

Thursday, 14 December 2023

Dear friends,

I intend this to be my last letter for the year and hope you have enjoyed some respite from the barrage of letters that characterised the previous three years. As usual, we share these letters widely, but they are primarily intended for the information of our residents and their families and friends, our staff and volunteers, and the growing Harbison community. Unusually, this letter is not about COVID-19.

### **Harbison Employees of the Year**

Before I confirm our Employees of the Year for 2023, I'd like to share a story about one of our 2022 winners, Breannan Ciantar EN, and Veronia Corro RN. Recently, Harbison was approached by the organisers of the Sony Ignatian Children's Holiday Camp which has provided holiday camps for children living with disability for more than 20 years. They had heard about Harbison's multi-generational care program and wondered whether we could support them to meet the needs of children at the annual camp.

Bree and Veronica volunteered and last week gave four days of their time, including a weekend, to support 22 children aged from 5 to 15 years. Last night, I received this message from the organisers: "Thanks so much. Bree and Veronica were amazing on the children's camp... We had 22 kids with various intellectual and physical disabilities. Many high needs, nonverbal and severe autism... a few with epilepsy too. Your nurses were fantastic and lots of fun... they are both just lovely people".

It's been another one of those years. Our team continues to reimagine how they can serve the community and leverage our not-for-profit status (no shareholders expecting dividends, no government taxes, which means more money for care and services). In that spirit, I'm pleased to confirm that our 2023 Employees of the Year are Sherlyn Gavellas and Margaret Aumua, and it has been my honour this week to present them with their prizes alongside their colleagues who have reached service milestones at Harbison.

It is always difficult to select people for this acknowledgement, because there are so many worthy candidates on the shortlist, but Sherlyn and Margaret each stood out despite quite different backgrounds. Sherlyn has been a member of the Harbison personal care team since 2016 and is well known for her dynamism, positive (team) work ethic, and skill. Margaret only joined the personal care team this year but has made a significant contribution to our workplace culture and distinguished herself for her unassuming dedication to the role, and for setting high standards in every aspect of her work. We look forward to supporting them with professional development opportunities as part of their award, and to sharing their journeys at Harbison. They are both just lovely people.

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#### **Harbison**

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## **Nurse Practitioners at Harbison**

I am pleased to confirm that Harbison has launched Nurse Practitioner Clinics for our residents. Nurse practitioners are the most experienced, qualified, and independent registered nurses in the health care system. Our Nurse Practitioner Clinics aim to complement and improve access to other care and services, improve coordination with GPs and specialists, and provide mentorship and clinical expertise to our Registered Nurses and allied health professionals. We are planning to host information sessions about the clinics in the New Year.

Meanwhile, our inaugural nurse practitioners are Mary Keans (NP, RN PhD Candidate, University of Sydney academic) and Amy Montgomery (NP, RN, PhD Candidate, University of Wollongong academic). Mary has been a registered nurse for more than 35 years, a nurse practitioner for more than 10 years, and was involved in the formation of the Geriatric Flying Squad at St George Hospital. Mary teaches nursing at the University of Sydney and is experienced in cardiology, chronic disease management, and aged care. Amy teaches nursing at the University of Wollongong and holds qualifications in aged care and dementia care. Amy is the director of Enhance, a nurse practitioner-led clinic supporting people with dementia and their care givers. Amy expects to complete her doctorate next year.

We will soon provide our residents with more information about how to request an initial assessment at the clinic, after Mary and Amy have had time to orient themselves and get to know the other members of our clinical team.

## **Residential Care Leadership**

I'm pleased to announce that Danny Turner has been confirmed in the role of General Manager, Residential Care. Danny's role is to support the care leadership at each service and coordinate the residential care and service operational teams. Reporting to Danny, Kritika Bhattarai RN and Nwadi Nwanyieze RN are responsible for overall day-to-day care at our Moss Vale and Burradoo services respectively. Anna Simons RN will also report to Danny, coordinating clinical quality and compliance for the organisation and the Medication Advisory Committee. Please note that if you have a concern about the care of a resident, your first point of contact should be the Registered Nurse in charge of the shift. We aim to immediately resolve as many concerns as possible.

