

mecwacare

AUTUMN 2022

# matters



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*Caring for Victorians since 1959*

# Ushering in a *new* chapter

As we continue to roll with the punches of a rapidly changing pandemic environment, a new year is always a great time to take stock and reassess priorities.

Omicron has presented another set of challenges in our everyday work (and personal lives), with snap lockdowns at aged care homes sadly becoming the “norm” despite best efforts to keep the virus out.

We are now entering our third year with COVID. We have had to devise new ways of engaging and supporting residents and clients, while limiting risk across all areas of the organisation. At times, it has been exhausting and everyone is feeling the long-term effects of being on red alert for so long. Having to think on our feet and constantly assess risk can take a toll.

For our residents and their loved ones, it has been sad and painful. COVID has robbed them of precious time

together. For many, this has been devastating and our hearts ache for them.

Aged care, along with almost every industry, has been hit hard. Fortunately, we have a committed team at mecwacare who continuously front up each day to provide exceptional care and support.

I am tremendously proud of our team. They have done it tough over the past two years. Please take the time to thank them when you see them. I know they will appreciate it.

We continue to grow our community and in December 2021, we welcomed Ballan Health and Care Services to the mecwacare family. It has been a hectic “getting to know you” period against the backdrop of an ongoing pandemic and I commend the Ballan team for supporting a smooth transition.

I am confident that these two historic organisations will blend well to provide the Ballan community with the highest standard of health and care services.

Work at our two major development sites is going ahead in leaps and

bounds. Part-demolition is underway on John Hood Terrace in Church Street, Richmond, where the historic hotel will be transformed into a premium inner-city aged care home. Meanwhile, the new Simon Price Centre is on track to be delivered in 2023, offering a level of luxury that reflects its stately surrounds in Mont Albert, and which will double the size of the original site.

This year we usher in a new era for the mecwacare Board as we farewell outgoing Chairman John Hood and welcome new Chair Ian McHutchison OAM. Ian has contributed to mecwacare in several capacities since 2013 – as Vice Chairman and member of the Chief Executive Review Committee and Finance and Audit Committee.

We are fortunate to have such a dedicated and committed Board that provides governance and support to broaden our services and care for some of the most vulnerable people in our community.

**Michele Lewis**  
Chief Executive

*On the cover: mecwacare Squires Place chef, Abhi*

**Squires Place, Altona North**

## Beautifully refreshed and refurbished aged care home

### FEATURES

- Hair and beauty salon
- Café
- Cinema
- Library
- Outdoor alfresco

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**mecwacare**





David and Ann Bennett

## Carers need *support* too

### Respite during a rough patch helped this couple recover and maintain their independence

Late last year, Armadale local David Bennett tripped and injured his Achilles tendon.

With steep stairs at home, his wife Ann soon realised she would need help to care for him.

"I struggled at home for about 12 days," Ann says. "I found it was impossible. I'm very small and dealing with him was quite difficult."

Ann called mecwacare to discuss emergency respite care for David and shortly after, he moved into the Malvern Centre for a temporary stay.

"It was so welcoming, from the first conversation with William (in the Admissions team) to meeting the facility manager Karin, it has been a really lovely experience."

Choosing aged care accommodation can be an overwhelming experience, particularly when circumstances dictate that the decision is made quickly.

David and Ann felt comfortable reaching out to mecwacare, an organisation they knew through friends.

***"It was so welcoming ... It has been a really lovely experience ... I'm so grateful."***

**Ann Bennett**

"I know a number of people in permanent care in Malvern, so that's why I immediately thought of the Malvern Centre and hoped I could get David in there," she says.

"I can understand now why they are there. I heard David telling a friend yesterday that he's never had the same meal twice. Just wonderful. I keep telling my friends who are at the age where they might need attention. I'm so grateful."



Navigating the aged care system can be complex and overwhelming. For practical advice, talk to our friendly Admissions team on **8573 4980** or email **[admissions@mecwacare.org.au](mailto:admissions@mecwacare.org.au)**



# Abhi's *culinary* care



Meet Abhi, the kitchen guru responsible for creating delicious, nutritious menus at mecwacare Squires Place in Altona North.

