

mecwacare

AUTUMN 2023

matters



Hands with a tale to tell

**Hands
Exhibition**

page 4

**Ballan
is Electric**

page 6

**X-Ray Machines
bound for Sri Lanka**

page 8

Caring for Victorians since 1959

A fresh and *hopeful start*

The beginning of 2023 brings renewed energy to our work. Our focus is on supporting older Victorians, people living with a disability and those facing disadvantage, by delivering the highest quality care and creating opportunities for them to live fulfilling and purposeful lives.

As the future of the aged care sector continues to be shaped by reforms driven by the Australian Government's policy response to the final report of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, mecwacare's commitment to the delivery of care and services that exceed industry standards and expectations is unwavering. Caring truly is at the heart of everything we do and we approach this year with renewed energy - driven by our fundamental belief to safeguard the dignity of all our residents and clients.

We achieve this in a number of ways, including our commitment to provide high-quality care, nutritional meals, enriching and engaging social programs, plus improved access to a diverse range of allied health services that support people to live and age well.

We are thrilled with the positive results that our new strength and balance training equipment is achieving for clients at our day centres in Malvern East and Pakenham.

The acquisition of this innovative technology is life-changing and plays an integral part in helping people experience improved health and fitness outcomes.

By being hands-on in our delivery of tailored care, we work with both clients and residents across our facilities to assess their balance, identify people at higher risk of falling, and implement personalised training programs that make a difference.

We are grateful to the generous support we receive from businesses, organisations, community partners and individuals.

It is this ongoing support that enables us to give even more

people access to that advanced clinical equipment and fitness aids that underpin the care we are so proud to provide.

A major highlight to begin this year was our 22nd Annual Charity Golf Day on February 13. The ongoing generosity of all our sponsors, donors, community partners and event attendees helps ensure our ability to deliver vital programs and services across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria.

You can read more about our premier fundraising event on page 11.

The future is exceptionally bright for mecwacare: thank you for the role you play in contributing to our efforts to support our residents and clients to live their best lives.

Michele Lewis
Chief Executive

On the cover: Michael is part of the exhibition featured on page 4 (pictured with wife Ruzena).

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Creating positive memories of quality care and support

When the doors to mecwacare's Barry Fenton Centre slide open, John, 91, enters with a smile and guides his wife Heather, 85, towards her place at the table in the activity room.

It's been almost one year since John and Heather's daughter discovered the Dementia Support Program that operates here twice weekly.

For Heather, attending the women's program, each Wednesday, from 10am – 2.30pm, offers social interaction with other women, tailored, fun activities under the guidance of trained staff, and a delicious lunch that is prepared with the help of staff and a regular volunteer.

From John's perspective, the respite the program offers him as Heather's husband and carer, is equally important.

"Our program guarantees carers the peace of mind that their significant other is within a safe, happy, and routine-based environment," says Centre Manager, Rebecca Spencer. "John is an older Australian and can be at risk of carer stress."

Seeing the positive difference that the Dementia Support Program makes for both individuals and family members supporting older Victorians with a dementia diagnosis is, says Rebecca, one of many reasons she loves working in the aged care and disability sector as a valued mecwacare team member.

"My passion is people," she says.



John, 91, is a dementia carer for his wife, Heather, 85.

After 58 years of marriage, John's own passion, as Heather's husband, is to ensure that her care is in the best possible hands.

"It has been challenging at times, but when you love someone, it's just what you do," says John. "Finding this program has been wonderful. So many people don't realise the impact dementia has on everyone involved but all the people here have so much empathy and understanding. It's been marvellous."

Remembering his wife as a vibrant, physically active woman, who loved to dance, cook, sew and be sociable, has made the changes dementia has made to their life together difficult to deal with at times.

As part of the program at Barry Fenton Centre, though, John says that Heather seems to enjoy the company of other women – something that was always an important part of her life as a busy mother and grandmother.

"Knowing she is being looked after gives me the break I need," John says. "Everyone has made us feel so welcome, from the beginning. I walked in here on the first day as a stranger and I walked out already feeling like a friend."

