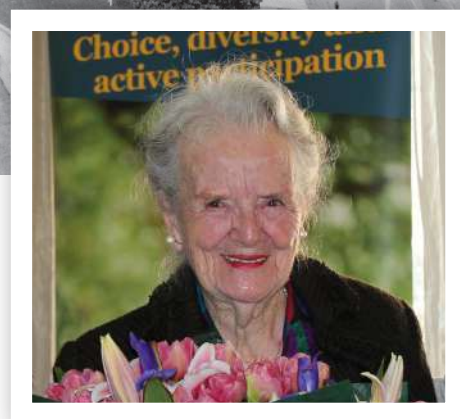


Original MECWA site, looking east down High Street from the Malvern Town Hall early 1960s



Margaret Watson, *mecwacare* volunteer for more than 50 years

mecwacare

Over 60 years of history

mecwacare is an organisation founded by a group of volunteers concerned about the elderly and vulnerable in their local area and is a unique story of a community caring for itself.

First steps

In the 1950s, councillors at the City of Malvern came up with the idea of providing the first senior citizens centre in Malvern. The councillors ran dances at the Malvern Town Hall to raise funds to build the centre on a site in the south-east corner of the Malvern Cricket Ground. The new centre was completed in 1958 and the City of Malvern invited members of the community to be directly involved in caring for their relatives and friends. This voluntary committee looked at other needs for older people in the community and formally became the Malvern Elderly Citizens Welfare Association (MECWA) in 1959.

In 1960, MECWA began a meals on wheels service and opened its first opportunity shop in Malvern in 1964 to raise funds to support its services. This important source of income was expanded, with the opening of the Malvern East store in 1969 and the Windsor store in 1996.

Diversifying our services

Independent living units were opened at MECWA House in Warner Street, Malvern in 1973 and demand in the area continued to grow. The 1970s also brought about the acquisitions of what is now the Barry Fenton Centre in Bowen Street and a property in Fisher Street, Malvern East – at the time a base for the meals on wheels service and later becoming a day centre for people with disabilities.

By 1991 MECWA House had been extended significantly and renamed the Olive Miller Nursing Home. In 1998, MECWA opened an aged care facility in Prahran, the Sir Donald and Lady Trescowthick Centre, and community housing units in Glen Iris. In the same year, its head office relocated to Waverley Road in Malvern East.

In the early 1990s, the organisation moved into the provision of care and services in clients' homes and by the mid to late 1990s, had expanded services across Melbourne and grown client and staff numbers enormously, including the establishment of an office in Pakenham to accommodate the increasing need for care services in the Cardinia Shire region. In 1999, Rivendell House Community Centre was established in Pakenham, providing social and activity programs to older people and people with an acquired brain injury living in the region.

New millennium brings big changes

In 2001, to further accommodate increasing demand, MECWA constructed a brand new aged care facility – the Noel Miller Centre in Glen Iris. This resulted in the sale of Olive Miller Nursing Home, with all residents moving to the new facility. In 2007, construction of the *mecwacare* Malvern Centre aged care facility began, with the centre opening in 2010.

MECWA's oldest landmark, the original Malvern Elderly Citizens Centre, was marked for demolition by Stonnington Council to make way for a larger Malvern Library, which opened in 2005. In 2009, a decision was made to close the first day centre and consolidate the services it provided to older people into the Bowen Street site.



Malvern Op Shop 1964



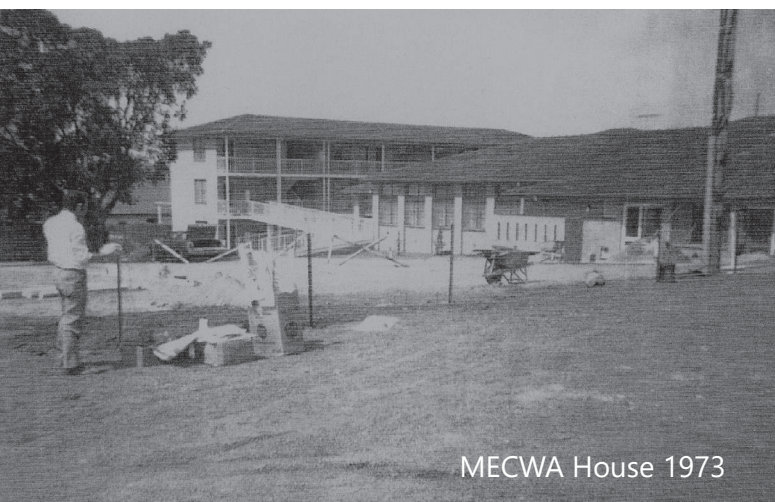
Malvern Op Shop 2019

In 2007, MECWA changed its name to *mecwacare*, which was representative of the organisation's focus as it grew into a larger care services provider across Melbourne and into regional Victoria.

mecwacare today

Following a move from Malvern East in 2015, *mecwacare's* Corporate Services, Home and Community Care South East Metro Service and Home Care Packages Service now operate out of an office in Malvern Road, Malvern.

Fisher Street Centre in Malvern East provides day programs for people with disabilities, including skills building, education, vocation and inclusion support, and leisure activities. Services to people with a disability are growing significantly, both as centre-based programs and as care and respite services provided into clients' homes, where clients range in age from infants to the elderly. *mecwacare* is also a registered NDIS provider.



MECWA House 1973



mecwacare Noel Miller Centre 2003

Community centres, Barry Fenton Centre in Malvern East and Rivendell House in Pakenham, offer programs for people with dementia, people with an acquired brain injury and older adults looking for social integration and inclusion. Increasing demand for services in the Cardinia Shire has also resulted in the expansion of Planned Activity Groups to Garfield, Koo Wee Rup and Emerald, and in 2020, San Remo and Phillip Island.

Home and Community Care Services have expanded considerably with offices in the Melbourne CBD, Pakenham, Malvern and Keilor East and since 2013, Ballarat, marking the first time the organisation had provided care outside metropolitan Melbourne. The South West Region Office operates out of Ballarat, providing services across a large area of south-western Victoria. *mecwacare* has since opened offices in Greensborough and Inverloch.

mecwacare now has 13 residential aged care facilities in Malvern, Glen Iris, Prahran, Richmond, Caulfield, Mont Albert, Hoppers Crossing and Westmeadows; and in regional Victoria in Hamlyn Heights (Geelong), Traralgon and the Mornington Peninsula (three centres).

More recently, it has expanded Community Housing to provide 102 units to people over 65 or people with a disability, who are financially and socially disadvantaged. There are fully renovated units in Beaumaris, Sandringham and Glen Iris.

The original Malvern Op Shop is still operating, along with three other stores in Malvern East, Windsor and Hawthorn. Many volunteers are the heart and souls of these stores, which are vital to the organisation with all funds raised going towards caring for clients and residents.

From humble beginnings in Malvern, *mecwacare* now provides care services in all 31 local councils of metropolitan Melbourne and across a substantial area of regional Victoria. With a strategic plan for service growth, *mecwacare* is always seeking opportunities to expand its services and provide care and support to the Victorian community.

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