in NSW residential aged care homes.

The exception is for end-of life visits or on compassionate grounds if the visitor was providing regular and frequent essential care prior to the exclusion rule, or if the visitor is providing essential care to a new resident.

In most cases we will identify the residents to whom an exception applies, and we will contact the next-of-kin to make the necessary arrangements.

Please be mindful of our limited resources and refrain from contacting us about a visit unless you genuinely believe you fit the narrow exception. Instead, please focus on using alternative forms of contact, including virtual video visits, letters, care packages, etc.

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

The local health community has done a fantastic job of supporting the vaccination rollout in our area. As of 5<sup>th</sup> September 2021, NSW Health reports that 76.9% of the eligible Wingecarribee population has received a 1<sup>st</sup> dose and 49.2% are fully vaccinated. For more information about NSW vaccination rates you can use this link <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/find-the-facts-about-covid-19?#map-of-nsw-vaccinations-by-home-postcode>

At Harbison, as of 7<sup>th</sup> September 2021, 94% of staff and 92% of residents are vaccinated with at least one dose. From 17<sup>th</sup> September 2021 all staff are required to have at least their 1<sup>st</sup> dose, and from 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021 the rule applies to visiting health professionals.

For more information about vaccination rates at residential aged care providers in Australia you can use this link <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/residential-aged-care-worker-covid-19-vaccination-rates-map/residential-aged-care-worker-covid-19-vaccination-rates-map>

Despite being a regional area, where access to vaccine has been more difficult, we are fortunate that our community is relatively well protected against the virus. However, we must all remember that vaccination is not a silver bullet and all the other preventative strategies – hand hygiene, cough etiquette, social distancing, testing, self-isolation, and following the public health orders – remain essential.

Thank you to those of you who have shared your anti-vaccination opinion with me. Your opinion is noted, but please do not take it personally when I say that this is not about you. While we respect your choice, your personal perspective is not a factor in our risk assessment or public health policy. We are focused on the greater community good and keeping everyone safe at Harbison. I am not interested in any further correspondence on the subject.

### **World Roads for Seniors – Day-2 update**

The Harbison team representing Australia is ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in the world after the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of competition in the annual Road Worlds for Seniors, leading from Iceland and Norway. That's right, first-in-the-world! Our rivals at CAMA Woodlands in Canada are currently placed 8<sup>th</sup>, but there is a long way to ride in this competition, and my cycling advisors tell me that the peloton always catches the breakaway.

Our teams are on-track to surpass their 2020 result today or tomorrow, with three weeks to go in the race. Unfortunately, some of our champions are temporarily sidelined by the current isolation requirement, but we hope to have them back in the saddle as soon as we conclude our investigation into the possible link to the Regal Medical Centre.

Congratulations to everyone. The teamwork between residents, staff, and volunteers is a joy to behold, and the event management has exceeded all my expectations. You can follow the competition using this link <https://www.roadworlds.com/results/>

Thank you for reading this letter. Please increase your vigilance and plan for increased local cases in the next two weeks. In the longer term, we continue to prepare for relaxed restrictions and will implement them as soon as it is safe and in accordance with the best and latest public health advice. Meanwhile, we may need to escalate our precautions or change our restrictions with little or no notice, and we ask for your patience and continued understanding as we work to support our residents and staff through these uncertain and challenging times.

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**