

mecwacare

SPRING 2023

# matters



## *Spring has sprung*

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*Caring for Victorians since 1959*

# Welcome

As warmer weather begins to arrive, it is difficult to believe that we have arrived at September so soon.

The past several months have been incredibly exciting with the acquisition of six new facilities, and we have welcomed a large number of new clients, residents, and staff members to mecwacare. We are excited to be further expanding the capacity we have to provide high quality care and services.

I'd like to congratulate Sanjeet Sharma on his appointment as Executive General Manager of Residential Services. Sanjeet has been an integral part of mecwacare for many years, and he holds a tremendous knowledge and capacity to lead the department.

mecwacare is delighted to be opening the brand-new Simon Price Centre aged care facility in Mont Albert North, after several years of construction. With its first residents set to move into the home in early September, we are thrilled to have deepened

our connection to the eastern suburbs through the provision of a luxury aged care home, with a diverse menu, caring staff, enriching, engaging social programs, and improved access to a diverse range of allied health services that support people to live and age well.

I am pleased to be welcoming Anne McCormack as the new mecwacare chief executive, commencing on Tuesday September 12. I'd like to thank all staff, volunteers, residents, clients, and other stakeholders for the last 17 years of support and dedication to the organisation and wish you all the best for the future to come.

What makes mecwacare the organisation I love is the people - the teams of workers with a shared passion to provide safe care and support to the elderly and disadvantaged in the community. These wonderful

## On the cover

Olywn Syle has been volunteering at mecwacare's Malvern East opportunity shop for nearly 25 years.

people, whether on weekend, public holiday, or night duty, share their days with me, as well as with the residents and clients.

I love their honesty, diversity, and integrity, and I have been privileged to be part of their lives. I have been so lucky to work alongside this team, with a shared passion to assist the elderly and those with a disability to live their best lives.

In this issue we marvel at the magic of music from Paul and Sandra, wish our featured centenarians a happy birthday, and welcome our new home and village acquisitions.

Please enjoy the wonderful spring edition of mecwacare Matters, as we celebrate success, growth, and dedication.



Michele Lewis  
Chief Executive

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# Celebrating centenarians

Over the last few months, we have celebrated several centenarian birthdays at both our aged care facilities and retirement villages.

Dorothy May celebrated turning 102 on April 9, with a visit from family to her independent living unit at Pascoe Vale Gardens retirement village, enjoying a cake and the company of many of her loved ones. Dorothy became part of the Pascoe Vale Gardens family in 2013, after visiting a friend there and being impressed with everything the village had to offer.

Margaret 'Marty' Palmer, a resident at the Noel Miller Centre in Glen Iris since April 2023, celebrated 105 wonderful years on June 16. Marty loved having her family visit, along with resident friends and staff. Having grown up in Donald, a town in Victoria's Wimmera region, Marty then lived in Warrnambool, Drumcondra in Geelong and finally the Malvern area. She has enjoyed career postings as a librarian, radio announcer, and jeweller, but she has particularly relished her role as wife to Ronald, mother to Heather, grandmother to Elissa, Ben and Amey, and great-grandmother to Billy, Jack and Penny.



Olga Kludt, an aged care resident at Trescowthick Centre in Prahran since 2021, celebrated her 101st birthday on June 19 with a high tea with friends and staff. The party even received a surprise piano performance from the centre's music therapist Bingyu, who lifted spirits even further and topped off a perfect day.

On Friday, July 21, Mona Rawlins celebrated turning 102 at the Noel Miller Centre, where she has been a resident since 2017. Having grown up in Rainbow, a northwestern Victorian town 400 kilometres from Melbourne, Mona attended the local primary school before boarding at the Ballarat Church of England Girls' Grammar School for secondary school. In 1942, Mona enlisted in the Australian Defence Force, working as a driver during World War Two in both Melbourne and Darwin. Mona enjoyed celebrating her birthday among friends, family, and staff.



*From left to right: Mona Rawlins, Dorothy May, and Marty Palmer. Above: Olga Kludt.*



*Above: The new Simon Price Centre is a luxurious yet homely aged care facility.*

# Simon Price Centre set for service *success*

mecwacare is excited to be welcoming residents to the brand-new Simon Price Centre in Mont Albert North in September.

The Simon Price Centre is a \$40 million development project, offering a state-of-the-art residential aged care facility with premium design and finishes, both inside and out.

Having originally opened in 1978, the original building was demolished to make way for the site's upgrade, which began in 2022 and received the finishing touches in September this year.

