

mecwacare

SPRING 2021

matters



Springing to life

Balance is a
double act

page 3

In the thick
of it

page 4

From little things
big things grow

page 8

Caring for Victorians since 1959

Creating our *vaccination* "ring of steel"

Vaccination hubs, decontamination tents, exposure site "explosions", super spreaders – how familiar we are becoming with these terms that seem to accompany the pandemic that refuses to go away.

Extended observation of the NSW situation enabled us to see that crisis from so many angles and understand how vital it is to be prepared.

I am reminded of the old saying, hope for the best but prepare for the worst.

The best preparation is vaccination and I am proud of how we have worked hard to develop a vaccination "ring of steel" around our aged care homes.

We successfully applied to the Australian Government to administer our own staff in-house Pfizer vaccination program. We encouraged all staff to "roll up" and get the jab, administering 1,400 doses.

And while we set up this vaccination blitz, we also began a new stage in COVID-19 management – mandatory reporting of workforce vaccination status.

Vaccination becomes compulsory for all residential aged care workers and volunteers from September 17. To keep working, they must have had at least one dose. This is the strongest message yet that we are all in this together and everyone has a personal responsibility to help break the crippling cycle of infection.

At the time of writing this, most of our staff have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine and in some of our homes, the rate of vaccination is 100%. All mecwaCare homes have remained coronavirus-free in 2021. This is due to the conservative approach we have maintained when reopening our facilities and the continuous use of advanced PPE beyond the official government advice.

While vaccination programs and managing lockdowns due to the Delta strain are a significant focus of our work, the usual demands of our business are many and varied.

One of the more unusual aspects was a one-day "pop-up" sale of contents at the former Richmond Hill Hotel in Church Street, which we are refurbishing and converting into a beautiful aged care home. Neighbours dropped in and expressed their delight that we are taking over the historic building.

Refurbishment is an ongoing program along with building an operational network to support our home care expansion. This edition reports on a new home care office to service our growing business on the Mornington Peninsula (see page 11).

Aged Care Employee Day on August 7 was an opportunity to celebrate our wonderful staff and how they improve the quality of life for our residents and clients. We are proud to have such a resilient and responsive workforce that shows every day that what they do is more than just a job.

Michele Lewis
Chief Executive

Pictured on the cover:
mecwaCare Barry Fenton Centre client Ron Higgins

Balance is a *double* act

If you've noticed a good energy in mecwaCare's East Malvern Op Shop, it could be the yin and yang of volunteers Jack and Dale.

Jack, 28, is the friendly face of the store, working upfront on the cash register while Dale, 60, prefers to stay behind the scenes.

Jack says he feels like he and Dale balance each other despite being at opposite ends of their careers.

"Working with Dale is interesting because he is closer to finishing work and retiring, and I'm kind of just starting," Jack says. "But we get on really well, never have any problems."

Both men volunteer on Mondays and Thursdays, and have developed a strong rapport.

Dale encourages Jack, who is autistic and lives with anxiety, to challenge himself.

"One thing I've noticed with Dale is that he just goes, 'back yourself'," Jack says.

"And when you back yourself, it is fine. I get so wound up sometimes, it's good having a colleague like that."

Having studied digital media for five years, Jack says voluntary work is his way of "keeping sane" until he feels ready to enter the paid workforce.

Meanwhile Dale, a former university lecturer, says the shop (which has been part of the local community



Jack (left) and Dale, the dynamic duo of mecwaCare's East Malvern Op Shop.

for 52 years) is an ideal environment for volunteers.

Jack agrees, saying that dealing with customers often takes him out of his comfort zone.

"When I come to the shop I feel very welcome, very wanted all the time. It's all right to make a mistake, it's all right if you are a bit anxious. And it makes you feel comfortable. It's a nice experience. I kind of feel like this is my purpose."



FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT VOLUNTEERING WITH MECWACARE, PLEASE CONTACT US ON 8573 4962.

