

matters

SUMMER 2020

meccwacare



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Caring for Victorians since 1959

Rising in the face of adversity

Nobody could have predicted at the start of 2020 that in a few short weeks, we would be in the grip of a global pandemic and the world would change as we know it. When COVID-19 reached our shores in February, our focus immediately shifted to preparing mecwacare's defences against the highly infectious and deadly virus.

This was uncharted territory, an unprecedented health issue that was rapidly changing every day. Our approach was to remain calm and ensure a coordinated and controlled response.

We worked non-stop to keep our residents, clients, staff and volunteers safe. We proactively implemented a range of robust infection prevention and control measures and developed COVID-safe business continuity plans that went beyond the official advice.

Our combined efforts resulted in all our sites and facilities remaining coronavirus-free for months.

Sadly, at the height of the second wave – in an area of Melbourne where community transmission was widespread – the virus made its way into the mecwacare John Atchison Centre in Hoppers Crossing. We are deeply sorry that some of our special residents succumbed to the virus and our thoughts and prayers are with their families, particularly during the festive season.

To highlight the devastation of COVID-19, mecwacare's Christmas Appeal tells the story of a loving husband who lost his wife of 68 years to the virus. Theodora (Do) Litjens was a resident at the John Atchison Centre. Her husband Andre has opened up about his wonderful life with Do and their heartbreaking last moments together in the hope that it helps mecwacare strengthen our pandemic response.

Inside this edition, you will read about some of our amazing staff who answered the call to assist during the outbreak.

We also have stories on the opening of our stunning new retirement living village in Malvern and a gorgeous short film about ageing and friendship.

It has been a very challenging year for everyone. As we emerge from lockdowns and restrictions, we look forward to Victoria being coronavirus-free and progressing our care and services beyond the pandemic.

We are incredibly proud of the resilience, commitment and determination of our kind and compassionate staff who have risen in the face of such adversity.

They are our pandemic heroes.



Michele Lewis
Chief Executive

Pictured on the front cover: mecwacare Trescowthick Centre resident Patricia Tolson enjoying the sunshine at the Prahran home with Clinical Manager David Mitrovic.

Celebrating
— 20 YEARS —

mecwacare

20th Annual Charity Golf Day

Monday 15 February 2021

**YARRA YARRA GOLF CLUB
567 WARRIGAL ROAD, BENTLEIGH EAST**

PUTTING COMPETITION | \$5,000 HOLE-IN-ONE | LONGEST DRIVE

Team and single entries close Monday 1 February 2021

For more information contact:
fundraising@mecwacare.org.au
03 8573 4809



1959 - 2019

TRUST FRANK CONQUERS WORLDFEST



TRUST FRANK, A TOUCHING SHORT FILM SPONSORED BY MECWACARE ABOUT THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF AGEING AND THE IMPORTANCE OF FRIENDSHIP, HAS WON ITS FIRST OFFICIAL AWARD.

First-time director Penny Moore was delighted to receive a Silver Remi Award in the comedy/romance category at the 53rd Annual Worldfest International Film Festival in Houston, USA.

With over 4500 applications, Trust Frank received official selection at the festival, which is an Academy Award qualifying event.

"It's a pretty decent accolade," Penny said. "To win our first official award is very encouraging and hopefully the first of many!"

Penny is in esteemed company with the likes of Steven Spielberg, George Lucas, John Lee Hancock, David Lynch, Ang Lee and the Cohen Brothers previously winning a Remi Award.

Trust Frank is a sentimental and gently humorous story about two lonely elderly neighbours, struggling to battle serious infirmities as they age.

It was filmed in Moonee Ponds and stars John Flaus (The Castle, Jack Irish, Harvie Krumpet) and Brenda Palmer (Animal Kingdom, Blue Heelers, Winners and Losers).

mecwacare attended an advanced cast and crew screening earlier this year before COVID restrictions took hold and the lockdown was imposed, delaying the film's official release in Australia until next year.

Trust Frank is slated for competition at the Melbourne and Sydney International Film Festivals in 2021 and will be screened in mecwacare's 13 residential aged care homes when restrictions ease.

mecwacare is delighted to be part of this project, which puts dementia in the spotlight and shows that you are never too old to find love and friendship.

