

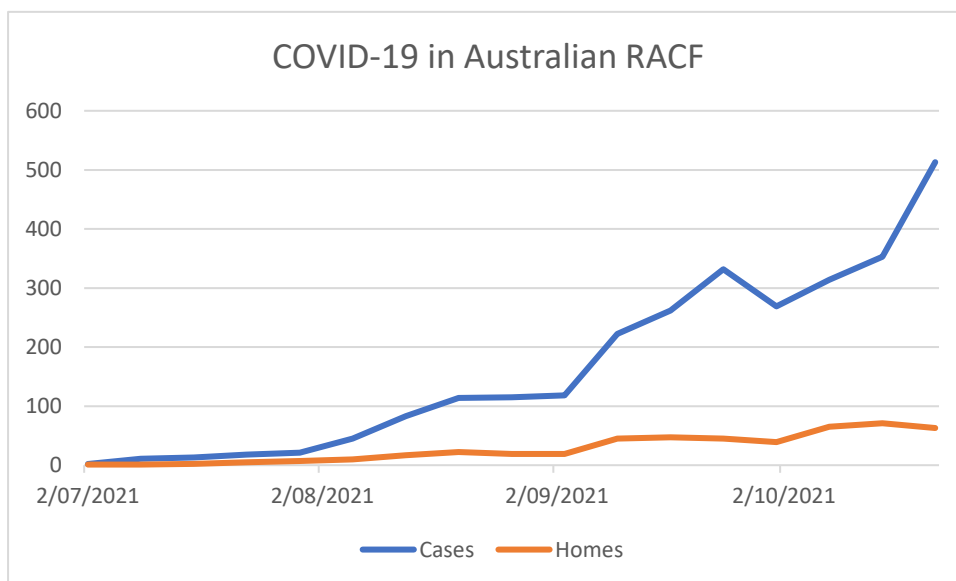
Monday 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2021

Dear friends,

This letter follows my letter dated 11<sup>th</sup> October 2021 and provides a range of information about our COVID-19 protocols. As usual, it is being shared widely to ensure everyone at Harbison has the same information at the same time.

### Risk of COVID-19 in residential aged care

The risk of COVID-19 outbreak in residential aged care is increasing, as demonstrated by this graph which charts Department of Health data since 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2021.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/covid-19-outbreaks-in-australian-residential-aged-care-facilities>

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We expected the risk of infection to increase as society emerges from lockdown, but the data shows that the risk was increasing even before restrictions began easing after reaching the vaccination milestones.

While less than 5% of homes are currently in outbreak, it is vital that staff, visitors, and residents maintain strict infection prevention and control to ensure that we can continue to relax restrictions and optimise quality of life at Harbison. Despite high vaccination rates, a COVID-19 outbreak would have serious harmful outcomes for residents and staff, for the organisation, and potentially for the community.

Thanks to high vaccination rates, I am optimistic that the worst of the pandemic is behind us. However, it is critical that everyone except residents always wear their surgical masks (properly – see Gilbert if you need any advice), maintain social distancing (when possible), use appropriate PPE and contact precautions, practice hand and cough hygiene, avoid locations of close or casual contact, and test (and isolate if directed) at the mildest sign or symptom.

Vaccination reduces the risk of hospitalisation or death, but these frontline precautions prevent transmission in the first place.

#### COVID-19 visitor protocols – update

Thank you to everyone – residents, staff, and visitors, for making the first two-weeks of fully vaccinated visitors so successful. It has been very positive to see so many friendly faces after the lockdown.

In accordance with public health advice, visits are still restricted to fully vaccinated visitors over the age of 12-years and limited to two-visitors-per-resident-per-day. A reminder that fully vaccinated means you have had your 2<sup>nd</sup> dose at least 14-days prior to your visit.

However, from next Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2021 the alternating visiting days will no longer apply, which means fully vaccinated visitors will be permitted to visit between 8am and 6pm on any day. Visits outside visiting hours require an appointment.