Who we are

mecwaCare is a not-for-profit, non-denominational charitable organisation that has been supporting Victorians for more than 60 years. We are a values-based, care-driven organisation that provides residential, community and in-home nursing, care and support services for the elderly and people living with a disability.

mecwaCare was founded by a small group of volunteers concerned about the elderly and vulnerable in their local area and formally became the Malvern Elderly Citizens Welfare Association (MECWA) in 1959. In 2007, MECWA changed its name to mecwaCare to better represent the organisation's focus as it grew into a major provider of aged care and disability services across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria.

Need a break?

Choose a mecwaCare aged care home for your next respite stay – and save.

SPRING SPECIAL

- 1 > Book respite care before November 30
- 2 > Stay 14 nights
- 3 > Transition to permanent care
- 4 > Receive \$500 rebate*

FIND OUT MORE

Call 8573 4812 or email admissions@mecwaCare.org.au



* To be eligible, respite must start before 30 November 2021. \$500 will be credited towards permanent care. While mecwaCare welcomes third party funding for payment of respite stays (i.e. Carer Gateway), these residents will not be eligible for the rebate. The rebate is only available to residents paying two weeks out of pocket.



Left: Trescowthick Centre residents and staff share morning tea
Inset: Margaret Hall

Walking a mile in their shoes

David Mitrovic (pictured above) is young, but he has already packed a wealth of experience into his career at mecwacare.

Known by residents and their families for his empathy and caring nature, the Trescowthick Centre Facility Manager says he gets back as much as he gives.

“What I love the most about my work is that every resident is unique. Every resident has a story and every story teaches me something about my own life and about how I can improve myself,” David says.

Originally from Gippsland, David’s career trajectory within the organisation – an enrolled nurse to completing his registered nurse

training while working as an admissions officer, to clinical care coordinator and now facility manager – shows the high regard in which he is held.

At the Trescowthick Centre, David’s role requires him to coordinate a multi-disciplinary team and liaise with residents and their families to promote and support quality health outcomes.

David’s dedication to his residents and work is exemplary. His calming, can-do attitude and willingness to help other staff are excellent attributes.

He supports mecwacare’s organisational values – caring, accountable, respectful and ethical – in all that he does.

Nine reasons to choose mecwacare aged care homes



Safe and secure environment



Registered nurses rostered on every shift



Modern, quality and comfortable facilities



Welcoming community



Fresh meals by in-house chef



Over 60 years of experience



Experienced and caring staff



Vibrant lifestyle programs



Not-for-profit organisation

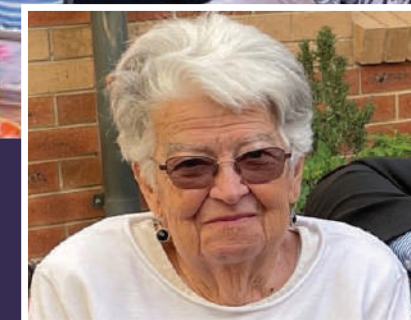


Book a tour today. Call 03 8573 4812



In the *thick* of it

Trescowthick Centre resident Margaret Hall is a vibrant example of how, with the right approach, the elderly can thrive in aged care.



Margaret and husband Graham moved into mecwacare’s Prahran home a week apart in January 2021, requiring very different levels of care.

“Dad had rapid onset dementia,” daughter Ruth says. “We knew dad wasn’t going to be there long. But with care and attention, the home actually improved dad’s health.”

Sadly, Graham passed away in April. However, Ruth is comforted in the knowledge that he was cared for by experienced, compassionate staff around the clock.

“I know dad was never in any pain,” she says. “He was always treated with the utmost respect and humility. It has actually changed my viewpoint of aged care.”

Margaret has since thrown herself into daily life at the home, taking advantage of the many organised activities on offer.

She enjoys socialising with others and is part of the resident welcoming committee, where she gets to meet and greet new mecwacare residents.

An avid gardener, Margaret has set up her own gardening group. She also enjoys going on group outings to cafés, shops and markets.

“I still say that mum has de-aged five to seven years,” Ruth says. “She has always been busy and active. She’s so relaxed and happy.”