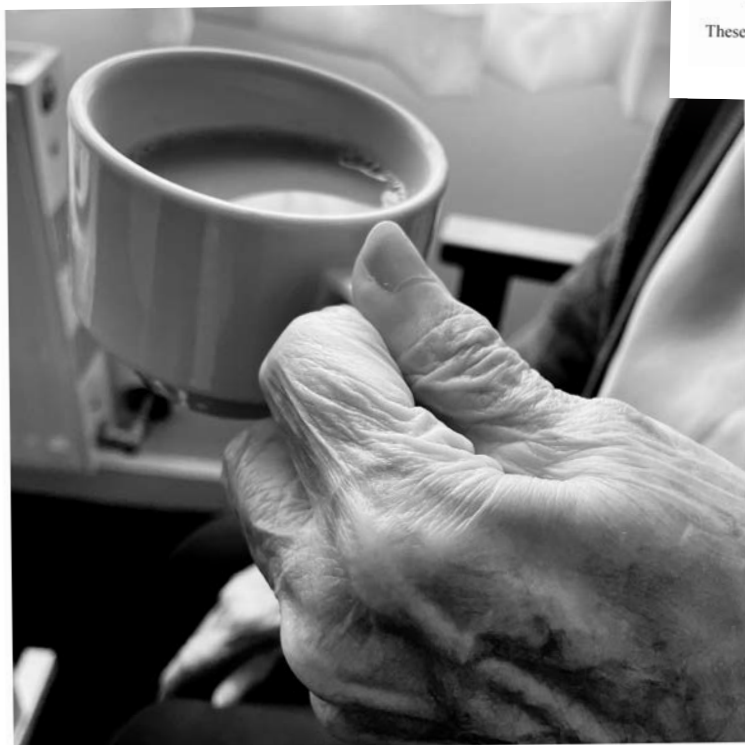


These hands grew up in Glasgow, the youngest of three children. These hands left school and went to work on a farm earning the princely sum of 10 shillings a week, before fulfilling a childhood dream of joining the Navy and training to be an engineer, an ally to my brother and sister who both joined the Air Force.

These hands built and maintained the engines of ships carrying 400 passengers to far away places before coming ashore in Australia to settle in Melbourne after finding love on a voyage to New Zealand. These hands made a life with my wife and family, living around East Melbourne and raising three children, two daughters and a son. These hands wound up the gramophone to enjoy music: Scottish bagpipes, Doris Day, and Perry Como. These hands love to spin a bowling ball and became president of Mount Martha Bowls Club. These hands have soared up into the skies from Moorabin, loving the feeling of freedom, space and sharing good times with great friends. These hands discovered a talent for art, working on wood and on paper.

These hands are proud to have painted the image selected for the cover of the 2018 Mecwacare calendar.

Hugh



These hands grew up in Crimea where my father made beautiful furniture and had a shop where he sold it. Everyone liked my father. When the communists came, life became very hard. My father was the only man from the village not sent to Syberia. He was sent to prison instead where he contracted typhoid and died.

These hands studied hard at school until Grade 5 when I left and began working to help out my mother. These hands emulated the hands of my mother, a seamstress, and learned a lot about sewing from her, knowledge I still hold. These hands have sewn beautiful, intricate tapestries of flowers made from many tiny stitches, which hang in my room.

These hands speak German, Russian and English. When the war started, these hands were sent to work as a translator, a job I did not like. These hands have loved living in Australia. These hands are 100 years old.

Olga



These hands would brush my mother's hair for hours on end as a child, in a way to stay up for longer in the evening. These hands trained in hairdressing and went to work nine hours up in the Manchester City building to tame mares and transform people each day. These hands worked in one of Melbourne's first open-plan hairdressing salons in South Yarra, where the ladies would sit outside in a row under the free-standing driers and take afternoon tea while their hair dried.

These hands first met my husband at a school hall-room dancing class when I was 16. These hands have welcomed three children, four grandchildren and four great grandchildren. These hands drove a little car with 'urgent blood' written on the front all over Melbourne, picking up pathology specimens and dropping them off to the lab.

These hands knitted and sewed for my kids, they have built bonfires and a new home from the ground up in Hellens. These hands have always enjoyed painting, which they learned from the hands of my father.

Pam



Hands-on connection in aged care

A powerful art project at mecwacare's Trescowthick Centre in Prahran has given residents a unique, creative outlet for sharing their life stories.

During Melbourne's lockdowns, when visits and lifestyle activities at aged care homes were limited, Deborah Carveth, a Swinburne University researcher, joined with Facility Manager, David Mitrovic, to start the project with residents at the Trescowthick Centre.

"This started as a small project to spark more social interaction with our residents," David explains. "We wanted to be able to spend more time with our residents when they were having limited contact with others; we created an opportunity for them to talk about their lives and who they are."

"It's important to give people a voice and to give them the chance to be reminded of what they have achieved," says Deborah, of the inspiration for the resident-focused initiative. "People's stories are their legacy."

A successful pilot program with a small number of residents convinced Deborah and David to expand the idea. Altogether, the project ran for one day a week over six months, with photos taken of residents' hands. The photos, together with text of the residents' stories, featured in an impactful exhibition at the Trescowthick Centre.

"We invited the families to see the exhibition, which was a wonderful time for residents to share with their loved ones," David says.

"The photos and the stories are a wonderful memento for one family whose mother passed away, the project has left them with a unique piece of their mum's legacy."