Visits still must occur outdoors or in a resident's room, and visitors will still be subject to visitor screening requirements, outlined in my last letters and available from NSW Health using this link <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/racf-latest-advice.aspx>



## **COVID-19 check-in cards from Service NSW**

Many of us will already have linked our digital COVID-19 vaccination certificate to the Service NSW App. If you do not have a smart phone or are uncomfortable using the Service NSW app you can now order a COVID-19 check-in card as an alternative and convenient method for checking-in to any business in NSW, including Harbison.

To order your check-in card simply visit <https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/create-covid-19-check-card>

If you are the representative of a resident, we recommend ordering a check-in card for any resident who is likely to take an outing from Harbison and who does not have a phone or the ability to use the Service NSW app.

## **Visitor management system upgrade**

We will be upgrading our visitor management system at both sites to provide a longer-term solution to visitor management post-lockdown. We will provide more information soon, but the system will track influenza and COVID-19 vaccination status so we will require visitors to register evidence of vaccination in the system. For convenience, it will be possible to complete this step prior to visiting. We will provide regular visitors with an opportunity to pre-register once the upgraded system goes live.

Another convenient feature of the new system is a key tag which allows visitors to simply scan in without entering their information or using an app. More information about this option will be provided soon.

## **3<sup>rd</sup> COVID-19 vaccination dose for residents**

We expect the Government to announce arrangements to provide residents with a 3<sup>rd</sup> dose of COVID-19 vaccine soon. This is based on evidence that the effectiveness of vaccination begins to decline six-months after the 2<sup>nd</sup> dose. Most Harbison residents received their 2<sup>nd</sup> dose in May 2021, so we expect they will be among the first residents to be offered a 3<sup>rd</sup> dose as early as November 2021. We will provide more information as soon as possible.

## **Mandatory 2<sup>nd</sup> COVID-19 vaccination dose for staff**

From today, all staff are required to have received two doses of COVID-19 vaccine unless they are medically contraindicated. Staff who have not received two doses will be redeployed to work-from-home until they are fully vaccinated, or if that option is not feasible then they will be stood down until they are fully vaccinated.

As of 19<sup>th</sup> October 2021, only 17 staff (from almost 400) were yet to receive their 2<sup>nd</sup> dose. Managers are working with any remaining staff to help them complete their immunisation.

## **New mobile devices for staff**

An important step in our ongoing investment in technology has begun. We are progressively issuing individual mobile devices to members of our personal care and clinical teams who work more than an average of 60 hours per fortnight. The rollout has begun at Moss Vale and will begin at Burradoo soon.

This will significantly increase the number of staff who have access to information and systems at their fingertips while they work. For example, staff will be connected to the Advance Care nurse call system (which should further improve response times), our Person Centred Software care management system including BESTmed and Painchek (which should reduce desk time and increase care time), Microsoft Teams and Outlook, our CentroAssist policy and procedure system, our SharePoint intranet, Person Centred Feedback, Altura learning management system, Ticked Off maintenance management, Moving on Audits, IonMy risk management, and useful apps like Google Translate and the Aged Care Quality Standards app. They can even make a phone call.

Use of these new devices is governed by policy. While the main purpose of the device is to improve care safety and quality and WHS, reasonable personal use is permitted, and employees will have the option to purchase their device for a reasonable cost if they leave Harbison. Staff who are issued with a device are expected to take it home and are responsible for bringing it to work fully charged and ready for use for a full shift.

Casuals and staff who work less than 60-hours per fortnight will continue to use shared devices, which they will check out at the start of their shift. The new devices are Samsung Galaxy A21S phones. They are smaller and lighter than tablets, and a test program generated positive feedback from users. Individually allocated phones will have a richer feature set, while shared devices will operate in kiosk mode. All devices will be managed remotely and subject to password security. We believe this investment in IT will provide improved care and an improved workplace experience by supporting staff at point-of-care and driving deeper collaboration through improved communication.

Managers will be briefing their teams about the new equipment and our People & Culture team will support managers with the paperwork. Because of their role in monitoring care quality and safety, our nursing team will continue to use tablets to supplement the functions available on the new devices, and we are introducing mobile workstations to provide more flexibility for clinical and medical professionals and minimise the need to work at a desk or from an office.

