

IN THIS

Issue

Welcome to the winter edition of mecwacare Matters! As the days grow colder, we bring you stories that warm the heart and celebrate the spirit of our incredible community.

We highlight the generous contributions of our volunteers in celebration of National Volunteer Week, including a touching high tea held in their honour. You'll also meet a young Elstoft House volunteer whose journey with us inspired a career in nursing.

This issue features vibrant cultural events at Malvern and Trescowthick centres, a moviethemed day at Barry Fenton Centre and a behind-the-scenes look at a special video shoot at Pascoe Vale Gardens.

Discover a lifelong friendship from Vincent House, a couple supported to live independently at home and a moving ANZAC Day tribute to one of our veterans.

Finally, we celebrate our Charity Golf Day, which raised an incredible \$115,000 to support people living with dementia in our aged care homes.

So, grab a warm drink and enjoy this heartwarming winter read!

LETTER TO THE



Do you have suggestions, questions or story ideas for mecwacare Matters?

Email us at

fundraising@mecwacare.org.au

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ON THE COVER

Braydon pictured with Val. See page 3.





Photo: Braydon pictured with residents Freda and Val, Care Support Coordinator Debbie and his mother Nadine.

Finding Confidence through volunteering

Braydon is a 20-year-old volunteer at mecwacare Elstoft House who has shown resilience beyond his years. After long-standing struggles with bullying and anxiety at school, he found confidence and a sense of belonging through volunteering.

Braydon's early school experience was difficult. Repeated bullying and lack of support left him feeling isolated and anxious. He eventually switched to online learning to complete Years 11 and 12 but the impact on his confidence lingered. When his mother Nadine began volunteering at Elstoft House, Braydon was inspired to give it a try himself.

Initially uncertain, Braydon found a renewed sense of purpose upon arriving at Elstoft House, where the warm welcome from both residents and staff helped him feel at ease. Support from staff members like Debbie and Michael helped Braydon regain confidence and reconnect with others.

"Since I joined mecwacare, I realised I enjoy caring for people," Braydon said. "That motivated me to study nursing."

Braydon now travels independently to his course four days a week and has made new friends – something he never imagined possible just a few years ago. His mother Nadine says she's proud to see how far he's come.

Braydon's story is a compelling example of what can be achieved when an individual is given the right support and encouragement. We're proud to be part of Braydon's journey as a volunteer at mecwacare where he continues to grow, connect and realise his potential.

If you would like to explore volunteering opportunities with us, visit **www.mecwacare.org.au**



Celebrating our Volunteers

As part of National Volunteer Week 2025, mecwacare was delighted to host a special High Tea on Tuesday, 20 May at the elegant Kooyong Lawn Tennis Club. The event was a heartfelt gesture of thanks to the extraordinary volunteers who so generously share their time, care and compassion.

More than 220 volunteers came together for a morning of delicious food, lively conversations and sincere appreciation. The atmosphere was one of celebration and gratitude, honouring the invaluable contributions our volunteers make in enriching lives and building stronger, more connected communities across Victoria.

CEO Anne McCormack shared a touching reflection on mecwacare's beginnings in 1959, when a small group of volunteers in Malvern came together to support their ageing neighbours. "That simple act sparked what has now become mecwacare," she said. "You are a key reason why we're so successful today, grounded in a serviceled approach to our purpose and mission."

Guests enjoyed a delightful spread of savoury bites and sweet treats, while learning about the many ways volunteers support mecwacare – from gardening and dog companion visits to book clubs and intergenerational programs.

The event also featured the 2025 Volunteer Awards, honouring volunteers across three categories: New Volunteers of the Year, Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme (ACVVS) Volunteers of the Year, and overall Volunteers of the Year.

In addition, Service Awards recognised milestone years of dedication, from 5 to 30 years, with certificates and glass trophies marking each recipient's long-standing commitment.

This special celebration was a joyful tribute to the volunteers who help bring mecwacare's mission to life every day.

Congratulations Service Award recipients

Robyn Baxter, Barry Fenton Centre — 30 years Clive Wright, Barry Fenton Centre — 30 years Margaret Skellett, Vincent House — 25 years Olwyn Syle, Malvern East Op Shop — 25 years Susan Barton, Board Member — 20 years Donald Jones, Malvern Centre — 15 years Heather Law, Barry Fenton Centre — 15 years Winnifred Nelson, Elstoft House — 10 years George Terhorst, Elstoft House — 10 years Graeme Eddy, Community Transport — 5 years Jo-Ann Stubbings, Malvern East Op Shop — 5 years Susan Williams, Malvern East Op Shop — 5 years Gillian Miles, Malvern East Op Shop — 5 years David Stevens, Malvern East Op Shop — 5 years

New Volunteers of the Year

Jennie Evans, Malvern Centre Hamida Khan, Vincent House Lauren Goldberg, Jubilee House Toni Bahler, Annie's Court