Above: Project founder Deborah Carveth (far left) and mecwacare's David Mitrovic (right) with a family member/volunteer. Opposite: The hands featured in the exhibition told powerful personal stories.

Riding around *Ballan is electric!*

A three-seater electric bicycle, acquired by mecwacare in 2018, is being put through its paces in Ballan, helping residents of mecwacare's nursing home and hostel get around the grounds – and the nearby town. The bicycle has also created an opportunity for volunteers to get on board and help residents get out and about in the idyllic village.

"The locals love seeing the bike, and wave at our residents," says Lifestyle Coordinator at mecwacare Ballan, Kerri Sommerfield.

"They feel like rockstars."

The electric bicycle boasts comfortable seating for two passengers, a blanket to keep them warm and a cover to protect against the weather. The rider sits behind and pedals briefly to start the bicycle, before the motor kicks in.

The popularity of the distinctive transport is soaring - especially in the warmer months - and mecwacare is looking for local volunteers who can donate some riding time to join the bicycle team and help more residents enjoy extra time outside in the sunshine.

"This is a great opportunity to improve your fitness, enjoy getting around Ballan, and also meet many engaging residents from our aged care homes," says Julianne Neilson, Volunteer Coordinator at mecwacare. "Riding the electric bike is a lot of fun. You get an enormous positive buzz being out on such a unique vehicle and the residents love it."

One of those electric bicycle-loving residents is Norma, at mecwacare's Ballan nursing home. "Going out on the bike is so much fun," she says. "I went along with a friend, and we giggled like schoolgirls."

Below: A mecwacare volunteer rider helps residents have fun on the bike.



To register your interest in joining mecwacare Ballan as a volunteer bike rider, please contact Julianne Neilson, Volunteer Coordinator on volunteers@mecwacare.org.au.



Above: Learning & Development Manager, Maureen Walsh, and Lead Nurse Educator, Rosemary Perrone.

Education creates *quality care*

“I am passionate about nurses and carers understanding the client journey and their lived experience,” says mecwacare Learning and Development Manager, Maureen Walsh.

A lengthy professional background in community-based palliative care has, she says, equipped her with vital first-hand knowledge that informs her holistic approach to care delivery.

It’s an understanding that is at the heart of the care team’s ability to offer genuinely personalised, meaningful care.

“My mission is to ensure we are sensitive to the ‘unseen’ needs of our clients and respond accordingly,” Maureen says.

Part of what makes the care that mecwacare’s nurses deliver so unique is the calibre of their comprehensive training.

According to Lead Nurse Educator, Rosemary Perrone, this training places nurses in a critical role to help support older Victorians stay in their home, surrounded by the familiarity of family, friends and pets that can have such

a positive impact on the emotional wellbeing that underpins physical and mental health.

“Being at home as long as possible is important for many people – and the family members caring for them,” says Rosemary. “Delivering education that helps our in-home nursing team become more knowledgeable about specific health conditions and diseases ensures that each nurse delivers the best possible care.”

Rosemary’s passion for lifelong learning is evident in her own commitment to further education, including her current studies towards a double diploma in leadership and management.

“One of the most important lessons I share with the nurses I help train is that everyone they deal with has different individual needs – no matter what diagnosis they have been given,” says Rosemary. “All the care we deliver is person-centred. Making sure that everyone we care for as nurses is treated as an individual is at the core of our mecwacare approach.”