Abhi says providing residents with choice is the most satisfying aspect of his role.

"Every lunch and dinner service, I go and talk with them personally. I like to know if they are happy with my meal. If not, I make a note," he says.

"Whatever I cook, I do it to make them happy."

It's been over a decade since Abhi was recruited from his commercial cookery course to specialise in aged care meals.

In addition to knowing which meals residents prefer, he takes into account other considerations, including allergies, cultural requirements and ageing conditions, such as dysphagia (difficulty swallowing).

"I modify textures for residents and cater for allergies such as coeliac," he says.

"At the end of the day I want to see that residents are happy and well and enjoy their food."

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***"Whatever I cook,  
I do it to make  
them happy."***

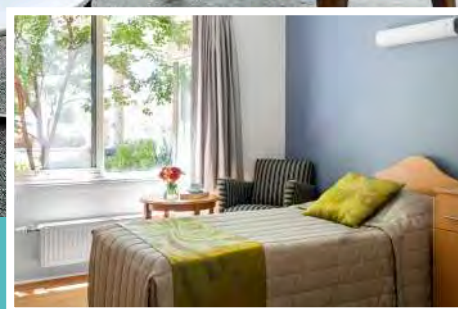
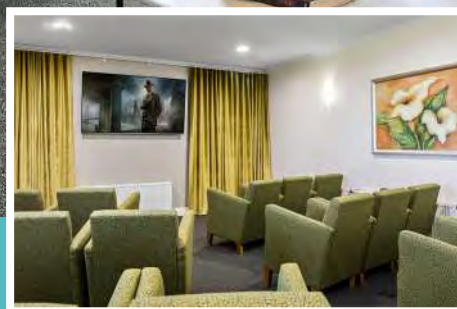
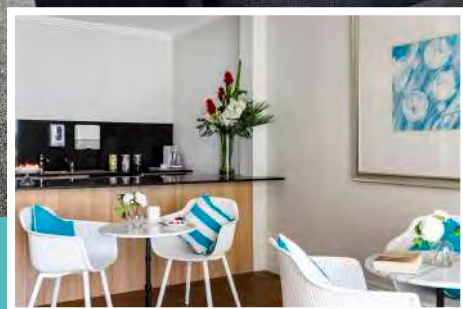
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**Abhi**

## 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.



# Refreshed and refurbished

In less than 12 months, Squires Place in Altona North has been transformed to meet the mecwacare gold standard.

Located in the heart of Melbourne's bustling south-western suburbs, Squires Place is a warm and inviting residence that offers a safe and secure environment.

This two-storey, newly refurbished contemporary home is set amongst landscaped gardens and is a short drive from the beach and all that scenic Port Phillip Bay has to offer.

Squires Place provides accommodation for 60 residents in fresh, light-filled private rooms – all with ensuite bathrooms and built-in robes. New carpet and furnishings throughout have given the residence a modern but homely feel.

Significant renovations have enhanced the comfort, design and functionality of the home.

There are spacious, comfortable lounges and inviting garden areas for residents to relax and entertain guests.

Upgrades include a cosy café, cinema and library to provide an engaging social lifestyle. With a new hair and beauty salon, residents can enjoy being pampered too.

Squires Place offers residents access to 24-hour care and support, as well as an extensive program that encourages an active lifestyle. A friendly and welcoming community awaits at mecwacare Squires Place.

