



4 April 2022

Dear friends

This letter contains updates about COVID-19 and other important matters at Harbison.

As usual, we share this information with our residents, their families and representatives, our workforce including our volunteers and contractors, the local GPs who care for our residents, our company members who act as community representatives, and the wider community.

We value your feedback

Feedback is an important part of our continuous improvement. We always welcome positive or negative input, which can be shared online (www.harbison.org.au), using the QR codes displayed in our homes, using a form and the feedback boxes, speaking at a residents' meeting, contacting the Resident Advisory Committee, or simply by emailing, phoning during office hours, or meeting with us.

If you prefer, you may wish to engage an advocate, and we recommend the free advocacy services offered by OPAN (www.opan.org.au or ph. 1800 700 600) or Seniors Rights Service (www.seniorsrightsservice.org.au or ph. 1800 424 079).

Our staff know how to support you to provide us with feedback, so please ask if you need some help.

We report feedback to our Board of Directors. If we cannot resolve a complaint, you may choose to escalate your concern to the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (www.agedcarequality.gov.au or ph. 1800 951 822).

More information about feedback is available in the Harbison Handbook, which is provided to every resident. If you have any questions, please ask.

Harbison

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Re-accreditation of Harbison Burradoo

Every three (3) years the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission decides whether to renew the status of Government-Funded Approved Providers, like Harbison. This review takes the form of an unannounced site audit, usually by a team of four (4) or five (5) Quality Assessors.

The Quality Assessors look at our systems and records and speak to a wide range of residents, family members, and staff to determine whether we meet the minimum standards required under the Aged Care Quality Standards.

Harbison Burradoo underwent a site audit from Monday, 21 March 2022 to Thursday, 24 March 2022 (the week before last). This morning, we have been notified that Harbison Burradoo successfully met every requirement under the Aged Care Quality Standards. Congratulations to everyone on the Burradoo team for this outstanding result!

I am proud of the calm, professional way that our Burradoo team managed the process. It is a big challenge to demonstrate compliance in such a complex system as residential aged care, and we operate in a punitive regulatory environment. Despite having our two senior leaders confined at home due to COVID-19, the audit ran very smoothly. Sincere thanks to everyone who spoke to the Quality Assessors. The feedback I have received indicates it was generally a positive experience.

We expect that the next site audit of Harbison Moss Vale will occur soon. I am confident that the Moss Vale team will also do their best to uphold our reputation in the community. Many of the innovations which were praised at Burradoo – like Motiview, our Simple Food food-safety system, and the Harbison Handbook – are also used at Moss Vale.

Temporary changes to the Personal Care teams

In March, Elly Alcock stepped into the role of Personal Care Manager at Moss Vale to allow Rebecca Glover to participate in a quality and safety project. Rebecca is now handing the project to Rabin Joshi and will take over from Rabin as Personal Care Manager at Burradoo while Rabin is working on the project team. The updated contact details are:

- Elly Alcock (Moss Vale): elly.alcock@harbisoncare.org.au or ph. 02 4868 6204
- Rebecca Glover (Burradoo): rebecca.glover@harbisoncare.org.au, or ph. 02 4868 6215

COVID-19 – update

COVID-19 continues to impact Harbison every day. Local community transmission is at a record level, with more than 3,000 reported cases in the Wingecarribee. Like anyone living in the community, our staff are at high risk of infection or exposure and rolling furloughs are impacting rosters in every department. Current furlough levels are equivalent to the outbreak levels of late January 2022 but have improved significantly from the latest peak on Wednesday, 23 March 2022.

We are working constantly to minimise the impact of workforce shortages, but it is a reality of the pandemic. I am grateful to everyone for their ongoing patience, and to the staff who continue to show great flexibility, teamwork, and resilience.

Despite the impacts of COVID-19, according to a recent review by KPMG, Harbison is delivering an estimated 28 minutes of personal care per resident per day higher than the industry average for inner regional providers. This does not include the additional care provided by the members of our lifestyle, allied health, and catering teams. We also provide an estimated 10 minutes of RN care per resident per day more than average, not including the extra clinical care provided by our Enrolled Nurses and Clinical Nurse Consultants.

The Government has not yet confirmed the minimum care minutes which will apply from later this year, but we are already meeting or exceeding the recommendations of the Aged Care Royal Commission. This is reflected in your feedback to us, with our latest survey in March 2022 reporting that more than 90% of residents agree that they feel safe, get the care they need, and that staff follow up when issues are raised.

COVID-19 fatigue is real. After more than two years, our staff are feeling the strain of the pandemic, including outbreak preparation, the post-Christmas outbreaks, the rolling strain of unplanned leave caused by furloughs, and increased workload caused by reduced visitor access and rolling escalations of our Outbreak Management Plan.

When the outbreaks eventually occurred, our staff stepped up immediately, filling 12-hour shifts to minimise the impact on residents. We rewarded those staff with twice the normal rate of pay, and extra annual leave entitlements so they could have a break to recover as soon as circumstances allow, without dipping into their existing annual leave. 83% of staff reported that the collaborative effort represented by the 12-hour shifts was successful.

We are proud that our employee numbers have remained steady throughout the pandemic, but we are working constantly to ensure that we maintain the right mix of skills and experience, and the right workplace culture. We acknowledge it is not easy, but together we have succeeded in minimising the impacts and shown that we are a match for COVID-19.

COVID-19 visitor hours

From today - Monday, 4 April 2022 the visiting hours at Harbison will be from 11am to 4pm, every day. This does not impact Partners in Care who visit in accordance with their agreed plan, or end-of-life visits.