Ruth attributes the improvement in her mother’s health to the personalised and empathetic care of experienced mecwacare staff, such as Facility Manager David Mitrovic.

“David has the ability to pick up on when residents are feeling a bit low. He makes sure he gives them some TLC. He has quite often visited mum himself. We love the place and mum does too; that’s all we care about.”



mecwacare welcomes new residents at the Trescowthick Centre. Book a tour today! Call 8573 4812.



Lasagne à la Laxman

Here's the recipe for how to make the world's best lasagne – one of **mecwacare** Vincent House's all-time favourites.

Our recipe begins with the key ingredient: a fastidious Sri Lankan by the name of Laxman (*pictured above*).

After grounding him in hospitality, immerse him in the gourmet capital of the world, apply a generous garnish of working in Paris' finest dining establishments and then marinate him in Australian and international cuisine with an upmarket pub job.

Stir in a little experience at running his own business and then recruit him to apply all those years of pleasing the fussiest customer.

Along this winding master chef journey, Laxman developed his knockout lasagne. It's his signature dish and endorsed by the most discerning palates – the home's Italian residents.

They swear that Laxman's lasagne is the best they have ever tasted. And they have sat down to lasagne here, there and everywhere.

Five-star resident reviews are part of the Laxman legend. They say you can put any menu in front of him and he will give you a masterclass.

After growing up in Sri Lanka and living in France, Laxman moved to Australia to provide a better future for his son. He spent six years surprising customers at the Melbourne airport pub before starting his own food business and then landing in aged care.

After the rigours of being a hard-working businessman and chef, he relishes the change of pace in aged care.

"I find it less stressful and I have a life balance," he says.

Those who have seen Laxman in the Vincent House kitchen, attentively managing the day's meal preparations, are very impressed by his time and care over everything.

The man himself humbly accepts his reputation, merely saying he loves to cook and make every dish a success.

Bellissimo!



Patricia enjoying a video call with son David, who lives in the USA.

Connecting over the Pacific

Video can shrink the distance and bring back bonding memories for a mother and son.

Before the global COVID-19 pandemic, US-based David Phillips contacted his mother Patricia in **mecwacare Vincent House** by phone.

But after the coronavirus struck, new options become available to replace personal visits to the Westmeadows home – and David picked up on the popularity of video.

But was mum Patricia up to it?

With assistance from Facility Manager Kathryn Hunter and the Vincent House team, Patricia was set up with an iPad and access to Zoom. Staff were there to assist, and the connection was made.

Teething problems? Yes – for David and mum!

"In the beginning, my first video call seemed difficult for mum and a touch difficult for me as well," David says.

"The initial zoom video calls were simple mum and son conversations, although with my physical distance and mum's progressive cognitive issues, the communication was limited."

But Patricia adapted and thrived – and surprised her son. She became quite at home with the technology and David could see new possibilities.

"Mum's comfort with the video calls graduated rapidly from a little confusion to a comfort level she not only welcomes, but anticipates," David says.

"My reaction was to explore the technology further and introduce online videos via YouTube to enhance the connection between mum and me, and to add stimulation through the visual medium."

David says he knew history was the way to go. But not the usual suspects like the pyramids and the conquerors; snippets of television shows and movies they watched together when David was a child.

This was unforgettable viewing – from the high jinx of (cartoon characters) Tom and Jerry to the lively banter between Don Lane and Bert Newton.

Plus, a little highbrow viewing – the travels the family made, the cars they drove, images of old school uniforms, Phillip Island penguins and birdsongs.

"This all became an excitement in our communication. And at times, seemed to stimulate mum's memory," David says.

"Mum and I look forward to our calls. The video call has become a powerful resource and is providing excitement and joy for us."



If you would like to know more about our aged care homes, please call **8573 4812** or email **admissions@mecwacare.org.au**

Louis brings the *laughs*

It's plain to see why Louis, 91, is such a popular participant in activity groups at mecwacare's Rivendell House in Pakenham.



Acting Centre Manager Lisa Cartmel shares a laugh with Louis.