"It's a pretty decent accolade... to win our first official award is very encouraging and hopefully the first of many!"

Penny Moore



Pictured: John Flaus and Brenda Palmer.

Our Pandemic HEROES

When COVID-19 reached our shores in February, mecwacare's immediate priority was to protect our vulnerable residents, clients, staff and volunteers from the deadly virus.

Our proactive infection prevention strategy, which included advanced Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), held strong for many months. However, during the second wave in late July – in an area of Melbourne where community transmission was widespread – the virus made its way into the mecwacare John Atchison Centre in Hoppers Crossing.

We worked around the clock to try to stop the spread of this highly contagious virus, which very quickly impacted our residents and staff, with devastating consequences.

Enter our "Pandemic Heroes", staff members from other mecwacare sites and services who put their hand up to selflessly support our residents and their families during the outbreak. These individuals utilised their skills, experience, education and training to assist with medication rounds, nursing duties, resident health and wellbeing, communication with anxious families and deliveries of essential items. They threw themselves onto the frontline without thinking twice. Here, we celebrate three of those heroes.



Sharron Gregory

Sharron, who was a Home and Community Care Program for Younger People (HACC PYP) Project Worker at the time of the outbreak, assisted as a Registered Nurse on night duty at the John Atchison Centre. Sharron helped with medication rounds, resident observations and monitoring for any symptoms of COVID-19 or deterioration.

She says reassuring residents and their families was a key feature of her time at the centre, which was so important when anxiety and loneliness was prominent.

Sharron's new role as Centre Manager for mecwacare's South East Region Home Care Office, does not require hands-on nursing duties but the situation at the Hoppers Crossing home called on her expertise, education and experience as a nurse to

support staff and residents during the outbreak.

Her ability to move across to the site and assume such critical responsibilities demonstrated leadership traits that will no doubt hold her in good stead in her new position.

Eleanor Hillis

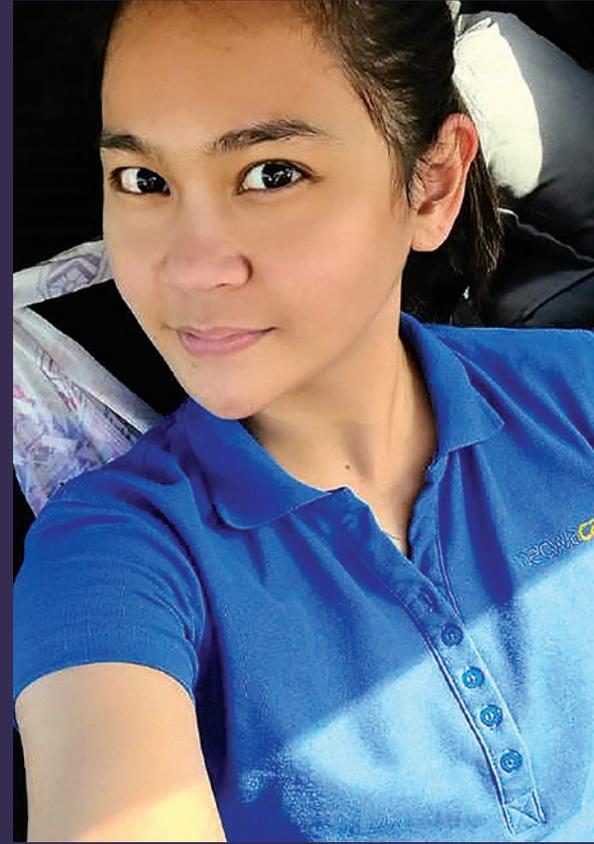
Eleanor has worked as a cleaner and laundry assistant at the John Atchison Centre since mecwacare opened the facility in 2018. Conscientious and loyal, Eleanor is always respectful of those around her and happy to roll up her sleeves and get on with whatever needs to be done.

Her "can-do" attitude came to the fore when COVID-19 impacted the centre. Despite contracting the virus herself and spending two weeks at home before the health department cleared her to return

to work, Eleanor jumped straight back in without any hesitation to support her colleagues and residents at the home.