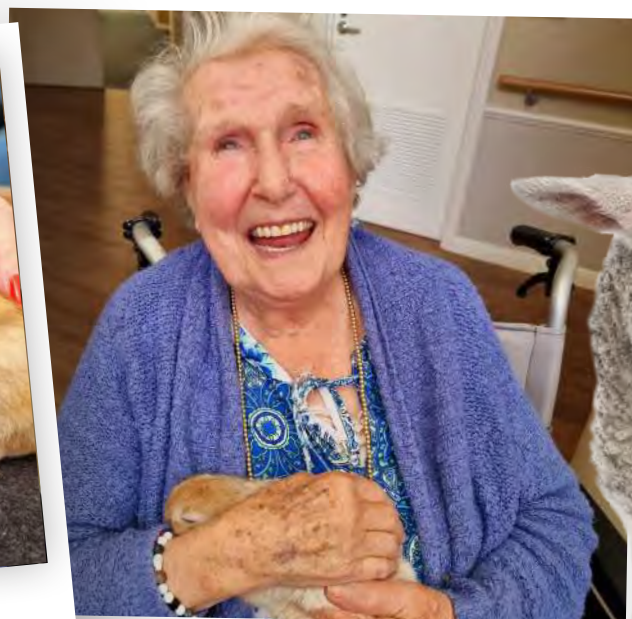


Squires Place welcomes new residents for respite and permanent care. Please contact our friendly team on 8573 4812 to book a tour and learn more about this wonderful home.





*Esther*



*Joan*





# Furry friends lift spirits

**Park Hill residents in Mornington turned out in record numbers for a special visit from some furry and feathered friends.**

Everyone had a chance to cuddle and pat lambs, bunnies, hamsters, a cheeky black goat and even a runaway turtle who made a very slow attempt to escape the spotlight.

It's been a while between visits from the good folk at Rain, Hayne and Shine Farmyard in Balnarring with lockdowns forcing the cancellation of scheduled events. This meant residents were extra excited about the opportunity to get hands-on with the cute visitors.

Nobody missed out – with the few residents who were unable to leave their room receiving a one-on-one visit from an inquisitive hamster and bunny duo.

Interacting with animals is shown to have a number of benefits for the elderly, including reducing stress, lowering blood pressure and increasing social interaction and physical activity.



*Derek*



**mecwacare has 14 aged care homes across Melbourne and regional Victoria.**

**To find out more or book a tour call 8573 4812 or visit our website at [mecwacare.org.au](https://mecwacare.org.au)**



# Standing strong

Monica has a special connection to the Barry Fenton Centre in Malvern East.

One of her many grandchildren attended the last kindergarten class before the building was converted into a community centre back in 1999.

These days, Monica attends strength training classes twice a week – when her busy calendar allows – and fitness instructor David Cookson says she is a highly motivated participant.

Monica enjoys the social aspect of classes, sharing a cup of tea and a chat after her workout with people of a similar ilk. “I always feel I’ve had a good workout and it’s great for

strengthening my shoulder,” she says. Having previously exercised at a gym, Monica says group classes at the centre have a different atmosphere and are much more friendly and accepting.

There is greater emphasis on falls prevention and building up the important muscle groups we rely on for everyday movements, such as getting out of bed.

Monica’s hobbies have been hard on her shoulder, as she played cello in the Whitehorse Orchestra for 21 years. Undeterred, the keen musician has switched to the flute.

“I can’t imagine life without music.”

**Inset: Barry Fenton Centre participant Monica with fitness instructor David Cookson.**

*Monica penned this lovely letter to our team following last year’s lockdowns.*

Dear Friends,

One of the highlights of lockdown has been the hard work you have all put in to keep our spirits up and our bodies and brains active.

The packages of Pringles and quizzes, the jokes and travel tours have brightened my days.

Particularly I give a big shout out to David for his one-on-one exercise sessions. His patience and encouragement have made me feel alive. Thank you, David!

My thanks to you all. It is great to be back again in class with David and Katrina.

Sincerely,  
Monica



mecwacare’s community centres offer social group programs, strength training, podiatry, and activities for people with an acquired brain injury, dementia support and carers’ support groups.

For more information call **8573 888** or email **community@mecwacare.org.au**



# Jorgen Elstoft, 1935–2022

Late last year, mecwacare Life Governor Jorgen Elstoft agreed to share his story. Sadly, Jorgen passed away in late January, aged 86. We are honoured to have an opportunity to celebrate the life and achievements of this very generous man.

