

Tuesday, 21 June 2022

Dear friends

This letter follows my letter dated Tuesday, 14 June 2022. It provides an update about the COVID-19 outbreak at Burradoo. If you are new to these letters, we distribute them to our residents and their representatives, our workforce including our wonderful volunteers and contractors, local general practices, our company members, and the wider community.

The goal is to ensure that everyone has the information they need to understand how we are responding to the pandemic and other important issues.

Burradoo COVID-19 outbreak - update

Unfortunately, we are now dealing with two separate outbreaks at Burradoo. The Chisholm outbreak now involves four cases, of whom two are recovered and have been released from their isolation period. The other two are isolating in their rooms and receiving anti-viral medication. We are in direct contact with their families, and I am pleased to report they are doing well. The wing is still isolated from the rest of the home, but we are working with the public health unit to determine if we can release the northern half of the wing because the cases have all been clustered in the southern end of the wing.

The second outbreak is in Burrawang. This new case was detected following a social outing to visit family. The resident has contracted COVID-19 from a family member and is now isolating. So far, surveillance testing of other hostel residents has not detected any spread.

I take this opportunity to remind you of the critical importance of infection prevention and control if you are hosting a resident on an outing or at a family gathering. If you do not take precautions, you are not only exposing your resident to avoidable risk, but you are exposing their fellow residents and our workforce.

- You should perform Rapid Antigen Tests on everyone immediately prior to the outing or gathering.

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

- Anyone who tests positive (and anyone who has had contact with them in the previous seven (7) days) should not participate.
- It is prudent to wear surgical masks where social distancing is not possible, and indoors.
- Hand hygiene using alcohol-based sanitiser is essential.
- Anyone with cold or 'flu-like symptoms should not participate.
- Anyone who has arrived from overseas in the past seven (7) days should not participate.
- Everyone should have current vaccinations for influenza and COVID-19 unless they are medically contraindicated.

We all have responsibility for the safety of our vulnerable residents and our workforce.

COVID-19 and influenza in the community is a high risk for anyone living in residential aged care. Everyone who works at Harbison is dealing with daily disruption because of unplanned leave due to either COVID-19 or influenza.

In May 2022, the equivalent of 67-weeks of full-time care were lost to unplanned leave. This is a heavy burden on a small community-owned organisation, a significant disruption for residents and staff, and a personal cost to the furloughed workers. The circumstances may be largely beyond our control, but we must work together to do what we can to minimise the problem.

Our teams have a good track record for containing and resolving outbreaks, but experience shows that COVID-19 outbreaks can be persistent. Each new infection resets the isolation clock for another seven (7) days. It only takes one careless mistake for transmission to occur.

Please take your own responsibility for infection prevention and control seriously.

Residents who are isolating may be supported by their partner-in-care but may not receive other visitors except at end-of-life. If you are a partner-in-care, please continue to provide support in accordance with the care plan. If you are not, please consider enrolling in the program to ensure your resident receives the support they need regardless of outbreak status.

Winter vaccinations – update

It is mandatory for employees to have a current influenza vaccination and three (3) doses of COVID-19 vaccine. This year, the census date for influenza vaccination is Thursday, 30 June 2022. We are providing a final free influenza clinic at Moss Vale on Wednesday, 20 June 2022 for staff who have not yet provided evidence of their 2022 vaccination.

In NSW, influenza vaccination is now free if staff prefer to have their vaccination at their pharmacist or GP. Vaccination evidence should be sent to our Infection Prevention & Control Coordinator, **Leah Willis**.

At Moss Vale, 96% of staff and 82% of eligible residents are fully vaccinated against COVID-19. At Burradoo, 97% of staff and 88% of eligible residents are fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Only five (5) residents and four (4) staff are unvaccinated, for valid reasons, out of a combined group of 560 people.

If anyone has any concerns about vaccination, please speak to your manager (for staff) or a registered nurse (for residents).

Visitor vaccinations/restrictions - update

As you know, it is a condition of entry that everyone (except residents) checks in using our screening system. The system tracks your vaccination status, and unless your vaccination status is current you will not be permitted entry.