Eleanor's manager said she went above and beyond, assisting residents to move into new rooms as part of the government's "zoning" policy and ensuring each resident was comfortable with how the room was organised. Eleanor later assisted residents to move back to their original rooms, always explaining why she was there and asking for their consent to pack up their belongings.

Eleanor was like a breath of fresh air and always had a smile for everyone she came into contact with. Her manager says her consistent presence during a very difficult time was appreciated by all, describing her as "one in a million and a true star in our eyes".



Khryss Patron

Khryss, who is a domestic assistant in the North West Metro Region, joined mecwacare in the middle of the pandemic. She had not been in the role for long when she volunteered to assist as a cleaner and kitchen assistant at the John Atchison Centre.

With her caring nature and positive attitude, Khryss soon found herself supporting residents with their general wellbeing by chatting with them and putting their minds at ease during what was a frightening time for everyone.

She believes the most challenging aspect was the first few days getting to know all the residents when the outbreak was at its peak. However, she says it didn't take long for the residents to start recognising her, despite wearing full PPE, and calling her by name.

Khryss worked at the home whenever she was needed, becoming one of the most reliable and confident employees during an unprecedented and challenging situation. Her positive nature and soothing manner with the residents provided them with much-needed comfort.

A diligent worker, Khryss often stayed back to ensure all tasks were completed and began to understand the needs of individual residents so she could provide them with the support they needed. She says that she never feared for her own safety. Such selflessness and awareness was a welcome addition at a time when all hands on deck were needed.

Khryss says her experience reinforced her decision to become a direct care worker. She is now completing her qualifications and looks forward to continuing to support some of the most vulnerable people in our community.

mecwacare John Atchison Centre was declared coronavirus-free by the health department in early October. At the time of publication, it remains the only outbreak at a mecwacare site.



For more information on the outstanding contributions of the mecwacare team, see page 11 for our Annual Employee, Volunteer and Contractor Awards.



You can also read about mecwacare's All Stars on our Facebook page.



ROBIN SYME MALVERN:

Living the life of luxury

ROBIN SYME MALVERN, MECWACARE'S NEW BOUTIQUE RETIREMENT LIVING VILLAGE, WELCOMED ITS FIRST RESIDENTS IN OCTOBER.

IN A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER, WE ARE DELIGHTED TO CELEBRATE THE COMPLETION OF THIS STUNNING BUILDING. OUR RESIDENTS HAVE BRAVELY SET ASIDE THEIR COVID-19 FEARS AND ANXIETY TO START A NEW CHAPTER IN THEIR LIVES, IN A BEAUTIFUL NEW HOME.

The complex contains 31 luxurious two and three-bedroom residences crafted and styled to perfection. Promoting a life of convenience, comfort and wellbeing, residents will enjoy living life their way, with access to a range of facilities including a cinema, wine bar, cafe, private dining room, gymnasium and business lounge.

Living in a friendly community, residents have the freedom of choice to live the life they want with the reassurance of access to long-term support in the neighbouring mecwacare Malvern Centre, if required. A truly welcoming community in a safe and secure environment, Robin Syme Malvern offers a real sense of belonging and peace of mind.



Please call Pauline and Robyn on **03 9831 9876** today for a personal tour or visit **www.robinsymemalvern.com.au** for more information.



- ✔ Relax knowing that you live in a safe and secure environment.
- ✔ Make the most of the outstanding amenities available
- ✔ Enjoy an active and social lifestyle where participation is optional
- ✔ Delight in living in a brand new residence with little to no maintenance, giving you more time to do the things you love
- ✔ Our 24-hour emergency on-call system offers peace of mind
- ✔ All you need and love is within easy reach, including shops, cafes and restaurants
- ✔ Have access to residential aged care in the future with *mecwacare*



IN HONOUR OF ROBIN SYME AM

Robin Syme was a major contributor to aged care in Australia, particularly for his support and guidance to *mecwacare*.