Jorgen Elstoft was rightly proud of his numerous contributions as a long-serving Board member – 17 years to be precise.

But residents in mecwacare's aged care homes might say libraries are his greatest legacy.

Jorgen contributed a huge number of books to our residences, including the Noel Miller Centre aged care home in Glen Iris and Robin Syme Malvern retirement village, where he lived. In 2016, Jorgen was surprised to see that Elstoft House in Hamlyn Heights, Geelong – newly acquired by mecwacare and named after him – did not have a dedicated library.

An avid reader, he decided to fix the problem himself.

"I said, 'Look, if you put up some shelving, I'll donate 1,000 books' and they did," he said.

Jorgen put up all the books with his own hands and joked: "I'll never do that again".

While he was no longer physically able to stock shelves, he continued to donate books from his vast and varied collection.

A well-stocked library has since become the "Jorgen standard" in all mecwacare aged care homes.

***"I think reading is particularly important for older people who are less mobile."***

**Jorgen Elstoft**

Born in Copenhagen, Denmark, Jorgen came to Australia on a short-term posting in 1965.

In his early years he completed national service, which kicked off a lifelong interest in military history. He held senior accounting and finance roles in Denmark, Canada, the US, Germany, South Africa and South East Asia before making Australia his home.

He stayed because "I married an Australian girl" – wife Jenny, with whom he shared four sons and 16 grandchildren.

In Australia, Jorgen worked for Nylex and the Boston Consulting Group, and was ahead of his time in striving to achieve work-life balance.

"At age 53 I reluctantly observed that my hours of work and the years of my age precisely coincided – and that both were growing!"

This was the impetus for Jorgen to establish a boutique consultancy, The Como Consulting Group, specialising in corporate finance and with more reasonable working hours.

In 1995, he joined the Board of mecwacare, which was then a small organisation. His motivation was "the principle that you should always give something back, even in a small way, where possible".

Vale Jorgen.



**mecwacare Life Governor  
Jorgen Elstoft**



# Practice makes *perfect*

Anne Turner is the glue that holds the busy Ballan Medical Clinic together.

Since she first moved to the region in 2000, Anne says she has done “a bit of everything”.

“I started as a carer in the hostel on night shift. Then nurse, unit manager and now clinic manager,” she says.

As practice manager, Anne has introduced an online booking system for clients and met increased demand for doctors with more staff.

“We’re in a growth phase,” she says. “We used to have three doctors on every day, we now have five. We are focused on preventative health programs for the community, such as vaccinations, health checks and connecting clients to specialist services.”

Anne says Ballan’s laidback vibe and close-knit community contributes to a fantastic work environment.