Each visitor is required to have two (2) doses of COVID-19 vaccine, and the third (3rd) dose is strongly recommended. Until you provide evidence of vaccination, or the current immunisation medical exemption form from your doctor, you are not permitted entry.

Now that the 2022 influenza vaccine is available, most visitors need to provide us with updated influenza vaccination evidence. You may not enter based on your 2021 influenza vaccination.

If you wish to visit and have not provided evidence of your COVID-19 vaccination, or your 2022 influenza vaccination, please email a copy of your immunisation record to our Infection Prevention & Control Coordinator, **Leah Willis**, at leah.willis@harbisoncare.org.au or provide a copy of your immunisation record to our security staff or the Registered Nurse In-charge when you visit.

To minimise any inconvenience, we suggest having a copy of your current vaccination certificate with you when visiting.

Please also remember that in NSW each resident is still limited to two (2) visitors plus two visitors under the age of 12 each day. Please understand if our staff refuse entry because the limit has been reached and ensure family plans are coordinated with the limit in mind.

Even if you are fully vaccinated, you may not enter if you have arrived in Australia in the past seven (7) days.

Finally, end-of-life visits are **not** subject to these restrictions and our staff will support families to visit safely regardless of vaccination status and will support as many visitors as safely possible if that is the choice of the resident.

Clinical handovers - improvement

Clinical handovers are an important communication process for all staff providing care and support to residents, which improves resident and workplace safety and enables

clear and concise relevant information to be transferred from shift to shift and to visiting health professionals like doctors or ambulance officers.

While handovers are led by a Registered Nurse, they are interprofessional and provide an opportunity for everyone to ask questions and contribute their knowledge of a resident and their professional perspective to support a person-centred approach to care.

We have been working on improving our handover processes for some time. All staff have access to a handover report and are required to acknowledge that they have read it each shift. Compliance with this vital process has improved recently, but we expect 100% compliance. We have begun a new in-person handover process to complement the handover report. This new process will be progressively introduced in each wing, starting in Wingello at Moss Vale. We expect the new process will be fully implemented by September 2022.

Residents and their authorised representatives are welcome to review their handover sheet to ensure it captures the information which is important to them. We will provide opportunities for this as the process rolls out in your wing.

As always, we welcome feedback about any changes so whether you are a resident or member of their care support team, please feel free to let us know what you think of this improvement using our feedback system.

May 2022 resident survey – summary

Just over half of our residents participated in the monthly survey in May 2022. That is a fantastic result, and I thank all 132 of you for being so engaged. These surveys are modelled on the Aged Care Quality & Safety Commission's *Consumer Experience Interviews* and are designed to help us identify areas for improvement each month. Some of you may remember when these surveys were annual, but we have invested in our survey capability to provide more opportunities for residents and their representatives to be involved in the way Harbison is run.

The May 2022 satisfaction rating was 4.4/5. Our aim is to achieve a rating higher than 4/5. Satisfaction at Moss Vale was slightly higher (4.7) than at Burradoo (4.2).

You told us that we could improve the way we explain things to you and do more to follow up when you raise things with us. You also told us that staff sometimes need more knowledge or experience.

I hope the new handover process will help our staff communicate with each other and with you, to ensure you have the information you need in a form that you can understand, and to follow through from shift to shift when you raise things with us.

It is hard to train your troops when they are fighting a war, but our investment in training and education has reached an all-time high. Staff have an extensive training

program to complete each year and are supported by our clinical educator and workplace trainer.

We are supporting some staff to complete university qualifications and provide our nurses with access to the University of Wollongong's *Nurse Gerontological Program*. We have invested in new technology and are progressively rolling out personal mobile devices to our care teams, so they have access to information including policies, procedures, and care plans at their fingertips. Our recruitment process is perpetual to ensure we replace experienced staff as quickly as possible when they retire or resign.

There is plenty of other important feedback in the May 2022 survey, but I wanted to share these key themes and our initial responses with a wider audience and to encourage every resident or representative who wishes to participate in the June 2022 survey. The more people who participate each month, the better our care and service will be. Each month, representatives may receive a survey link by email and residents will be invited to participate by staff and volunteers.