Robin was a solicitor with over 40 years' experience in the not-for-profit sector. This former president of The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital, Chairman of the State Council and President of St John Ambulance Victoria joined the *mecwacare* Board in 2000. Soon after, he was appointed as the organisation's Chairman.

Within this role, Robin supported the expansion and enhancement of *mecwacare's* residential and community services, including the refurbishment of our Fisher Street and Barry Fenton day centres. Over a 10-year period, he was involved in the extension of *mecwacare's* Sir Donald and Lady Trescowthick Centre in Prahran and the Pakenham home care office, and opened *mecwacare's* Malvern Centre, a 101-bed aged care facility right next door to this new collection of luxurious residences.

HOME CARE *on the Coast*

mecwacare's new Barwon office is now the base of operations for all home care services in the Barwon and Surf Coast regions. It was built alongside mecwacare Elstoft House in Hamlyn Heights (Geelong) during extensive renovations at the residential centre and opened on October 1.

Home Care Packages, the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) and Private Care (self-funded) services will be provided across the City of Greater Geelong, Bellarine Peninsula and Surf Coast Shire, including Torquay, Anglesea, Bellbrae, Jan Juc and Freshwater Creek. These services provide individualised flexible support tailored to meet the varied needs of each client and their unique circumstances, and aimed at supporting people to achieve their own goals. mecwacare was selected to take over CHSP funding for Surf Coast Shire from October 1.

This dedicated team is based locally, ensuring safe and professional service outcomes for vulnerable clients within the coastal communities. For more information, please call the team on **5270 4888** or email hcs.barwon@mecwacare.care.org.au

Mornington Peninsula Shire appointed mecwacare to provide core aged care services for new clients from 1 December 2020 under a Partner Provider Model. Services include domestic assistance, personal care, respite care and shopping support. This year has seen extensive growth in our services across Mornington, which included two new residential aged care centres in Shoreham and Safety Beach, taking the number of aged care homes on the Mornington Peninsula to three.

mecwacare now has home care offices in six locations, providing care and support across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria: Malvern, Keilor East, Pakenham, Ballarat, Hamlyn Heights (Geelong) and Inverloch.

Support for people under 65

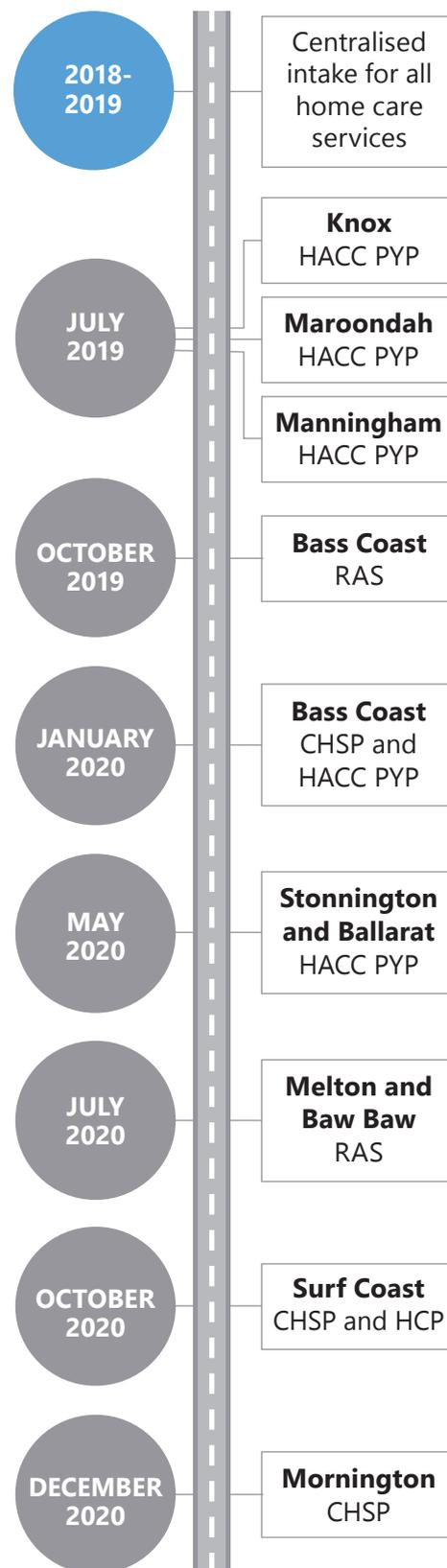
While mecwacare is the largest provider of government-funded home care services to people over 65 in Victoria, we also provide home care and support services to people under 65.