"I like to tease," Louis says, often sharing gags from a joke book he calls "my bible".

Flirtatious and funny, Louis doesn't mind that he is outnumbered by women when he visits the centre on Mondays, which he has done since November 2019.

"I love coming each week. I'd come two days if I could... every day. It's great for me. If I'm at home I sit and twiddle my thumbs."

Planned activity groups are excellent opportunities for people who are over 65 or who have a disability to connect with their community.

Rivendell House organises a variety of engaging and rewarding programs, which include outings, gentle

exercise, music and entertainment, art and craft, guest speakers and film and video screenings. Transport is available for participants to attend the centre.

During organised games, Louis often steps up to man the whiteboard as scribe, playing hangman and other word games.

When at home in nearby Beaconsfield, he enjoys cooking and has a flair for one pot recipes.

Louis turns 92 this September. He says that although he celebrated his last birthday in lockdown, he was touched that the occasion was not overlooked by Rivendell House staff, who sent birthday cards and delivered care packages.

MECWACARE RUNS A VARIETY OF CENTRE-BASED PROGRAMS IN MALVERN EAST, PAKENHAM AND BASS COAST. FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL 1800 163 292 OR EMAIL COMMUNITY@MECWACARE.ORG.AU

CENTRE-BASED CARE

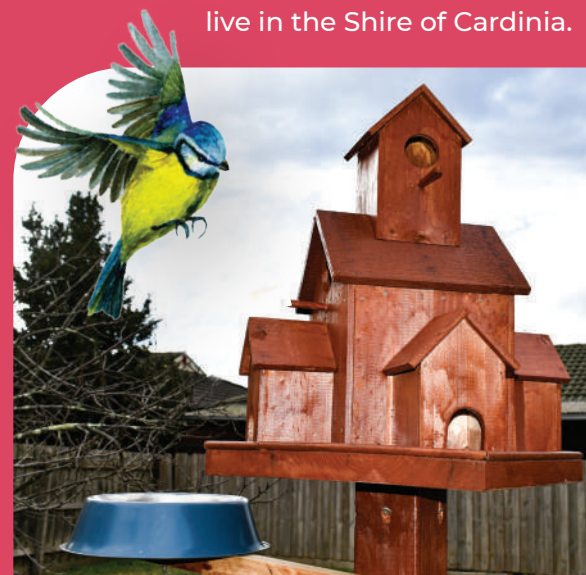
Palatial home for feathered friends

India's famed Taj Mahal took over 20 years to build. But Pakenham's tribute to the great building, a magnificent bird house, was designed and hammered out in only months.

In the Autumn 2021 edition of mecwacare Matters, we brought you the story of Rivendell House regulars Michael and Sandy who bonded over their pet project, which is fondly known as "the Taj Mahal of bird houses". Now standing proudly in the back garden, their precise and detailed woodworking prowess is evident.

There have been no exotic bird sightings yet, with mainly corellas and starlings visiting during the colder months. But like Rivendell House, the welcoming work of art will no doubt soon attract an array of friendly faces. Some warmer weather and plenty of bird seed should help attract feathered friends.

Rivendell House's woodworking group is just one of the programs offered at the Pakenham community centre for people aged over 65 or who have a disability and live in the Shire of Cardinia.



HOME CARE

A *private* matter

Accessing services and taking control of your own specific care needs are some of the reasons Victorians are taking up private home care.

Irene arrived home to convalesce after a serious operation with all her nursing and care needs in place.

"Who do you know?" a close friend asked. Another friend was surprised, too.

"I didn't know those services were on the approved list," he said. "How did you arrange all that?"

The answer is simple: Irene had organised some of her services as a private care client.

"I made the choice to secure some services privately, as a fee-paying client. I know that while government-subsidised services can be very

efficient, with private care I am in control of how many hours I receive and when," she says.

Access and control are chief reasons why many ageing Victorians are taking up private care.

All mecwacare home nursing services, home care services and disability services can be purchased privately across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria.

Our team of qualified and experienced nurses and direct care workers provide personalised care that supports clients to remain living in their own homes for as long as possible.

