



8 March 2022

Dear friends

This letter follows my communication dated 2 March 2022 and provides an update on our management of COVID-19 risks and the floods which are impacting the area. As usual, we are sharing this letter with our residents and their representatives, our entire workforce, our company members, local GPs, and the wider community.

Burradoo hostel has reopened to visitors

Thank you to the residents of our hostel at Burradoo who have endured the past week with patience and good humour.

We are pleased to report that there have been no signs of transmission from the infected worker. This great result is not unexpected, because proper hand hygiene and PPE has lowered the risk of transmission. However, due to the range of areas worked by this employee it was necessary to take the extra precaution of isolating our residents.

Residents may now resume social outings, subject to the same restrictions as everyone, plus the added burden of having three (3) Rapid Antigen Tests (**RATs**) in the days following their return.

Harbison

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Burradoo

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Burradoo NSW 2576
F 02 4868 6476

Moss Vale

36 Yarrowa Road
Moss Vale NSW 2577
F 02 4869 3214

Avoca is closed to visitors

A member of staff from the Avoca team at Moss Vale has tested positive for COVID-19 and is now isolating. We have closed Avoca to visitors, but Partners in Care may continue to visit and support their residents.

Avoca residents are **not** confined to their rooms, but the wing is now an Amber Zone with restricted access and enhanced PPE requirements for staff. We will monitor residents for signs and symptoms and perform RATs in accordance with Public Health Guidelines - where practical. If anyone is concerned about a resident in Avoca, please contact Reception during office hours on 02 4868 6300.

Staffing is being impacted by the floods

Since yesterday, staffing has been impacted by the floods in our region. We are working to mitigate the impact of the floods, which are exacerbating ongoing shortages caused by COVID-19 furloughs. As always, our priority is everyone's safety. Please be patient with staff as they do their best to limit the inconvenience caused by the current emergency.

COVID-19 update

As of 3 March 2022, there are 210 COVID-19 outbreaks in residential aged care across Australia. This is a significant improvement from a month ago, when 1,176 homes were in outbreak. Part of the improvement may be attributed to changed criteria to declare an outbreak, but generally the data reflects ongoing improvement in the capacity of the sector to manage the risks.

We are, however, seeing increased community transmission in the Wingecarribee over the past few weeks, which is consistent with rising cases across NSW. There are just over 1,000 local cases with an average 95 new infections every day. Unfortunately, this growth

in infections contrasts with stalled uptake of booster doses. Based on experience, we can expect a higher incidence of infection at Easter.

I know it is easy to lose track of the COVID-19 risk against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine, the devastating floods in Queensland and NSW, and the untimely demise of Wornie, but **it is vital to remember that the risk is real and increasing**. Our goal is to keep our homes open to families and friends, and we need everyone to cooperate to achieve that goal. I encourage everyone to have their booster (third (3rd) vaccination) as soon as they are able.

It is now mandatory for aged care workers to provide evidence of their third (3rd) dose of vaccine, and the third (3rd) dose is strongly recommended for all visitors (two (2) doses is mandatory for visitors, except at end-of-life). It is also mandatory to have a current influenza vaccination, and the 2022 influenza vaccine will be available soon. Please attend to your influenza vaccination as soon as it becomes available and provide us with your evidence to avoid interruption to visiting privileges. We will soon be arranging the annual influenza vaccinations for our residents.

Donations from visitors

It has been a pleasant surprise to see how many visitors have chosen to make a small donation to cover the additional costs of managing visits. Thank you for playing your part. We estimate it costs at least \$10 to test and screen each visitor and this cost is drawn from resident care income unless visitors pay their own way.

COVID-19 has directly cost Harbison more than \$1 million so far. When indirect costs are added, the total is much higher. Unless the Government funds the cost, services will be impacted. By making a small donation when you visit you are reducing this impact on our residents. Remember that donations of \$2 or higher are tax deductible.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

If you work for Harbison, you are entitled to free use of the employee assistance program from Access EAP. If you or your family is flood-affected, or impacted by the war in Ukraine, or you just need some extra support, please contact Access EAP on 1800 818 728 for free and completely confidential help.

OPAN and Seniors Rights Service

If you have a concern about the care and services we provide, remember that you can engage an advocate to help you raise your concern with Harbison. There are two options. The first - **OPAN** (Older Persons Advocacy Network) which is a free service funded by the Commonwealth (ph. 1800 700 600). The second - **Seniors Rights Service**, is another free service funded by the NSW Government (ph. 1800 424 079).

If you don't need an advocate, you can always raise a concern using our feedback system, or simply tell any member of our team. We promise to respond to any concern promptly, openly, and in confidence.

Thank you for reading this letter. Once again resilience is the key to making the best of the current challenging circumstances. We have been pulling together for the past 2.5 years since the fires first broke, late in 2019. Please keep pulling together because the worst of COVID-19 is probably behind us, and the floods will pass.

Yours sincerely



David Cochran
Chief Executive Officer