This includes respite care, personal care, domestic assistance and other available services. Clients are our partners in the ongoing assessment and planning process to ensure they receive the care and services they need for their health and wellbeing. mecwacare works with clients to assess and plan their care needs and develop an individual care plan by utilising a Wellness and Reablement Approach. This is done in consultation with the client and their nominated representatives and appropriate providers.

Our Home and Community Care Program for Younger People (HACC PYP) services are delivered from six sites across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria to people under 65 (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders under 50) who need assistance with daily activities. Our staff are proud of their reputation for being professional, courteous and dependable, and for creating a diverse workforce that provides culturally appropriate services to those in need.

For more information, call **8573 4980** or email intake@mecwacare.org.au

TIMELINE OF EXPANSION



HACC PYP: Home and Community Care Program for Younger People

HCP: Home Care Packages

RAS: Regional Assessment Service

CHSP: Commonwealth Home Support Program

A NEW DAWN IN DISABILITY SERVICES

mecwacare's disability day centre is open again after being closed during the Stage 4 lockdown in metropolitan Melbourne. Our staff continued to support participants throughout this period, ensuring their return to the East Malvern centre was seamless.

In addition to regular phone calls and wellbeing checks, monthly newsletters featuring participant stories, birthday well wishes, recipes, games, art projects and more were sent out to participants so they felt connected to their peers while physically apart. Staff also prepared the centre for the long-awaited return of participants when restrictions eased, distancing seating arrangements to comply with guidelines and planning a range of new activities.

Communication focused on the importance of keeping safe during the lockdown, with messaging about social distancing, hand hygiene and wearing face masks included in all correspondence as a friendly reminder.

Fisher Street's relaxation program, originally once a week, has now become a part of the centre's daily routine since reopening, enlightening participants on managing stress and peace of mind. At the end of each day, participants retreat to the Sensory Room to unwind and reflect before going home.

With calming music to set the atmosphere, a mindfulness script is read to the group by support staff with guided imagery, breathing exercises and gentle stretches. Each participant has the option of closing their eyes or simply focusing their gaze elsewhere, ensuring they are comfortable and relaxed. After the session, the group reflects on how they are feeling and share their highlight of the day.

This puts mental health at the forefront and provides the opportunity to talk about all aspects of the centre and its services.



Pictured: Fisher Street participant Rachel Oliver with Disability Support Worker Malwina Smalec working on the Fisher Street newsletter.



Staying strong in body and mind

Dianne Gilbert is the fitness instructor at mecwacare's Rivendell House in Pakenham. She leads interesting and engaging strength training programs for people over 65. COVID-19 restrictions meant Di was unable to run her programs as normal for months, but that did not stop her from inventing ways to provide a high-quality service for the people she supports and cares about. Di sent out quizzes, brain games and exercise routines to her clients, either by email or post. She called every client regularly and encouraged them to keep motivated and continue with their exercise programs, prioritising their health during the lockdown. Di's clients were grateful for the fantastic support they received during isolation.

OPEN FOR THE FESTIVE SEASON

MECWACARE IS DELIGHTED THAT OUR FOUR OPPORTUNITY SHOPS ARE AGAIN OPEN FOR BUSINESS, JUST IN TIME FOR CHRISTMAS. WHETHER IT IS MALVERN, MALVERN EAST, WINDSOR OR HAWTHORN, MECWACARE'S OP SHOPS ARE BRIMMING WITH PRE-LOVED TREASURES WAITING TO BE DISCOVERED.

Pictured: Malvern Op Shop Manager Juliana Walker inside the Wattleree Road store.



We are grateful to the community which has so generously donated items from their cupboards and sheds during the coronavirus lockdown. Your generosity has ensured we have a fantastic range of items, with every dollar from sales going back into programs and services for some of the most vulnerable people in the community.

