



Monday, 28 November 2022

Dear friends,

Here is an update about the COVID-19 outbreak at Moss Vale and COVID-19 case at Burradoo. It follows my letter dated Monday, 21 November 2022 and precedes the next family Zoom meeting on Thursday, 1 December a 11am using this link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89508397231?pwd=cUREWGp2NDNBNjI5NzhPMDY3T3dWQT09>

Also attached to this letter is a letter from the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission for your information. As usual, we are sharing this information widely.

Moss Vale COVID-19 outbreak – update

I am pleased to report that the Moss Vale team has effectively contained the outbreak and over the weekend the number of active cases has halved to ten (although these numbers are expected to bounce around from day to day). Several residents have chosen to refuse anti-viral treatment, but all active cases are clinically stable. Surveillance testing will continue until the outbreak is resolved, and P2/N95 mask plus face shield remains the minimum PPE requirements for the home.

Burradoo COVID-19 case – update

Burradoo has not met the technical requirements to declare an outbreak but has been operating under the Outbreak Management Plan since a case was first identified just over a week ago. That case has now recovered, but a second case was detected recently and is now isolating. The Outbreak Management Plan will remain active until further notice.

P2/N95 masks are the minimum PPE requirement for the home.

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Notifying the person responsible

We have received several requests to provide direct updates to additional family members when residents are unwell. In the absence of alternative instructions from a resident, it is our policy to provide direct updates to a single point of contact, known in NSW as the person responsible. The person responsible is also the person who can consent to medical or dental treatment if a resident lacks the capacity to consent to their own treatment. We rely on the person responsible to notify any other people about the resident's condition, in accordance with any known wishes of the resident.

An enduring guardian is always the person responsible if one has been appointed. If there is no enduring guardian, then a spouse or partner is the person responsible. If there is no spouse or partner, then an unpaid carer who provides or arranges regular domestic support is the person responsible. If there is no carer, then a relative or friend with a close personal relationship and frequent personal contact can be the person responsible.

Identifying the person responsible is an important step in the admission process and should be reviewed during case conferences. In an emergency it is vital that we have a clear substitute decision maker as our point of contact. If you are the person responsible for a resident, please ensure you keep others informed in accordance with the wishes of the resident. Also, remember that general information like these letters is readily available from our website www.harbison.org.au if you are not a person responsible but like to keep up to date with Harbison news.

Conditions of entry

Everyone is required to comply with our conditions of entry. Unfortunately, on the weekend some visitors to Burradoo refused to comply with our screening requirements. You may not enter Harbison unless you have tested negative by RAT on the day of and prior to your visit. You must register using the visitor system and wear your identification label, so staff know that you have been screened. You must correctly wear your PPE and practice hand hygiene.

It is not fair on staff if visitors refuse to comply with these basic requirements. Staff have been instructed to direct any person who refuses to comply with our conditions of entry to leave the premises. If you refuse to leave, staff have been instructed to call the Police and report you as a trespasser.

Our teams are working hard to support visitor access during all circumstances, including outbreak. They are working hard to maintain normal routines as much as possible for our residents. We can only achieve these goals if everyone cooperates with the rules. If you will not comply with the rules, you may not enter Harbison.

It only takes a few mistakes to create the need for a lockdown. If you have a problem with how we are responding to COVID-19, please let me know. Our staff have a heavy enough burden without being put in a situation where they are challenged for doing their jobs.

Next steps

The latest data about COVID-19 outbreaks shows 19 times the number of outbreaks in Australia compared to this time last year (when there was a lower threshold to declare outbreaks) and a 21% increase last week. In NSW, the increase last week was 30%. Even though the outbreak at Moss Vale appears to be contained and Burradoo has avoided declaring an outbreak so far, the risk from community transmission remains high. We expect the risk to increase with the start of school holidays and then as we approach Christmas and the New Year.

Our goal is to avoid a lockdown and we remain confident that we can achieve that goal if everyone cooperates with the current approach. However, we have decided that this year there will be no special Christmas functions for visitors, like our traditional Christmas lunch. Instead, we encourage families to make their own plans, especially on Christmas Day.