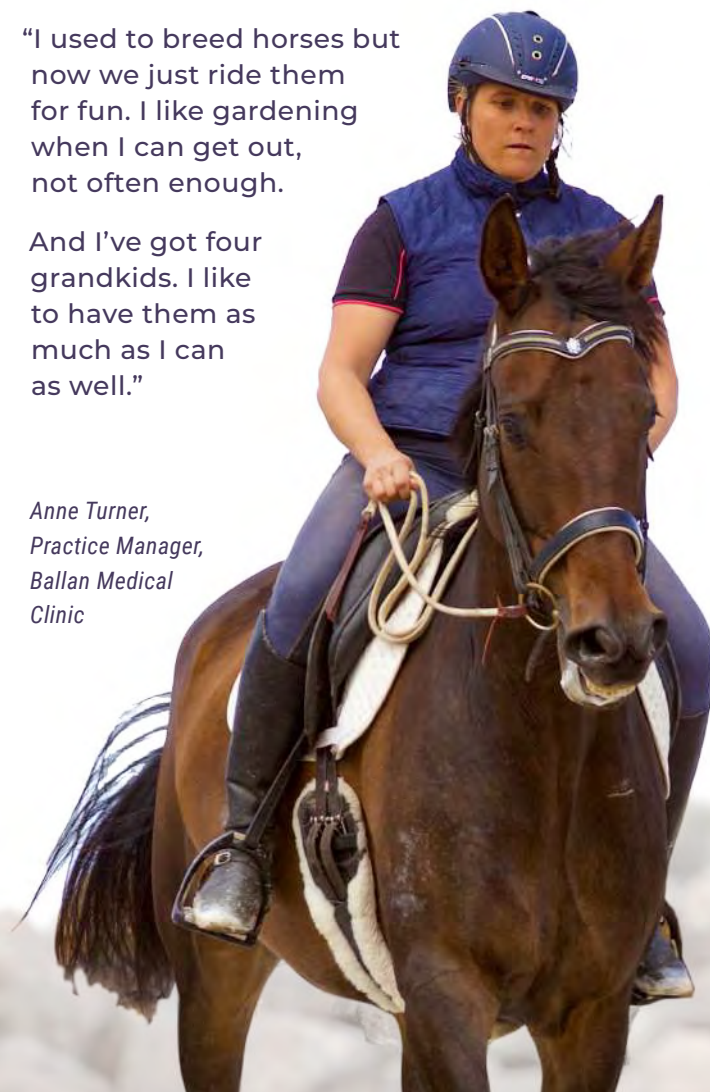
“We have such a good relationship with our clients that they become part of our family,” she says. “In Ballan you are not invisible. People look out for each other and say hello. Even if you don’t know someone you walk past and say ‘hi’. We still make eye contact here.”

At the end of the day, Anne heads home to her farm and family life, equally as busy as work.

“I used to breed horses but now we just ride them for fun. I like gardening when I can get out, not often enough.

And I’ve got four grandkids. I like to have them as much as I can as well.”

*Anne Turner,  
Practice Manager,  
Ballan Medical  
Clinic*



Ballan Health and Care Services in the heart of Ballan provides a range of services that support the health and wellbeing of the local community. There is an aged care home, medical clinic, allied health and pathology services, a Centrelink agency and an opportunity shop. There is also an on-site pool and gym that is available for rehabilitation and general fitness.

**Call our team today on 5366 7999 to find out more.**



# Caring for the vulnerable and disadvantaged



**mecwacare's community housing program offers affordable housing in three premium locations – Glen Iris, Sandringham and Beaumaris – and hopefully more soon.**

Other sites are being assessed with a view to expanding this vital program. In the past year, we have assessed several potential sites and the process of evaluation is ongoing.

Residents like Carolyn enjoy the benefits of easy access to public transport, shops and other essential services in a sought-after neighbourhood.

Since moving in, Carolyn has added her personal touches to a comfortable one-bedroom unit, making it quickly feel like home.

She likes the low maintenance aspect of being surrounded by leafy gardens that are maintained by mecwacare and looks forward to planting her own small garden.

mecwacare's units are disability and ageing-friendly, allowing residents to live independently for many years.

They are designed to provide comfort and independence for people who are over 65, or living with a disability, and who meet the Department of Health's eligibility criteria for a concessional rent allowance.



If you would like to know more about our community housing program, please call 8573 4970 or email [housing@mecwacare.org.au](mailto:housing@mecwacare.org.au)

**Heartless thieves struck a mecwacare community housing site in Glen Iris, stealing shrubs and bushes from a newly planted native garden not once, but twice.**

mecwacare Chief Executive Michele Lewis said the theft was extremely disappointing.

"It's thoughtless behaviour," she said. "We are a not-for-profit organisation and they have stolen from some of the most vulnerable people in our community; residents who are socially and financially disadvantaged. It is particularly sad to see this in these challenging times."

Work at the Elm Road site, alongside Gardiners Creek, was completed in September 2021. Shortly after planting was completed, the shrubs and bushes were stolen.

Incredibly, when the plants were replaced, thieves struck again.

This \$3,000 project was funded by the Communities Environment Program, supported by local MP Katie Allen.

It was intended to enhance the ecosystem, provide a natural habitat for animals and birds and improve the environment for tenants.





Robin Syme  
Malvern



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