Each shop has its own personality and offers a range of items for gifts, social occasions or simply to spoil yourself after a challenging year. We cannot wait to see our loyal customers once more, with a selection of high-quality clothing and trinkets sure to draw attention and appeal to anyone seeking a bargain.

Each shop adheres to strict infection control guidelines and all staff and volunteers are following mecwacare's proactive approach to hand hygiene and social distancing.



Donations of goods are vital to the success of our stores. If you have any books, clothing, bric-a-brac or other items you would like to donate, please call **9571 4221** or email enquiries@mecwacare.org.au



If you would like to donate your time as a volunteer in a mecwacare op shop, please contact Volunteer Coordinator Julianne Neilson on **8573 4962** or email julianne.neilson@mecwacare.org.au

Highlighting Excellence across Victoria

Earlier this year, our Annual Employee, Volunteer and Contractor Awards event was postponed in March due to the coronavirus and subsequent restrictions on public gatherings. We had remained hopeful that we would be able to come together at some point in 2020 to celebrate the achievements of all our award recipients and nominees. Sadly, this was just not possible.

So, like the many adjustments we have all had to make this year, we decided to announce the awards a little differently too. mecwacare Chief Executive Michele Lewis, the Leadership Team and Management Group linked up with the award recipients via Microsoft Teams to advise them of their success – and their certificates and prizes were delivered to their workplaces.

We received 70 nominations for staff, volunteers and contractors who assist our residents, clients, participants and the wider community to live purposeful and fulfilling lives each day. Their extraordinary contribution in caring and supporting some of the most vulnerable people in our community cannot be underestimated.

mecwacare would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge all our staff, volunteers and many loyal contractors for their continued support, particularly during this very challenging year. We could not do what we do without you. Thank you!

It has been heart-warming to see our organisation unite to manage this unprecedented health issue – an excellent demonstration of mecwacare's values in action – Caring, Accountable, Respectful and Ethical.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FOLLOWING RECIPIENTS OF MECWACARE'S 2020 EMPLOYEE, VOLUNTEER AND CONTRACTOR AWARDS:

Encouragement Award Community

Jacqueline Noble
Disability Services
Manager

Encouragement Award Corporate Services

Rochelle McNamara
Recruitment Coordinator

Encouragement Award Home Care

Kathryn Marinis
Client Services
Coordinator
(North West Metro)

Encouragement Award Residential

Brenda Davies
Enrolled Nurse
(Malvern Centre)

Long-Term Contribution Award 1

Jean Mason
Registered Nurse
(South East Metro)

Long-Term Contribution Award 2

Maria Bono
Centre Manager
(Barry Fenton Centre)

Support Services Staff Award

Corporate Services
Snez Angelkovic
Quality Officer

Support Services Staff Award

Home Care
Chantelle Keven
Regional Manager
(South West Region)

Support Services Staff Award

Residential
Shannon Glover
Lifestyle Coordinator
(Park Hill)

Administrator of the Year Award

Corporate Services
Vickie Gillan
Admissions Manager

Administrator of the Year Award

Home Care
Katrina Krejci
Client Services
Coordinator
(South East Region)

Administrator of the Year Award

Residential
Sharon McCormack
Reception/Roster/
Administration Officer
(Rositano House)

Carer of the Year Award

Residential
Kadija Roba
Registered Nurse
(Trescowthick Centre)

Carer of the Year Award

Home Care
Effie Mitsiopoulos
Enrolled Nurse
(North West Metro)

Contractor of the Year
Dineshkumar Subramani
Medirest
(Trescowthick Centre)

Volunteer of the Year Award 1

Olwyn Syle
(East Malvern Op Shop)

Volunteer of the Year Award 2

Donald Jones
(Malvern Centre)

Employee of the Year Award

Adrian Gordon
Registered Nurse
(Trescowthick Centre)

Chief Executive Leadership Award

Cheryl Shannon
General Manager
Organisational
Quality and Risk

**Chief Executive
Special Award**
IT Team

I would like to support *mecwacare*

Please complete and return this donation slip to support *mecwacare*'s life-changing work.