ACVVS Volunteers of the Year

Jo Foley, Marcelle Quinn and Chris Henry

Volunteers of the Year

Nadine Grey, Elstoft House Marjorie Waite, Malvern East Op Shop Sonia Goubran, Malvern East Op Shop Sandra Luxford, Community Transport

Photos: Top left: Volunteers Aisyah, John and Mimi. Top right: CEO Anne McCormack and Board Member Susan Barton. Middle left: Volunteer Don and Care Support Coordinator Virginia. Middle right: Volunteers Sonia, Olwyn and Marjorie. Bottom left: Volunteer Nadine and Care Support Coordinator Debbie. Bottom right: Volunteers Phuong Vo and Thi My Trang Nguyen.













A celebration of strings: The **Koto** enchants Malvern

The soothing sounds of the traditional Japanese Koto recently brought a sense of calm and joy to Malvern Centre, as residents enjoyed a morning of musical delight and cultural discovery.

Performed by the talented Melbourne Koto Ladies, the concert featured the gentle plucking of the 13-string zither, Japan's beloved national instrument, filling the space with its graceful melodies.

The occasion held special significance for resident Trish Walsh, who is currently recovering from a stroke. Her daughter-in-law, Minako, leads the ensemble and performed for Trish for the very first time. "It was the first time I'd seen her play," Trish shared with a smile. "I loved every moment of it. They are all so talented."

More than just entertainment, the performance offered comfort, connection and a beautiful glimpse into Japanese culture. For Trish, it was an uplifting moment in her recovery journey, helping her feel inspired and hopeful about returning home soon.

Both residents and staff praised the visit as a heartwarming celebration of music and heritage. The event served as a reminder of the joy music brings and its quiet, powerful role in healing and togetherness.







Photos: Top left: Minako leading the ensemble.

Top right: Resident Trish with her son

Simon and daughter-in-law Minako.
Bottom: The talented Melbourne
Koto Ladies.







Photos: Malvern Centre residents and Squires Place visitors shared cuddles with the farm animals.

Farmyard fun brings **Joy** to residents

Recently, residents at mecwacare Malvern Centre enjoyed a visit from the Myuna Farm animals. The visit took place in the aged care home's sunny courtyard, where most of the animals roamed freely among the residents – much to their delight.

The mobile animal nursery included chickens, lambs, goats, rabbits, guinea pigs, a dog and even a turtle – a fun surprise for many residents. It was a lively morning, with residents patting, feeding and cuddling with the animals throughout the session.

"Seeing the residents interact with the animals and the expressions of joy on their faces was absolutely priceless," said Virginia, Care Support Coordinator at mecwacare Malvern Centre.

Animal-assisted therapy is part of mecwacare's wellbeing program, offered across all aged care homes. This includes visits from social support volunteers and their pet dogs, chicken-hatching

programs and even in-home animals like pet canaries at Gregory Lodge.

These visits support emotional wellbeing, help reduce stress and provide moments of connection and calm. For many residents, they also spark conversation and fond memories. "I love all the animals and I'm having a great time," said resident Mary of the Myuna Farm visit. "It reminds me of when I was young –I grew up with rabbits, little lambs and guinea pigs."

mecwacare is proud to provide activities and experiences that nurture each resident's wellbeing in personally meaningful ways.









Photos: Top: Participant Kristie and Fisher Street Centre Manager Lawrence Far right: Program Assistant Katherine, Grace Fenton, Barry Fenton and Program Coordinator Marianne Middle left: Lawrence and participant Natasha Middle right: Participant Mark Bottom: Barry Fenton Centre Manager Glen and participant Lynette.



Off to the *Movies*

On Friday, 11 April, the Barry Fenton Centre hosted its "Off to the Movies" Party, a vibrant celebration created by participants with their favourite movie themes in mind.

The centre in Malvern East came alive with colourful art, craft displays and live music, all bringing iconic movie moments to life. Staff and participants fully embraced the theme, dressing as characters from popular films like Grease, Star Wars, James Bond and 101 Dalmatians.

Participants enjoyed a range of activities including themed art and re-enacting classic scenes. The live music added to the energetic atmosphere, helping everyone immerse in the movie-themed experience.

"A delicious morning tea and generous servings of popcorn helped keep everyone energised as they enjoyed the festivities." The event was made even more memorable by the participation of guests from the Fisher Street Centre, along with clients from mecwacare's social support groups and strength training programs.

At mecwacare, we're proud to support these creative, participant-driven events that promote connection, fun and personal expression. Our community centres offer a range of programs focused on health, wellbeing and social connection for people over 65 or those with disabilities. Visit our website for more information on our services.