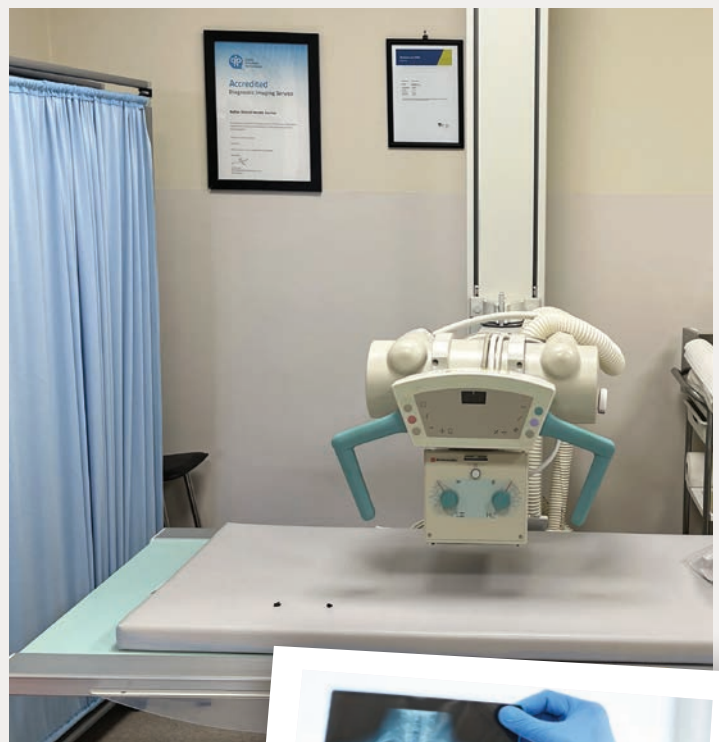
X-Ray machines bound for Sri Lanka

The Trincomalee District Hospital in north-eastern Sri Lanka is the new home for a range of x-ray machines donated by mecwacare. The fully refurbished equipment was originally in place at the Ballan & District Hospital, which mecwacare purchased in 2021.

mecwacare is proud to extend its support of vital health services in Sri Lanka through the donation of a standard x-ray machine, a chest x-ray machine and two dental / orthodontic x-ray machines to the Sri Lankan hospital.

The donation was inspired by the diversity of our mecwacare team – which includes staff who speak more than 100 languages – and coordinated through our partnership with the Mahamevnawa Jethawana Buddhist Centre Narre Warren North. The not-for-profit charity collects and ships medical equipment and hospital beds to rural hospitals in Sri Lanka.

“We are passionate about supporting the vital work of the Mahamevnawa Jethawana Buddhist Centre; their effort to coordinate the collection and donation of vital medical equipment to hospitals and health services in Sri Lanka is inspiring,” Michele Lewis, mecwacare Chief Executive says. “mecwacare was founded with a commitment to support vulnerable people in the community. Today, the reach of our services and programs is far beyond the Malvern area, and now our support reaches across the world to underserved communities in Sri Lanka.”



The donated medical equipment improves local health care.



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, disability and health services across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria.



Above: Members of the Mahamevnawa Jethawana Buddhist Centre team with mecwacare's General Manager IT, Peter Griffin.
Below: New technology for the Sri Lankan hospital.

“mecwacare is committed to supporting communities in need, and this extends to the people of Sri Lanka. We have a connection to health services in that country and are inspired by the care they provide with so little. We hope our support makes a positive difference to the health and wellbeing of people in the local area.”

- Michele Lewis

A sense of
Community





care for
Community



Allied health services

At mecwacare's Ballan Health and Care Services centre, a diverse range of allied health services benefit the entire community.

According to Kaylene Baird, mecwacare Ballan Home and Community Service Centre Manager, providing comprehensive services that include podiatry, physiotherapy, social worker support, hydrotherapy, exercise assessment and group therapy, as well as Cardiac Pulmonary Rehabilitation care makes access to high-quality medical and wellbeing support easy.

Public pool and gym memberships adds greater accessibility that has ensured the allied health hub is a much-loved addition to the region.

Better health support for every body

Visits to the on-site podiatrist are especially popular with older members of the Ballan community.

"This care is particularly important for seniors and anyone who lives with diabetes," Kaylene says.

Physiotherapy services are available four days a week and offer injury assessments and treatment, rehabilitation following joint surgery and mobility assessments.

Emotional and psychological wellbeing is a critical part of sustainable good health

Our on-site social worker (Monday-Friday) offers support to people of all abilities and circumstances. mecwacare's social worker helps people dealing with change and challenges, including illness, divorce, grief, or unemployment.

"Being a farmer and a farmer's daughter, I understand rural lifestyles and impacts on 'mind, body and soul'," says Kaylene. "We welcome new clients to the mecwacare Ballan Home and Community services, so come along and chat with our various clinicians to see what we can offer you."



Kaylene Baird



To find out more about Ballan Health and Care Services, visit mecwacare.org.au or call **5366 7999**.



Golfing greatness

mecwacare's 22nd Annual Golf Day was held on Monday 13th February – and it was a swinging success!

It was wonderful to return to the picturesque Yarra Yarra Golf Club in Bentleigh East, to watch more than 100 competitors test their golfing skills in the four-person ambrose competition, which was followed by a well-earned lunch in the venue's heritage clubhouse.

This year's winner of the Perpetual Trophy was Empower Healthcare, who put in an amazing effort to beat 27 other teams vying the title. Being crowned the 2023 Annual Charity Golf Day winners is a fantastic result for them – and the entire event was a wonderful way for everyone involved to enjoy some friendly competition

for a great cause. The day was generously supported by valued sponsorship partners.

"It is always such a fantastic day and, once again, I have been blown away by the generosity of our supporters," says mecwacare Chief Executive, Michele Lewis.

"I look forward to seeing everyone back in 2024." This annual event definitely puts the fun into fundraising, with 100 per cent of the money raised making a positive difference by providing advanced clinical equipment that enhances our commitment to exceptional personal care.

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