Our priority will be supporting residents who have no family or friends with whom to share the season and preserving as much of the Christmas spirit as possible within the homes. We are very aware that this will be the fourth (4th) year with a modified approach to Christmas, starting with the bushfires in 2019. Unlike the past two years, we expect that residents will be permitted to take social leave over the Christmas period, and we encourage families to take advantage of this wherever possible.

Of course, in pandemic terms the 25th of December is far in the future, so please ensure any plans are flexible.

Tomorrow, we celebrate our 2022 Road Worlds for Seniors champions with a medal ceremony and guests of honour General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove and Lady Lynne

Cosgrove at Burradoo. Sir Peter and Lady Lynne opened the refurbished Harbison Moss Vale in 2021 and we look forward to showing them around Burradoo.

We had a good turnout to the Family Zoom meeting last week. It is a great opportunity to hear from me and other families, and to raise any questions, comments, or concerns about outbreak management. We are happy to take questions on notice (via Fran McPherson fran.mcperson@harbisoncare.org.au).

Thank you for reading this letter. I will update you again soon.

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



Dear aged care resident and family members

I am writing to update you on the steps that your aged care provider is expected to take to keep you and other residents as safe as possible at this stage of the pandemic.

While we would all like to think that COVID-19 is no longer a threat, unfortunately that's not the case. It is true – and reassuring - that the risks to our health posed by this highly infectious virus are far more manageable now than they were two years ago. However, the risks have not been reduced to zero and experts predict more COVID-19 waves over coming months and even years as new variants of the virus spread through local communities. For that reason, we must be careful to maintain COVID vigilance and not to fall back into pre-COVID-19 habits.

We must also recognise that beyond COVID-19 there are other infectious diseases that can affect aged care residents, family members and staff. Managing COVID-19 effectively puts providers in a good position to also better manage other infectious diseases.

I have written to aged care providers this week to ensure that they continue to focus on six key areas of COVID-19 prevention and response (below) to ensure your ongoing protection:



You can expect that your aged care provider has these processes in place. You can also expect that any decisions made about infection control are communicated to you in a clear and timely manner.

Residents and family members have a right to understand what actions their aged care facility management and staff are taking to manage and reduce infection risks. There are also a number of steps that you can take to assist in this regard, helping to protect the health and safety of all aged care residents, staff and visitors.

If you are a family member planning to visit a loved one in care, it would be sensible to take precautions in the days leading up to the visit to reduce your risk of contracting the virus and carrying it into the service (where a rapid antigen test (RAT) may not pick it up on entry screening).

Pay attention to any signs or symptoms of illness. If you feel unwell, regardless of whether you have returned a positive COVID-19 test result, you should avoid interacting with others where possible. A negative RAT result is not proof that you don't have COVID-19, and COVID-19 is not the only infectious disease that can spread within aged care settings.

Keeping up to date with your vaccinations is another way to lower the risk to yourself and those around you. This includes COVID-19 boosters, as well as vaccinations for other infectious diseases that pose a risk to yourself and vulnerable members of the community.

At various stages of the pandemic, restrictions have been placed on visits to residential aged care via state and territory public health directions. All jurisdictions have now relaxed restrictions on access, however additional requirements (such as mask wearing) still apply in most places. If your aged care provider introduces special COVID-19 arrangements that you don't understand or don't support, then you should feel free to talk to the provider about this. They should have processes in place to ensure that any restrictions within the service do not impact on the wellbeing of residents and their families.

To understand more about your rights and responsibilities we encourage you to review the [Industry Code for Visiting Residential Aged Care Homes](#). The Commission has also produced a series of [Partnerships in care resources](#) to support aged care residents and their family or close friends to continue their relationships of care and companionship, even during periods of an infectious disease outbreak.

I hope the above information is useful. Thank you for your ongoing efforts to help manage and mitigate COVID-19 risks for people in residential care. Ensuring that aged care consumers are safe, protected from harm, and enjoy a good quality of life is a set of goals that we all share and take very seriously.

Yours sincerely



Dr Melanie Wroth MB BS, FRACP
Chief Clinical Advisor
25 November 2022