### **Road Worlds for Seniors – update**

We are planning to celebrate the success of our Road Worlds for Seniors teams soon. I am very happy to confirm that fundraising during the competition raised \$8,650.00 which means that we can purchase our 6<sup>th</sup> THERA therapy bike to make Motiview more accessible to residents throughout the year. My sincere thanks to these generous benefactors:

- Ruth Brookman
- Glenn Goodwin
- Lee Lewis & Ashley Jones on behalf of the Lewis family
- Martin & Philip Pogson
- Jacqueline Ravenscroft
- Wingecarribee Shire Council

Therapeutic equipment is not subsidised by Government, unlike care costs. Without private funding, programs like Motiview would not be sustainable. Harbison has matched funds raised for Motiview and will continue to do so to ensure that as many residents as possible, regardless of cognitive or functional ability, can benefit physically, emotionally, and socially from Motiview.

If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation to support our Motiview program, or would like to volunteer some time to our support crew, than contact our Partnership Manager, Zac Hulm, on 0410 435 148 (office hours please, although I'm not sure that Zac ever rests) or [zac.hulm@harbisoncare.org.au](mailto:zac.hulm@harbisoncare.org.au)

I will have one final surprise for our 2021 Road Worlds champions when we celebrate their success. Watch this space!

## Harbison Grand-Friends thank The Southern Highlands Foundation

You may recall Oxley College's Kindness Rocks project which is part of our Grand-Friends program. The primary school students at Oxley College have played an important role this year in helping our Harbison Grand-Friends through the worst of the pandemic lockdown, even though visits between residents and students have not been possible for most of the year. Grand-Friends is Harbison's version of the ABC's series *Old People's Home For 4 Year Olds* (which is a great show, guaranteed to make you laugh and cry, available on iview <https://iview.abc.net.au/show/old-people-s-home-for-4-year-olds>)

Harbison's care model is built around meaningful moments. Research shows that making every moment count improves health and wellbeing for residents. Intergenerational care programs have been shown to be beneficial because of the special way older and younger people engage with each other. This engagement is meaningful for all participants, not just our residents.

In addition to the therapeutic nature of intergenerational activities, these outings are a way for residents to remain connected or reconnect with their community. Benefits for residents include reduced loneliness through friendships, improved memory and mood, reduced incidence of depression, increased confidence and mobility, and an improved sense of meaning, purpose, and agency.

Like Motiview, we receive no aged care funding from Government for this type of program. Safely transporting vulnerable people to schools involves special buses which have been modified for wheelchairs and a team of trained staff, often on a 1:1 ratio, to assist residents with mobility, communication, dignity, and first aid in the event of an accident. On return from each outing every resident must be clinically assessed, which creates additional work for our clinicians beyond government-funded care. We also employ support staff who assist with planning, risk assessment, and logistics for each outing. We estimate that direct costs for a 3-hour outing for up to eight residents are between \$300 and \$1,200, depending on the staff ratio required.

Harbison is unique in the Southern Highlands because we provide up to 50% of our places to residents who cannot afford to pay for their care and accommodation. This means we cannot require residents to meet the cost of programs like Grand-Friends without excluding those residents who may benefit most from the outing.

To help make the existing program with Oxley College sustainable, and to increase the number of people supported by Grand-Friends by including other schools and pre-schools, Harbison has received a generous grant of \$20,000.00 from The Southern Highlands Foundation. My sincere thanks to Shelley Boyce, Nicole Smith, and Bridget Cosyn for visiting Harbison last Friday to present the grant to Harbison. This is "Give where you live" in action! We look forward to inviting more residents and students to join the program in 2022.