The new four-storey building has doubled resident capacity, with a focus on an ageing in place environment for residents, allowing them to stay in the facility should their care requirements change or increase.

Amenities available at the new centre include, but are not limited to, spacious lounges, light-filled communal and private dining areas, a luxurious cinema, contemporary café, and a library. The welcoming clubroom invites a sense of community among residents, and the landscaped gardens are designed provide a calming outdoor experience.

Hospitality and retail services, as well as car parking, are available on the lower ground level in an intentional design that minimises the building's impact on the surrounding green environment. Residents and their guests can enjoy sweeping views of the east from the upper-level suites, while remaining comfortable and content in a safe, secure facility environment.

The centre has an experienced, caring, and qualified team of long-term mecwacare staff with registered nurses on shift 24 hours a day. A wellbeing salon with nail and hair services is also up and running, allowing residents to be pampered without leaving home.

A specialised menu is designed to cater to individual cultural needs and dietary requirements, while maintaining the quality and taste of delicious, well-balanced meals. The facility has been named in honour of mecwacare's much-loved longest serving Board Member and Life Governor, the late Simon Price, who passed away in 2019.

**Private tours are available now.**



For all the latest information on The Simon Price Centre visit [www.mecwacare.org.au](http://www.mecwacare.org.au) or contact our admissions team on **(03) 8573 4812**.

# Hello world, this is me

On the morning of Thursday July 27, residents and staff from mecwacare's Trescowthick Centre in Prahran visited the Box Hill Community Arts Centre. They were able to view a beautiful exhibition of more than 50 self-portraits using a variety of mediums. Of these portraits, 11 were painted by residents and a staff member from the Trescowthick Centre.

At the centre's Avenue Neighbourhood House, the 'This Is Me' Self Portrait Art Competition exhibition opened on Tuesday July 18 and ran until Sunday July 30. With the winner receiving a \$500 cash prize, the competition was fierce. However, winning wasn't the main driver for our mecwacare Trescowthick Centre resident artists.

Awhina Teamo, Lifestyle Coordinator at the Trescowthick Centre, encourages residents to express their feelings, creativity and ideas in a physical form through art. Working on art is not only a great creative outlet, it is a calming, relaxing practice that has proven scientific benefits to artists' mental health. This is one of the reasons that art has been a pillar of the activity program at the Trescowthick Centre for years. Residents love creating their own works,

whether it be using paint, pencils, collage, glitter, or a variety of other mediums.

The residents' visit was a lovely outing for the day. With gorgeous sunny weather, the group wandered through the gallery viewing the exhibition before enjoying cups of coffee and tea with chocolates, courtesy of Awhina. The mecwacare bus then took the residents back to Prahran, where they visited the College Lawn Hotel for a delicious lunch in the sun, before returning home to the Trescowthick Centre.

Regardless of whether or not any of our residents receive the monetary prize, we believe that the day was a win for all residents, who have thoroughly enjoyed the experience.



Art has  
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mental health



**Above: Residents of mecwacare's Trescowthick Centre visit their masterpieces in Box Hill.**

# Home care heroes

Richard has been receiving a home care package since 2007, in order to stay living in his home and remain as independent as possible.

Richard receives a number of services through his home care package including cleaning, respite care, regular Lite N Easy meals, and assistance with tasks such as shopping. Richard is also able to attend physiotherapy and podiatry appointments through the transport assistance included in his plan.

Having been a mecwacare client for 16 years, Richard has been able to build strong relationships with the people that support him, including his care advisor, Kathleen.

Richard explains that Kathleen has supported him throughout several struggles, including a move from his previous first floor apartment to a ground floor home.

“Due to my decline in health, I struggled to climb the flight of stairs to get to my apartment,” Richard explains.

“Kathleen advocated for me tirelessly [and] managed to negotiate to a ground floor unit where I now live. If I had continued to live on the first floor, I would have had multiple falls and ended up in hospital.”

Richard explained that Kathleen assisted him to reduce financial stress by negotiating a discounted rental rate. She facilitated an occupational therapy assessment to determine whether Richard’s home needed modifications for him to remain living there safely.

“With the completed home modification funded by my home care package, I am able to live in my home indefinitely, independently, where I find comfort and feel safe,” Richard expressed.

Kathleen knows that Richard has limited community and social support, so keeping Richard in his home, where he feels confident

and secure, is important in maintaining his independence and positive spirit.

“She comes to visit me where possible and calls me on a regular basis,” Richard says of his care advisor.