Residential Care Manager, Burradoo

Danny Turner has accepted the role of Residential Care Manager at Burradoo, handing the Residential Services Manager Role for both sites to **Justin Woodward**. For those of you who do not know Danny, he has successfully overhauled our Residential Services Team over the past three years, after joining us from Ramsay Health Care.

Danny has overseen the construction of our new Moss Vale kitchen and renovation of our Burradoo kitchen and has built a catering team which is second to none. He has also instilled his teams with the culture for which we aim to be known – a commitment to excellence.

Mark Jeffrey was the acting Residential Care Manager at Burradoo following Mary Elliott's departure from Harbison to return to a role at NSW Health. Mark continues in his role as Residential Care Manager at Moss Vale, working closely with Danny and the other members of the Executive Leadership group. While Mark was acting Residential Care Manager at Burradoo, he oversaw the successful reaccreditation of the home by the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission.

We are fortunate to have two such capable and experienced leaders to support our clinical, care, and lifestyle teams.

Phone system – update

We have recently implemented some changes to our phone and email systems to improve communication. Now, each Registered Nurse has their own phone extension and voicemail. The extension is automatically included in any email they send, regardless of device, to improve your ability to respond directly.

Missed calls will generate an email alert to reduce the chance that a call is not returned. After hours, calls to the main number (+61 2 4868 6200) will be managed through an interactive voice response system. This is just a fancy term for being asked to choose

between the admissions, clinical care, finance, or other department so your call can be routed to the relevant area. These calls will be recorded for quality and training purposes, to help us pinpoint further improvements.

During the review of our phone system, our ICT Coordinator identified a problem at Moss Vale caused by incorrectly installed equipment. This problem accounts for some of the dropped calls which have been reported at Moss Vale. The issue was raised with our contractor, who acknowledged that the equipment was not in accordance with our design and has agreed to rectify the problem. We apologise for the frustration caused by this, and thank everyone who reported their experience, and the clever **Pavi Karunananda** who invested considerable time and effort to identify the non-compliant installation and the responsible contractor.

Communication is mentioned 19 times in the Harbison Handbook. We understand how important it is and are committed to being open, transparent, responsive, relevant, clear, and concise. Leaving systemic issues aside for one moment, it is important to remember that the Harbison family is characterised by at least six generations of employees, all of whom have different needs and preferences when it comes to information. An increasingly rich and diverse cultural mix of staff and residents, a range of professional perspectives and experiences, a rapidly changing regulatory environment, constantly evolving therapies, and an operating environment which is characterised by heightened emotions and a 24/7 need for dynamic problem solving. It is easy to get it wrong, and we cannot get it right unless there is real collaboration and presumption of goodwill. Thank you for your patience as we worked through this issue, and I hope everyone will find the new phone settings are an improvement.

Staff recognition program - reminder

Another theme in the May 2022 survey was a lack of awareness about the staff recognition program. However, we have seen an increase in participation by residents and families since I wrote to you about it in our newsletter, which went out on Friday, 3 June.

If you missed that letter, here is an extract which explains what the program is and how to nominate a member of the team for reward and recognition:

Weekly award winners are eligible for the Employee of the Month award, and the monthly winners are eligible for the Employee of the Year award.

QR codes (included below) are located around the homes, or you can use the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/2p8yeea6>



If you do not have a smart phone or access to the internet, then simply tell a member of your care team that you'd like to nominate someone and they can do it on your behalf using their care management device.

We publish the results in the newsletters, and it is important that we have representation from residents and families in the recognition program, because it is another way we seek to include you in the way we operate our homes.

Now, more than ever, our staff deserve to be recognised for the respectful, optimistic, authentic, and dedicated work they do.

Thank you for reading this letter. We are week three of outbreak at Burradoo. Our Outbreak Management Team has met every day to coordinate our response. They never complain (at least, to me) but I'd like to take this opportunity to thank them and their families for putting the needs of our residents ahead of their own needs and for standing their ground in the face of this relentless problem.

I will host the weekly Zoom meeting for families until the outbreaks are resolved, to ensure you have a chance to ask questions and express any concerns. Fran McPherson has included the details of today's call in the covering email, but if you need help please contact Fran on email: fran.mcpherson@harbisoncare.org.au or phone 02 4868 6291.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Cochran', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

David Cochran

Chief Executive Officer