For convenience, here are the current rules for visitors:

- Each resident is permitted only two adult visitors per day, plus two children under the age of 12 years;

- Except for end-of-life visits, adult visitors must have at least two (2) doses of COVID-19 vaccine at least 14-days before visiting, and a booster dose is strongly recommended. You must provide evidence of your vaccination status when asked;
- Every visitor is required to have a negative RAT test immediately prior to entry, so please come prepared to wait 15-minutes while the test is processed. We will provide each visitor with a test kit, but the test must be performed by the visitor under observation from staff;
- Visiting health professionals are not required to wait for the result of their test and are exempt from having a RAT test if they provide evidence of a negative test earlier on the same day;
- Visitors must wear a P2 mask, which we will provide. Masks may not be removed without permission from an RN. Permission may only be granted if the mask prevents communication e.g., with a person living with dementia, or creates a safety hazard, or to eat or drink in a designated blue zone e.g., in the café. If a visitor removes a mask, they must maintain a minimum 1.5m social distance;
- Visits must occur in resident rooms, outdoors, or in the café;
- Visitors may not enter if they have arrived from overseas in the past 14-days unless they have a negative RAT test on or after day-6 from arrival in NSW. An exemption is available on compassionate grounds for end-of-life visits; and
- We request you consider making a small donation when you visit to cover the cost of screening and testing you for COVID-19. COVID-19 has cost Harbison more than \$1M so far, which reduces the funding available for care and services. We estimate it costs at least \$10 to screen, test, and provide PPE to each visitor. Apart from shifting the burden away from routine care and services, donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible, and 30 June is not far away...

COVID-19 booster shots – residents

The Government has announced that residents will be offered a fourth (4th) booster dose to protect against COVID-19 this winter. The dose will be offered four (4) months after the third (3rd) booster dose. We will provide you with more information about the fourth (4th) booster dose when we have more information about the process. We note that the annual influenza vaccination program will also commence soon, and we will work with GPs to ensure their patients are assessed for both vaccinations.

COVID-19 booster shots – employees

Employees have until Tuesday, 12 April 2022 to provide us with evidence of their third (3rd) booster dose, after which they will not be permitted to work unless they have provided a new COVID-19 medical contraindication certificate, or it is within 19-weeks of their second (2nd) dose. Approximately 48% of staff have complied with this requirement so far. Managers will be supporting staff to complete the process before the deadline. Vaccination is a core responsibility for anyone who chooses to work with vulnerable people.

Aged Care Workforce Retention Bonus

We have lodged our application on behalf of eligible employees for the first instalment of the retention bonus announced on Tuesday, 1 February 2022. Eligible employees will receive up to \$400, subject to approval of our application and receipt of the funds from the Government. We will lodge an application for the second instalment in May 2022 and will keep the team informed as our application progresses.

What is an AN-ACC?

Aged care loves acronyms. Most of you will be familiar with **ACAT** (Aged Care Assessment Team), which is the assessment process to determine eligibility for government-funded aged care. You may also have heard of **ACFI** (Aged Care Funding Instrument), which is the system for determining how much funding is provided by the Government for each resident.

ACFI has been long recognised as not fit for purpose, and we are preparing for the introduction of a replacement for ACFI from Saturday, 1 October 2022. The new system is known as AN-ACC (Australian National Aged Care Classification) and is designed to overcome some of the problems with the ACFI system.

The Government has not published details of the new scheme yet, although the budget this week confirmed a key element, which is an average funding level of approximately \$225 per resident per day. That translates to about \$6.75 per resident per hour for care and nursing wages. Believe it or not, that's an increase on current funding, but not by much. I note there is an election around the corner...

You do not have to do anything before AN-ACC commences. Our residents have recently been assessed by the Government to determine the amount of funding which will be provided under AN-ACC. We do not know the outcomes of those assessments, but we will update you about AN-ACC as information is released.

Tulip Time 2022 – Friday, 16 September 2022 to Monday, 3 October 2022

I am thrilled to confirm that Harbison has been selected as the Charity Partner for Tulip Time 2022.

Tulip Time and Harbison share a 60+ year history in the Southern Highlands, and many of our residents, staff, and families have strong links to the festival. We are proud and delighted to be selected as the 2022 Charity Partner and look forward to celebrating Spring and welcoming everyone back to Corbett Gardens in Bowral for the first time in two (2) years.

Residents, staff, and volunteers will have opportunities to participate in a range of exciting events. If you would like to volunteer, please contact our intrepid Partnership Manager, Zac Hulm (zac.hulm@harbisoncare.org.au or 0410 435 148). A full program will be announced closer to the time. If you know a good anti-rain dance, please start now.

Harbison Family Zoom meeting - Wednesday, 6 April

A reminder that this **Wednesday, 6 April at 11am** we will hold a Harbison Family Zoom Meeting. Fran has sent an email with details which are:

Click on this link to join

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84491698519?pwd=K1pEN252UEpocFVLMjFKV2V3SlI0dz09>

Meeting ID: 844 9169 8519

Passcode: 013613

Thank you for reading this rather long letter. As always, we will inform you immediately if there are any significant changes to our COVID-19 plans, and our nursing team will keep families informed if there are any changes in the status of individual residents.

I hope you enjoyed the extra hour yesterday as we moved our clocks back from Daylight Savings and will take this opportunity to wish everyone a safe, peaceful, and happy Easter.

Yours sincerely



David Cochran

Chief Executive Officer