



Thursday, 6 April 2023

Dear Friends,

Happy Easter!

This letter follows my letter dated Friday, 13 January 2023. I am pleased to confirm that the long time between letters reflects the absence of COVID-19 in our homes.

However, as we enter the annual influenza season, we are also seeing an increase in COVID-19 in the community, which is now being reflected as an increase in the number of residential aged care services which are experiencing outbreaks.

It is time to step up our winter preparation for a range of respiratory disease risks. As usual, we are sharing this information with a wide range of stakeholders. Please read it carefully.

Workforce vaccination requirements

Since 2018, it has been mandatory for every member of our workforce to have current influenza vaccination, unless they are medically contraindicated or the annual vaccine is no longer reasonably available (e.g., in Summer). This requirement reflects the fact that immunisation against influenza reduces the risk of transmission, which protects everyone.

Our free annual staff vaccination clinics are running, and we encourage staff to take advantage of this service to obtain their vaccination. However, staff may choose to have their GP or pharmacist administer the vaccine, in which case evidence must be provided to hr@harbisoncare.org.au

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COVID-19 vaccination is no longer mandatory for our workforce, but we strongly encourage eligible members of the workforce to maintain current COVID-19 vaccination by having booster shots when they are available.

We are not currently running COVID-19 immunisation clinics for the workforce. For more information about where you can get vaccinated use this link

<https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/covid-19-vaccines/getting-your-vaccination/locations>

To assist our risk management, we request that staff notify us when they have a COVID-19 booster by sending a copy of their vaccination certificate to hr@harbisoncare.org.au

Resident vaccination requirements

We strongly recommend that all eligible residents be vaccinated against influenza this year.

While the incidence of influenza in the community is still low, it is increasing. NSW Health report that approximately 1-in-20 PCR tests are now detecting influenza. Many residents have already had their 'flu vaccination, and staff can assist other residents with the process.

We also strongly recommend that all eligible residents have the fifth (5th) booster for COVID-19, in line with public health advice that people over the age of 65 are at higher risk of severe illness.

Your GP can advise you about influenza and COVID-19 vaccinations, and we are working with primary and public health to help residents to access the COVID-19 booster dose. The risk of another outbreak is increasing, so now is the time to prepare.

Visitor vaccination requirements

Visitors are not required to be vaccinated against influenza or COVID-19, but we strongly recommend both.

Visitors are still required to complete a RAT on the day of, and prior to, each visit, register their visit on our check in kiosk, wear a surgical mask and practice hand hygiene during the visit.

Please note that our outbreak protocol may restrict visitors who are not vaccinated, so we urge you to plan ahead and consider your winter vaccination choices carefully.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the teams who will work through the Easter long weekend to provide care to our residents. This often involves taking time away from their own families, and we appreciate the difficulties which that involves. I have spent time in both homes this week and have been struck by the kindness and love which is on display everywhere at this important time.

I will write again soon, because it has been a very busy start to the year with aged care reform, but I hope you have enjoyed the respite from these letters as much as I have. Careful cooperation has delivered the longest period in which our homes have been outbreak-free since our first outbreaks in late 2021. I appreciate everyone working together to achieve this outcome, and the ongoing behind-the-scenes work of our outbreak management team to maintain our readiness for the next challenge.

I wish you and yours a happy and joyful Easter.

Yours sincerely,

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

David Cochran
Chief Executive Officer