

Thursday, 29 June 2023

Dear friends,

This letter follows my letter dated Thursday, 1 June 2023. As usual, we are sharing this information with our residents and their representatives, our workforce, local GPs, Company Members, and the wider community.

### **Harbison Burradoo – COVID-19 outbreak closed**

Congratulations to our team at Burradoo! I am pleased to confirm that the COVID-19 outbreak at Burradoo has been closed by the Public Health Unit. We are now in the usual enhanced surveillance period.

Thank you to our residents and their families and visitors for their patience as we worked to resolve the outbreak without resorting to lockdown. Working together we have demonstrated the value of taking the least restrictive approach to this ongoing problem.

During the 46-day outbreak our staff cared for 51 infected residents while at least 44 staff were furloughed with COVID-19. The end of the outbreak reflects the trend in the wider community, with the number of NSW residential aged care services in outbreak reducing from 158 at the start of the outbreak to 103 last week.

It is not easy working under outbreak conditions. We can all be proud of the way our teams supported each other and worked hard to minimise the disruptions experienced by residents. Thank you!

### **Important reminder – vaccinations**

All staff are required to have a current influenza vaccination because it reduces the risk of 'flu transmission and helps maintain a safe workplace. Thank you to Ankita Joshi RN for leading the 2023 influenza clinics to provide every employee with the opportunity to have a free 'flu vaccination. Staff are also strongly encouraged to keep their COVID-19 immunisation up to date because they work in a high-risk setting.

Residents are strongly encouraged to have an annual 'flu vaccination and keep their COVID-19 vaccination up to date in accordance with the latest public health advice. The COVID-19 vaccine can be given on the same day as influenza and other vaccines. Your GP can advise you about the vaccines.

We also strongly encourage all visitors to have a current influenza vaccination to help protect our vulnerable residents and themselves, and to maintain their COVID-19 immunisation with booster doses in line with current recommendations. Your GP or pharmacist can provide you with more information.

**Important reminder – avoid residential aged care if you have been infected, exposed, have symptoms, or are waiting for a test result**

You must not enter Harbison if you have been infected with or exposed to a case of COVID-19 in the past seven (7) days, or if you have any respiratory symptoms, or if you are waiting for a PCR test result. This is regardless of RAT results. It is critical in preventing new outbreaks and maintaining a safe workplace that you manage your COVID-19 risk responsibly. The latest public health advice is available online (<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/racf-latest-advice.aspx>).

**Current visitor requirements**

All visitors must wear a mask provided by Harbison, practice hand hygiene before, during, and after their visit, have a negative RAT result on the day of their visit, register and have a temperature check using the visitor kiosk on arrival, and minimise unnecessary movements around the home during their visit. You must always comply with directions from staff.

While community transmission of COVID-19 is declining rapidly, the risk of influenza is high and increasing according to the latest NSW Health weekly data. RSV risk also remains moderately high. We have a long way to go this Winter, and we encourage everyone to do their bit to keep Harbison safe. Please check your immunisation status – six (6) months can slip past before you know it!

When visiting Harbison please take extra time and care to ensure your mask is properly fitted, your visit has been registered in our visitor log, and your hands are always clean. If you are or have recently been unwell, please stay away.

Both our homes have now managed long outbreaks using extra restrictions as a last resort. We are confident that this is the best approach to ensure quality of life for our residents, but it places a heavy burden on our staff.

**Recognising the value of our workforce**

Please take the opportunity to thank our teams and congratulate them on their incredible resilience and adaptability. They and our amazing residents have been living and working together in difficult conditions for more than three (3) years now and continue to find new and better ways to meet the challenge.


From next week most of our employees will be rewarded with an interim wage increase for aged care workers from the Fair Work Commission, which is being funded by an increase in the care subsidy paid by the Government in relation to each resident.

Unfortunately, some aged care workers have been left behind because the Fair Work Commission has deferred consideration of the value of certain types of work until the final decision is handed down. Harbison has decided to pay an increase to those workers in advance of the final decision, to ensure that their work is valued the same as their colleagues, and in anticipation that the Fair Work Commission will eventually recognise the valuable work of *everyone* in aged care.

Meanwhile, we are also negotiating a new enterprise agreement with our nurses to ensure that we are an employer of choice in the Southern Highlands, and we hope to announce a successful outcome to that process soon.

Thank you for reading this letter.

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**