If you would like to know more about Harbison Grand-Friends, or would like to volunteer or donate to support the project, please contact our Partnership Manager, Zac Hulm, on 0410 435 148 (office hours please, although I'm not sure that Zac ever rests) or [zac.hulm@harbisoncare.org.au](mailto:zac.hulm@harbisoncare.org.au)

### **Southern Highlands Community Hospice**

As part of a pilot program to support eligible residents to achieve comfort and dignity at end-of-life, the Southern Highlands Community Hospice provides funding for end-of-life palliative care nursing and palliative pharmaceutical costs. Funding is generously capped per resident per year and is designed to ensure families are not burdened with potentially expensive pharmaceutical bills near end-of-life. It is one way the foundation is supporting end-of-life palliative care in the Southern Highlands.

Participation in the program requires consent from a resident or their representative, including consent to share limited personal information with the foundation. Our clinical team will discuss the program with you at an appropriate time, but if you would like to know more, please feel free to ask them as part of your ongoing conversation about advance care planning. The pilot is scheduled to end in December 2021, and we hope success will mean that an expanded range of support can be offered in 2022. If you have benefited from this program, we encourage you to share your experience with the foundation (<https://www.shchospice.org.au/>). We are grateful to the foundation for recognising that residents of aged care facilities remain part of our community.

### **2021 Residents' Representatives Survey – reminder**

A reminder that the annual survey of residents' representatives is closing at the end of this week. If you have not had your say please take a few minutes to complete this simple survey. Especially if you represent a resident who is not able to communicate their own views, this is an important opportunity to help us plan and improve for the future. To access the survey simply click on one of these links:

For Burradoo use this link to the survey

<https://app.personcentredfeedback.com.au/survey/9/2/O8UIGFH>

For Moss Vale use this link to the survey

<https://app.personcentredfeedback.com.au/survey/9/2/1FQ1O2X6>

### **Advocacy - Seniors Rights Service**

There are a range of advocacy services available for residents, like OPAN (<https://opan.org.au/>) which is a national organisation focused on supporting people to address issues with aged care.

Seniors Rights Service (<https://seniorsrightsservice.org.au/>) is an NSW service which provides free, confidential advice about a broader range of age-related issues in addition to aged care advocacy. Recent feedback from people who have use the service has been positive, so if you have questions or concerns or would like an advocate to help you resolve a problem then this service might be right for you. To contact the service simply phone 1800 424 079 or ask our staff to help you connect.

### **Behaviour and mental health support**

Harbison is fortunate to have two psychologists on staff. They can organise clinical psychological support for residents, including connecting residents with telehealth services like the Parramatta Mission C2BMe (continuing to be me) program or The Wellbeing Clinic for Older Adults at Swinburne University. Unfortunately, demand for these clinical services exceeds supply so we are considering options to make them more accessible to anyone who needs them.

Behaviour Support Plans have recently been introduced to residential aged care, and our clinical staff have been busy developing their competency to correctly assess behaviours and develop behaviour support plans in accordance with the new legislative requirements. At Harbison, staff are trained to understand that dementia is a condition which impacts the physical, psychological, emotional, and social wellbeing of people living with dementia and the people who care for them.



## Opportunities for further education

Twenty-one of our frontline team have recently completed the University of Tasmania's *Understanding Dementia* MOOC (massive open online course, <https://www.utas.edu.au/wicking/understanding-dementia>) and we hope some of them will choose to enrol in the University's *Diploma of Dementia* next year.

Harbison is supporting staff to develop their skills, whether their career ambitions are in clinical, dementia-related, or allied health. We will be supporting a number of staff each year to complete the study required to attain higher professional qualifications, and encourage anyone who is interested in becoming an Enrolled Nurse, Registered Nurse, Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist, Speech Pathologist, Dementia Counsellor, Psychologist, Gerontologist, or Nurse Practitioner to contact our People & Culture team with an expression of interest ([hr@harbisoncare.org.au](mailto:hr@harbisoncare.org.au)).

We also encourage secondary students who are considering careers in nursing, medicine, psychology, dementia care, or allied health, and tertiary students who are looking for financial support and practical experience during their studies to contact People & Culture to discuss how Harbison can support their studies and career.

Support may include paid study, reimbursement of approved expenses, coaching and mentoring, research opportunities, paid work experience, and accommodation.

Thank you for reading this letter. I will provide further detail about the changes to visitor protocols next week. As always, we welcome your feedback.

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