Please find enclosed my tax deductible gift of:

\$10 \$20 \$50 \$100 \$200 My choice \$ _____

Where would you like your donation to go?

- Elderly people
 People with a disability
 People experiencing financial hardship
 Area of greatest need

Payment by:

- Cheque Visa Mastercard AMEX AMEX ID _ / _ / _
 Money Order

Contact Details:

Mr / Master / Miss / Mrs / Ms / Mx / Other: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Telephone: _____

Date of Birth: ____ / ____ / _____

(optional)

- Please send me information about remembering *mecwacare* in my Will.
 Yes, I'd like to know more about volunteering at *mecwacare*.
 I do not want to receive further correspondence from *mecwacare*.

Cardholder no. _____ / _____ / _____ / _____

Expiry date ____ / ____ CVV _____

Cardholder's name: _____

Signature: _____



Fill out the donation form and post your cheque or card information to us in the reply-paid envelope enclosed or mail to *mecwacare*, 1287 Malvern Road, Malvern VIC 3144.



Simply call us with your payment details (freecall) 1800 163 292 between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday. We accept AMEX, Visa and Mastercard.



To make a secure online donation using your credit card, visit our website www.mecwacare.org.au

All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

mecwacare service network

Corporate Services

1287 Malvern Road
Malvern VIC 3144
P 03 8573 4888
P 1800 163 292 freecall
E enquiries@mecwacare.org.au
www.mecwacare.org.au

Residential Services

P 03 8573 4812
E admissions@mecwacare.org.au

mecwacare Annie's Court
Shoreham

mecwacare Calwell Manor
Safety Beach

mecwacare Elstoft House
Hamlyn Heights (Geelong)

mecwacare John Atchison Centre
Hoppers Crossing

mecwacare Jubilee House
Caulfield North

mecwacare Malvern Centre
Malvern

mecwacare Noel Miller Centre
Glen Iris

mecwacare O'Mara House
Traralgon

mecwacare Park Hill
Mornington

mecwacare Rositano House
Richmond

mecwacare Simon Price Centre
Mont Albert

mecwacare Trescowthick Centre
Pahran

mecwacare Vincent House
Westmeadows

Community Housing Services

P 03 8573 4970
E housing@mecwacare.org.au

Beaumaris

Glen Iris

Sandringham

Retirement Living

Hoppers Crossing

Malvern

Home Care Services

P 03 8573 4980
E intake@mecwacare.org.au

North West Metro
Keilor East

South East Metro
Malvern

South East Region
Pakenham

South West Region
Ballarat

Barwon Region
Geelong

Gippsland Service
Inverloch

Home Care Packages (statewide)

P 03 8573 4812
E homecarepackages@
mecwacare.org.au

Community Services

P 03 8573 4980
E community@mecwacare.org.au

Bass Coast
Cowes (Phillip Island)

Barry Fenton Centre
and Podiatry Service
Malvern East

Rivendell House
Pakenham

Disability Services

P 03 9572 9000
E community@mecwacare.org.au

Fisher Street Centre
Malvern East

Opportunity Shops

P 03 9571 4221 (donations)
E enquiries@mecwacare.org.au

Hawthorn

Malvern

Malvern East

Windsor

Robin Syme

Malvern

Residences by mecwacare

NOW OPEN



Introducing Robin Syme Residences – boutique retirement living in the form of luxury two and three-bedroom apartments in Malvern.

Residents can enjoy stress-free independent living, with a range of communal facilities including a gymnasium, café, dining rooms and business lounge. Residents will live in comfort and style, with the freedom of choice to lead the life they want and the reassurance of access to long-term support, if required.

The time is now! Make the decision to move into one of these beautiful residences and change your life.

TO ARRANGE A TOUR

Contact Pauline and Robyn – 9831 9876
robinsymemalvern.com.au
1253-1259 Malvern Road, Malvern



mecwacare



mecwacare
1287 Malvern Road
Malvern VIC 3144

T 03 8573 4888
E enquiries@mecwacare.org.au
www.mecwacare.org.au