

Tuesday, 3 January 2023

Dear friends,

Happy new year! This letter is the first for 2023 and follows my letter of Wednesday, 21 December 2022. It provides a brief update about the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak at Moss Vale which began on 17 November 2022 and now appears close to resolution. As usual, we share these letters with our residents and their representatives, our workforce, our company members, local GPs, and the wider community.

### **COVID-19 outbreak, Moss Vale – update**

Last Wednesday, 28 December 2022, we finally reached the magic number of zero (0) active cases after a total of 49 cases since the outbreak began. Before we can close an outbreak, we need to have at least seven (7) days without a new case. Unfortunately, two (2) days later we detected a single new case in Joadja. Fortunately, we have not detected any other new cases since then so we are confident that we are now very close to the end of the outbreak.

Burradoo has managed to avoid an outbreak so far, and that is a great credit to the cooperation from our visitors during the latest wave. According to the latest Government statistics released on 23 December 2022, the number of active outbreaks has doubled in Australia (and more than doubled in NSW) since our outbreak began last November. We have not reached the peak of this wave yet, so please continue to be careful when you visit Harbison.

Normal visiting hours are 10am to 4pm. Partners-in-care can visit outside these times in accordance with their care plans. If you drop off a resident outside these times please be prepared to wait until staff are available to check in the resident.

You must have a negative RAT on the day of and prior to your visit. You may perform the test at home before you visit. If you prefer, free RAT kits are available at the main entry but you must perform the test and wait for the result outside (i.e., not in the airlock or the lobby).

You must wear a P2/N95 mask unless you are eating or drinking in a blue zone (café or staff room) or having an outdoor visit. If the mask hinders communication, then you may ask an RN for permission to remove it, but if permission is granted you must maintain social distance.

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#### **Harbison**

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#### **Burradoo**

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Burradoo NSW 2576  
F 02 4868 6476

#### **Moss Vale**

36 Yarrawa Road  
Moss Vale NSW 2577  
F 02 4869 3214

You must use alcohol-based hand sanitiser before you enter the home, before and after touching anything, when you leave a resident's room, and when you leave the home.

If you have been unwell in the past seven (7) days or if you have any acute respiratory symptoms (no matter how mild), please do not visit Harbison.

It is a great achievement to have maintained visitor access at Moss Vale during the outbreak and to have avoided an outbreak at Burradoo. But while the risk of community transmission remains high it is vital that we continue to take these basic precautions.

### **Aged care star ratings**

On 19 December 2022, the Department of Health and Aged Care published the inaugural star ratings for residential aged care services in Australia. Burradoo has been rated 4-stars and Moss Vale has been rated 3-stars.

The star rating system is part of the Government's response to the Aged Care Royal Commission, and is calculated based on an annual consumer survey, compliance with the aged care quality standards, clinical quality indicators, and meeting the target care minutes linked to each resident's funding (approximately  $3^{1/3}$  hours per day on average, ranging from  $2^{1/4}$  to  $4^{3/4}$  hours per day).

There are several points about the star ratings. First, the Government expects consumers to embrace 3-stars as an acceptable rating and has rated more than 50% of services as 3-star. In a world of 5-star expectations, I believe this may increase confusion. Only 1% of services have been rated 5-stars, and about 1/3 have been rated 4-stars.

Second, the staffing component of the rating was assessed prior to the introduction of target care minutes, which began on 1 October 2022 and become binding on 1 October 2023. The Government has been criticised for launching a rating system for target care minutes before those targets were known or funded, let alone binding.

Third, the formula used for the ratings means that a 4-star rating can be achieved despite a 1-star rating for quality. In our case, Moss Vale rated higher for quality than Burradoo but achieved a lower overall rating. If the aim of the rating system is to encourage quality improvement then it seems odd that quality outcomes are not more important in the calculations.

Fourth, the consumer surveys of 10% of residents were conducted at different points in time. Some providers will have been impacted by issues like outbreaks, while others will benefit from surveys being conducted at more opportune times. Also, in our experience the surveys did not consider cognitive ability which means that providers like Harbison which care for high proportions of people living with dementia may do less well than other providers.

I believe the star rating concept is useful, but I do not think this system has been implemented with proper consultation and transparency. There is a high risk that it will not achieve the aim of helping people to compare available services, and I doubt that 3-star

ratings will be valued in the way the Government expects. At Harbison, we would rate both homes equally.

### **Speaking of surveys...**

As you know, we have now had 50 cases of COVID-19 at Moss Vale in the current outbreak. Because we changed our approach to managing the outbreak, with the aim of maintaining social contact and quality of life during the outbreak, we decided to ask families to tell us what they think of the new approach.

Thank you to the 48 people who have so far completed the survey. You have told us that you support the new approach, with a 99.5% satisfaction rating. It is not too late to complete the survey, which was emailed to representatives last month.

### **Family Zoom meetings**

I apologise to anyone who tried unsuccessfully to join the Family Zoom meeting last Wednesday, 28 December 2022. We had some technical issues with Zoom, and because it was a public holiday I did not have the usual brains trust available to help me sort it out.

The next Family Zoom meeting is scheduled for tomorrow (details below) and we expect this will be the last meeting for this outbreak.

Date: Wednesday, 4 January 2023

Time: 11am

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81224122710?pwd=NjYya2pMbDdOcndUaVpJbjArWTUrZz09>

I hope you have enjoyed a safe and happy Christmas and New Year. My thanks to the teams who have worked through the public holidays to ensure continuity of care for our residents. It is not an easy time of year, especially in outbreak, but I think our staff have done a great job of keeping things festive and fun.

Thank you for reading this letter. As always, we welcome your feedback and remind you that the easiest way to lodge a suggestion, compliment, or complaint is using the feedback system via smart phones (QR codes are displayed in the homes), our website (<https://harbison.org.au/contact-harbisoncare/feedback/>) or the feedback forms available from Reception or on request from any member of staff.

If you prefer to have some independent help to raise an issue, then OPAN (1800 700 600) and Senior Rights Service (02 9281 3600) provide free support.

If you would like to keep things informal, then simply tell a member of staff what is on your mind, and they will do their best to find a quick fix for you.

Yours sincerely,



David Cochran  
**Chief Executive Officer**