“My carers are fantastic. They understand my needs and are very helpful and friendly – they do such great jobs.”

Richard is extremely grateful for the assistance he receives from mecwacare, and it is an honour for mecwacare to be able to provide such worthwhile support to him.

*“With everything Kathleen has done for me, I am able to achieve my goals, to stay at home where I love to be, and live independently for as long as possible,” Richard smiles.*



**Opposite: Richard.**

# What goes around comes around

Jamie Baxter loves going to work every day.

The mecwacare op shop in Malvern East is his home away from home. A relatively small shop, it's packed to the rafters with meticulously placed stock.

With approximately 20 volunteers that dedicate their time to sorting, arranging, and selling wares in the store, Jamie knows just why they keep coming back.

"We'll be out in the shop, joking and laughing, or we've got some really good music on, and we've had customers dancing and singing as well," Jamie says.

Jamie and his volunteers pay particular attention to the two front window displays looking out onto Waverley Road. Changing the windows every fortnight, the displays are carefully adorned with a themed range of donated items for sale.

One such theme popular with shoppers and community members was Breakfast at Tiffany's – with a long black dress, pearl necklace, and



**Above: Olywn handmade her own stunning dresses in the 1960s (as shown above) and has been donating them to the Malvern East op shop. Below: Op shop manager Jamie Baxter.**

real croissant in-hand – the mannequin in the window revived Audrey Hepburn's iconic sixties character.

In a complete circle of life, Olwyn, a 94-year-old volunteer and avid dressmaker, has generously contributed several dresses she crafted in the 1960s. Today, these dresses adorn the walls of the op shop, patiently awaiting new owners who will cherish beauty, allowing them to be worn and appreciated once more.

The volunteers all love coming in to spend time with their op shop family, and the sense of kinship at the store is priceless.

"I love the sense of community that we've brought; the friendships that have grown in the shop," Jamie explains.



mecwacare's Malvern East Opportunity Shop is located at 299 Waverley Road. Open 9.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday, and 10am to 1pm on Saturday.



*Above: mecwacare is thrilled to have welcomed an abundance of new residents to our residential and retirement networks.*

# A *warm* welcome to new mecwacare residents

We are delighted to announce a significant milestone for our organisation as we embark on a new chapter by acquiring several new services.

In June this year, mecwacare acquired Berwick Brae Gardens retirement village in Berwick, while on Saturday July 1, we acquired the Gregory Lodge aged care facility in Flemington.

Further, on Tuesday August 1, mecwacare acquired Wahroonga aged care facility and The Pines retirement village, both in Canadian, Ballarat.

Finally, on Thursday August 31, we acquired Susan Barton House aged care facility in Darley, Bacchus Marsh. We also purchased adjacent land in Darley, with potential to develop a retirement village in the future.

These strategic moves reinforce our commitment to providing exceptional senior living experiences, expanding our capacity to deliver care and support to older adults.

With the acquisition of Berwick Brae Gardens, Gregory Lodge, Wahroonga, The Pines, and Susan Barton House, we are excited to broaden our reach and enhance the lives of even more individuals in their senior years.

As we continue on this exciting new journey, mecwacare remains dedicated to promoting the wellbeing, independence, and dignity of every resident. We will continue to invest in the development of our staff, expand our range of services, and foster a culture of inclusivity and support throughout all our retirement communities.

We extend our warmest welcome to the residents, families, and employees of Berwick Brae Gardens, Gregory Lodge, Wahroonga, The Pines, and Susan Barton House. The growth of the mecwacare family will undoubtedly contribute to the rich tapestry of experiences and achievements that define our organisation.

Thank you for your ongoing support as we embark on this transformative journey together.

# Fighting fit at the Barry Fenton Centre

For fitness instructor David Cookson, the strength training sessions he leads at mecwacare's Barry Fenton Centre are rewarding in more ways than one.

With classes running each day from Monday to Thursday, clients range in ages, backgrounds, and abilities. Some have cognitive impairments such as dementia, mobility issues, or chronic conditions such as osteoarthritis. Regardless, they all enjoy their sessions and work within their individual abilities, finding the social aspect of the sessions just as valuable as the physical activity.

Each client has a personalised training program to address their individual health and fitness requirements, but they all undertake exercises that focus on improving balance and posture. The aim here is to reduce their chances of having a fall.

"Everyone has a balance component to their program, so even though the strength part is tailored to what they each need, balance is the key exercise area that everyone has to do," says David.

David considers a client's medical history, particularly in relation to previous and existing

injuries. Each client completes a basic fitness assessment, evaluating their mobility, balance, and strength prior to commencing their sessions.