Continuing with the theme of professionalism in aged care, you may be interested to know that Nwadi has recently finished in the top of her class for a Master of Healthcare Leadership and Management qualification from the University of NSW, the oldest and largest program of its kind in Australia. This qualification follows her Doctorate in Nursing and her Masters in Academic and Professional Learning, not to mention more than 20 years as a Registered Nurse.

## **Consumer Advisory Body**

In November 2023, the Board of Harbison created the Harbison Quality Care Advisory Body in accordance with the *Aged Care Act 1997*.

Separate to this new advisory body, the Resident Advisory Committee was formed in 2018 and has provided valuable feedback to me and the Board since that time. From 1 December 2023 there are new requirements for aged care providers to offer residents and their representatives the option to form a "consumer advisory body". We are required to make this offer in writing once each year.

We expect that the Resident Advisory Committee will be reformed to act as a consumer advisory body for the purposes of the new regulations. Soon, we will write to residents to provide more information about how they can form an advisory body if they so choose. I take this opportunity to

thank the members of the Resident Advisory Committee, past and present, for their invaluable contribution to the care and services we provide at Harbison.

### **56<sup>th</sup> Australian Association of Gerontology Conference**

In 2018 Harbison introduced Motiview to Australia. Since then, the popularity of the program has grown each year to the benefit of hundreds of residents and families.

Last month, Harbison was an exhibitor and co-presenter at the Australian Association of Gerontology Conference. Dr Ruth Brookman from the MARCS Institute for Brain, Behaviour and Development, Western Sydney University, presented research about the benefits of our Motiview program and the annual Road Worlds for Seniors competition.

Working with Dr Brookman and her team, and a group of 32 residents, we were able to demonstrate that participation in Road Worlds for Seniors led to improvements in wellbeing, including functional fitness, mental health, independence, and social engagement. Congratulations to our Motiview team for being part of this novel research, and thanks to the team who represented Harbison and Motiview at the conference. Contributing to evidence-based best practice is one way we demonstrate our commitment to professionalism in aged care.

### **Annual staff engagement survey**

As you know, we routinely survey samples of residents and their representatives about their experience of care at Harbison. We use this information to identify areas for improvement, and I am pleased to report that resident satisfaction has increased again this year. Our amazing People & Culture team also conduct an annual staff engagement survey, which allows us to benchmark ourselves against a large database (n=26,679) from around the world to assess our organisational effectiveness.

This year, I am pleased to report record high engagement scores that exceed the benchmark and place our people in the 'top performers' category. This result builds on a strong result last year and reflects the impact of the 3-year culture and leadership program which the Board approved in 2022.

Thank you to the 268 staff who participated in the survey, and to the growing number of leaders in the culture and leadership program. Of course, there is always room for improvement, and we use this important survey to identify focus areas for the next 12 months. I look forward to working together on these opportunities for improvement in the new year as we strive to make Harbison the best place to work in the Southern Highlands (or Australia).

### **Christmas at Harbison**

We encourage friends and families to include residents in Christmas celebrations at home or in the community. Please remember that residents must sign out when they commence an outing and sign in on their return.

We have limited facilities to support family gatherings at Harbison, especially on Christmas Day. If you are planning to visit Harbison during this busy time, please be considerate of other residents and visitors and the demands on our staff, many of whom are away from their own families to provide continuity of care for our residents through the holiday period.

Also, please maintain your vigilance for signs and symptoms of communicable diseases (including COVID-19 and gastroenteritis, for example) if you are visiting or hosting vulnerable residents. If you or anyone in your group is unwell, please avoid visiting Harbison and carefully consider the risks of exposure to any resident you are hosting.

I take this opportunity to wish you and yours a happy and healthy Christmas, and to thank you for your contributions to Harbison this year. I look forward to working with you again in 2024.

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**