



Friday, 18 November 2022

Dear friends,

This letter follows my letter dated Friday, 14 October 2022. It contains an important notification about a new COVID-19 outbreak at Harbison Moss Vale. Please read it carefully because processes have changed since the last outbreak in September 2022.

As usual, in the interest of transparency this letter is being distributed to our residents and their representatives, our workforce, local GP practices, our company members, and the wider Southern Highlands Community.

We are in direct contact with the families and representatives of any resident who is infected with COVID-19, and as always, they are our priority. If you are the person responsible for a resident, you do not need to contact Harbison to find out if your resident is infected because we will always notify you directly.

Harbison Moss Vale – COVID-19 outbreak

Yesterday, we detected multiple cases of COVID-19 in multiple wings of Harbison Moss Vale. We immediately activated our outbreak management plan and notified the Department of Health and Aged Care and the NSW Health Public Health Unit. Our Outbreak Management Team had met the previous day in anticipation that the current wave of community transmission would inevitably lead to more outbreaks. As a result, we are well prepared.

It is too early to know whether there are more cases at Moss Vale, but we expect to have a clearer picture in the next few days. Infected residents are isolating in their rooms, where possible. I understand that all residents are fully vaccinated, have been offered anti-viral medication treatment, and are clinically stable.

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Other residents remain free to leave their rooms, but as always we recommend that anyone who is worried about catching COVID-19 remain in their room or outdoors and avoid other residents. We expect there will be some impact on scheduled activities, and we apologise in advance for any disappointment this causes. However, our goal is to maintain the schedule as best we can.

Visitors may continue to visit but are warned that they are entering an active outbreak site. At both homes, visitors and staff must wear P2/N95 masks and have a negative RAT on the day of and prior to entry. Visits must take place in resident rooms, outdoors, or the café. We strongly recommend that all visitors be fully vaccinated, and vaccination continues to be mandatory for staff.

I note that we have detected COVID-19 this week during visitor screening at both sites, which confirms the risk which visitors currently pose. I note also that we have a small number of staff on furlough as they wait out their seven (7) day isolation period, and we expect this number to grow. Please be patient with all staff as they do their best to compensate for any unplanned leave.

The latest data on COVID-19 outbreaks in residential aged care facilities is almost a week old, but it shows that the number of homes has almost doubled in the last month. At this stage, the wave in NSW appears to be behind the wave in Victoria, but we expect the numbers will continue to increase as we move into school holidays and the Christmas-New Year period. This wave was expected after community restrictions were abolished in October. It is sobering to note that the number of Australian aged care outbreaks this November is nine times higher than last November, and we all remember what happened last Christmas.

Therefore, we expect that Christmas plans will need to be fluid. While we aim to minimise restrictions during outbreaks, it may become necessary to impose tighter restrictions if the

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number of cases at Harbison reaches the levels seen at the beginning of this year. If you are making plans for the holiday period, please allow for contingencies.

Residents are discouraged from leaving the home for at least seven (7) days after they have been infected and may be required to wear masks on outings to e.g., hospital. Residents will be RAT tested on days two (2) and six (6) after their return from any outing and monitored for symptoms.

We will convene a weekly Zoom meeting for families and representatives from next week until the outbreak is resolved. Details will be circulated by email. These meetings are a great opportunity for you to hear directly from me and ask any questions or raise any concerns you may have.

Motiview – Road Worlds for Seniors 2022

The annual Road Worlds for Seniors competition is over, and the Slow Speed Demons have excelled themselves for the 5th year in a row.

As you know, Harbison introduced Motiview to Australia in 2018. Since then, the program has become one of our most popular, and last year we won the *Crew of the Year* award. This year, we congratulate our friends from Kløfta bo og aktivitetssenter in Norway for winning *Crew of the Year*, but we celebrate our best result on the leader board.

I'm thrilled to announce that our Burradoo team placed 3rd in the world, and Moss Vale placed 7th. On a combined basis the Slow Speed Demons would have placed 2nd. This is an outstanding result and includes some amazing individual achievements. I will not pre-empt the official awards ceremony but note that one of our men won his age group, and six of our men and one of our women were top 20 in the world.

More than 100 residents entered the race this year, collectively riding 14,854.6 km over 26 days of competition. Stay tuned for details about the awards ceremony. Meanwhile, if you want to know more about Motiview visit <https://www.roadworlds.com/>

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Expansion of our intergenerational care program

You may have seen social media about our latest initiative, Harbison Playgroup. Initially operating from the Jensen Room at Burradoo, Playgroup provides residents with an opportunity to participate in activities including art, singing, and stories with a group of children aged from birth to five (5) years, and their carers. If you care for a child who may be interested in the Playgroup, simply email the amazing Vanessa Tasker with your query (vaness.tasker@harbisoncare.org.au).

The Playgroup is part of our strategy to eventually improve access to childcare for our staff, with the added benefit of creating intergenerational care opportunities. Anyone who has participated in Harbison Grandfriends knows the magical bond between younger and older people. I am pleased to report that Grandfriends will soon involve more than 240 students. This year, the program expanded from Oxley College to Bowral Public School and Burrawang Public School, and other schools will join the program in 2023.

Residents are also enjoying the Friendship Program with students from the Aurora Steiner School. This program involves students in Year 6 who have been creating biographies of residents, shared artworks for display at Harbison and the school, and are planning a concert and puppet show prior to Christmas. Students from Years 7 to 12 from Chevalier College are supporting residents living with dementia with very popular weekly visits.

This is community aged care in action. I take this opportunity to thank the children and parents, our staff and volunteers, and the leadership teams who are supporting this vital approach to preserving quality of life. I hope you are having lots of fun and enjoying the similarities and differences between ages and life experiences.

Food deliveries to residents

We recently received an “A” rating in our annual food safety audit by the NSW Food Authority.

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However, a risk was identified during the audit which relates to deliveries of food to residents. Please ensure that any food you supply to a resident is delivered to staff so they can organise appropriate labelling. Food which is not labelled will be disposed of because of the food safety risk. Please refer to the Harbison Handbook for more information.

Burradoo Hostel – update

We will soon reach the point where the small number of remaining residents living in the Burradoo Hostel means that meals and activities will shift into the main building. We continue to host meetings with the hostel residents prior to each change and thank them for their ongoing cooperation and understanding.

We expect the hostel will close before Easter 2023 and will announce a firm date next year after consultation with the remaining residents. Most hostel residents have now successfully moved to Moss Vale or alternative accommodation at Burradoo, and I am pleased to report that feedback about their new rooms has been very positive. We will continue to work closely with the remaining residents, prioritising those with changing care needs to ensure they have first choice of any available rooms.

I intend to write to you again as soon as we have more certainty about the new outbreak. The risk of outbreak at Burradoo is high. We all have a responsibility to our vulnerable residents to take every precaution. If you are unwell, stay away. If you visit, ensure you have a negative RAT result on the day of and prior to your visit. You must follow all reasonable directions from staff and must correctly use the required PPE and practice hand hygiene using alcohol-based sanitiser. If everyone plays their part, then it should be possible to avoid additional visitor restrictions.

Thank you for reading this letter.

As always, we welcome your feedback and remind you that you can ask for help from advocacy services like OPAN (ph. 1800 700 600) or Senior Rights Service (ph. 02 9281 3600).

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Employees have access to the free Access EAP program (ph. 1800 818 728) if they need extra help with anything.

Yours sincerely,



David Cochran
Chief Executive Officer

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