Clients are of all ages and abilities, including older people, people with an acquired brain injury and people with illnesses, such as multiple sclerosis or dementia.

Care may be short-term – for example, to give a full-time carer a break for 24 hours or more – or long-term.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT MECWACARE'S PRIVATE CARE SERVICES CALL 8573 4962 OR EMAIL INTAKE@MECWACARE.ORG.AU



Nurse Liliana Olivera (left) assisting home care client Marjorie

From little things *big things* grow

What started with a simple show of support for *mecwacare* has blossomed into a lasting relationship for Barry Peake.

When Barry made his first donation to *mecwacare*, he didn't imagine that the relationship would continue for nearly three decades.

In 1993, Barry had begun a career in investment management and was raising a young family with wife Sue in East Malvern.

He first donated to *mecwacare* because he wanted to support a local organisation, but downplays the impressive feat that is 30 years of continuous giving.

"What I give is five-eighths of nothing, we're little donors," Barry says.

"I've been fortunate being in an industry that did well. You could be a nurse all your life and not earn a lot of money. But nurses, teachers... it's far more important work than what I did."

Now retired, Barry and Sue have contributed to *mecwacare* in other

ways, such as delivering books and magazines to the *mecwacare* Noel Miller Centre in Glen Iris and donating household goods.

"We go to the Malvern op shop fairly regularly," Barry says. "When we shifted house there were bags and bags of stuff. On one occasion I think they said, 'spread them out a bit!'"

Barry and Sue have enjoyed travelling widely pre-COVID and now love spending time with their grandkids.

Their ongoing contribution to *mecwacare*, which the highly organised Barry schedules twice a year, assists us to expand into more locations and reach more people than ever before.

His story is a great example of how over time, donors can make a significant difference.

Thank you for standing with us

Our *Standing Strong* campaign to fund the purchase of specialised exercise equipment for our residents and clients has received great support from the *mecwacare* community.

Thank you.

Your generous contributions will assist us to install a purpose-built leg press machine in each one of our aged care homes and community centres to boost mobility and balance – and prevent falls.

It's not too late to donate. Every fall prevented can be a life saved.

Donations can be made over the phone or via email (see details below).



If you would like to donate to *mecwacare* and make a difference to the lives of the elderly and people living with a disability, call **8573 4809** or email **fundraising@mecwacare.org.au**

All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

FUNDRAISING

New office supports Mornington *growth*

HOME CARE



A new home care office on the Mornington Peninsula is the latest addition to *mecwacare*'s growing network.

Co-located with our Calwell Manor aged care home in Safety Beach, the Mornington office will support *mecwacare*'s growth in home care services and home care packages while underlining our strategic expansion and reach in the region.

This new home care office complements our presence in a region where we have three aged care homes – Calwell Manor, Annie's Court in Shoreham and Park Hill in Mornington.

And in more good news, we are investing in staff learning and development on the peninsula.

A new training room at Calwell Manor will provide a local hub for staff to enhance their capabilities and save on travel time to Melbourne.

mecwacare identified an opportunity to establish a permanent base for operations in the region after securing the tender with Mornington Shire Council to provide home care services to new clients from December 1, 2020.

Under this partnership, *mecwacare* is delivering:

- Domestic assistance
- Assistance with self-care
- Flexible respite care
- Social support (including shopping).

More than 1,000 clients have already been referred to us.

The Mornington office has been developed by converting a self-contained apartment at Calwell Manor.

We were ready to install furniture and open just before the recent lockdown.

Chief Executive Michele Lewis said she was proud of the "in-house" project in which *mecwacare*'s property and maintenance team converted the self-contained apartment into a comfortable office space.

"It was a fantastic effort, with the team removing internal walls, a bathroom and bedroom to create an open plan space, carpeting, painting and installing LED lighting."



mecwacare has seven home care offices in Malvern, Ballarat, Geelong, Inverloch, Keilor East, Mornington and Pakenham. For more information call 8573 4980.

Make the move to Robin Syme Malvern



Robin Syme
Malvern

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mecwacare



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