The program consists of a 45-minute physical training session, with a 30-minute social session held immediately after. Here, David runs the wildly popular morning tea quiz, and clients can catch up and chat with friends.

"A lot of the clients get as much out of the social interaction as they do from the physical exercise – a lot of them live alone or they are carers for a partner, so getting out of the house is a chance to have some time for themselves," says David.

"The physical and mental health benefits of exercise are well known. We like to have fun in our strength training sessions. I certainly think all our clients are benefitting. They all enjoy the training and appreciate what we are trying to do."

***Below: Fitness instructor David Cookson, left, and strength training client Ruth Brown, right.***



To find out more about strength training, please contact mecwacare on **8573 4980**.

# Advancing care with the Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme

mecwacare is proud to be a select organisation delivering the federal government's new Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme (ACVVS) to eastern and southern metropolitan Melbourne.

Formerly known as the Community Visitors Scheme (CVS), this program has supported volunteers to visit and spend time with older companions for more than 30 years. However, on July 1, a newly upgraded version of the program was introduced as result of findings from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.

With a focus on older people at higher risk of feeling isolated, the free service aims to help develop and maintain social connections by providing friendship and companionship to older people.

The ACVVS will assist mecwacare to recruit, train, and support volunteers, while maintaining relevant community standards.

"We are delighted to be able to source, assist, and provide volunteers to older people in need of company and companionship," said Julianne Neilson, mecwacare's Volunteer Manager.

*"This initiative is aimed to support older people to continue living meaningful lives and build connections with volunteers."*

As a not-for-profit organisation, mecwacare has always had a strong volunteer program, currently hosting more than 500 volunteers. Having been founded in 1959 on a volunteer

basis, this scheme takes us back to our roots of providing compassionate care and services to disadvantaged community members.

Available to any person receiving government-subsidised residential aged care or a Home Care Package, recipients of the program must fulfill criteria including being socially isolated, feeling lonely, lacking regular and reasonable contact with friends or relatives, or having frailty, mobility, or communication impairments that prevent them from participating in social or leisure opportunities.

Eligible care recipients can be referred to the program through an ACVVS Network Member, which can be found on the Department of Health and Aged Care's website – [www.health.gov.au/ACVVS](http://www.health.gov.au/ACVVS). A full list of volunteer and recipient eligibility requirements is also available on the website.



To find out more about volunteering, please contact Julianne Neilson, Volunteer Manager on [volunteers@mecwacare.org.au](mailto:volunteers@mecwacare.org.au).



Above: Michele Lewis

## Saying *farewell* to Michele

Upon welcoming new chief executive Michele Lewis in 2006, mecwacare entered a new era.

Having studied to become a registered nurse 50 years ago, Michele has built an extensive knowledge of processes and protocols, regulations, legislation, and services. Michele has used this knowledge to grow mecwacare from a small player within the sector into an organisation that boasts 18 aged care facilities, six retirement villages and three affordable housing communities, providing disability services and home care services as the largest home care provider throughout the state.

Despite having lost her husband and the father of her three small children in 1996, Michele managed her life in a way that allowed her to achieve many of their dreams. She was able to build a successful career, raise her kids in a loving environment, and further her education with a Graduate Diploma in Organisational Psychology and a Master of Business Administration.

These goals were all achieved due to Michele's highly organised nature and her passion to provide high quality care to people in need. In addition to overseeing the acquisition and integration of more than 20 new facilities into

the mecwacare network, Michele has driven profitability from \$7 million to approximately \$250 million in her 17 years as chief executive.

Michele will enjoy her well-earned long service leave after stepping down from the chief executive role on Monday September 11. She has plans to renovate, design, and decorate a home, to travel, and to spend quality time with her family – particularly her seven grandchildren.

Due to Michele's undying passion for excellence, the end of her leave will lead her to seek a new role in the aged care sector. However, Michele highlighted, it will be a role with much less time commitment required.

Taking the reins of chief executive from Michele is Anne McCormack. Anne has broad experience in aged care, disability, mental health in the community, as well as community and tertiary health.

Anne has stood in past senior executive roles at Bankwest, the Silverchain Group, Medibank, and the Healthscope Group. She is set to take over from Michele on Tuesday September 12.



# A contemporary, luxurious aged care home in the heart of Mont Albert North.

The new Simon Price Centre features state-of-the-art facilities, including large, spacious bedrooms and suites, with balconies offering beautiful views across Melbourne.



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