To learn more about our wide range of programs at Barry Fenton Centre, visit **www.mecwacare.org.au**



Ballan Autumn Festival

Despite the rain, the Ballan community came together in full force at the annual Ballan Autumn Festival on Sunday, 16 March. The weather didn't dampen the spirits of festival-goers who enjoyed a day of fun, connection and celebration.

mecwacare was proud to be part of the festivities, offering free health checks, a spinning wheel with exciting prizes and showcasing beautiful crafts made by Ballan Aged Care residents. The atmosphere was filled with smiles and laughter as people explored the vibrant market stalls and community displays.

One of the highlights of the day was the muchanticipated parade, featuring a lively mix of local clubs, community groups, volunteer services and more, reflecting the heart of the Ballan community.

mecwacare is proud to support the Ballan community through a range of health and community services and we look forward to continuing to be an active and engaged part of this wonderful community.

Photos: Top: Resident Lyn from The Pines Retirement Village. Bottom left: Our dedicated mecwacare team. Christina, Louise, Natalie, Courtney and Donna. Bottom right: Resident Marjorie from Ballan Aged Care.











Photos: Audrey and Faye were among the many residents who immersed themselves in the festivities.

Dancing to a Latin Beat

The Trescowthick Centre in Prahran came alive with colour, rhythm and joy earlier this year as it hosted a spectacular Latino Festival. Residents and staff were swept up in an unforgettable cultural celebration that brought the vibrant spirit of Latin America right to their doorstep.

The festivities kicked off with a burst of energy as clowns on stilts, dressed in bright and festive costumes, delighted the crowd with their playful antics. The excitement continued with an electrifying line-up of dancers and performers who wowed everyone with lively salsa moves and irresistible Latin beats.

Professional dance groups showcased traditional Colombian styles like Cumbia and Porro, captivating the audience and inviting residents to join the fun. The enthusiastic participation created a heartwarming sense of connection and celebration throughout the afternoon.

Bringing a melodic touch to the festivities, a talented musician filled the air with soulful renditions of Colombian classics, including vallenato and bambuco. Beautiful voices of singers transported everyone to the bustling, music-filled streets of Latin America.

Adding a whimsical touch, a skilled caricature artist entertained guests with playful portraits, giving everyone a unique and cheerful memento from the day.

This joyful celebration was made possible by the wonderful Linda, one of our dedicated personal care assistants. Her passion for Latin culture and her vibrant community spirit brought the festival to life. With the generous support of our amazing Latino volunteers, caring staff and the Lifestyle and Wellbeing team, the Latino Festival was a heartfelt success and a day to remember.

Gracias a todos!

Together, supported and *at home*

Pauline and Russel have spent more than 60 years side by side – married for six decades and living in their much-loved Golden Point home for just as long. Originally from England, they built a full and adventurous life in Australia, raising two daughters and travelling widely, even living in New Zealand and Japan for a time.





Photos: Left:
Care Advisor Meagan
Right: The happy couple
Pauline and Russel on
their wedding day.

"It's that one-on-one support I really appreciate. Whenever I need something, I know I can go through Meagan, and it gets sorted," Pauline said.

These days, with ongoing health challenges, Pauline relies on mecwacare for a Home Care Package to help manage day-to-day tasks for the couple and stay independent at home.

Now, with two regular support workers, Pauline receives help with housework and meal deliveries, easing the load for Russel. "We're quite social and often out for lunch, so having dinners delivered at home just works for us," she shared.

They also receive assistance with bigger jobs like window and gutter cleaning – tasks that have become harder to do themselves.

What stands out most for Pauline is the personal connection with their care advisor, Meagan. "It's that one-on-one support I really appreciate. Whenever I need something, I know I can go through her, and it gets sorted," she said.

After a lifetime of love, travel and plenty of adventures, Pauline and Russel are thankful to remain in the home they cherish—with the right support behind them.

At mecwacare, we understand the importance of staying connected to the comfort and familiarity of your own home.



Contact us on **1800 163 292** to find out how we can support you or your loved one to continue living independently and confidently at home. visit **www.mecwacare.org.au**



Lest we forget: John's story

On ANZAC Day, many Australians rise early in the cold dawn, light a candle and bow their heads in solemn remembrance. We honour courage, mateship and sacrifice. We say, "Lest we forget."

John, a resident at mecwacare Trescowthick Centre, also remembers his mates – by reflecting on his Royal British Navy service and the strong bonds formed during those years.

Originally from London, John joined the Royal Navy as a junior seaman at just 15 and a half. After training at HMS Ganges in Ipswich, he was posted to HMS Ocean, an aircraft carrier based in Portsmouth.

His service took him across the UK, including a proud moment marching in the Edinburgh Military Tattoo at Edinburgh Castle. "As we progressed, we walked over the drawbridge singing... the crowd all cheered and we did our drill," he fondly recalled.

John served from 1955 to 1962 and keeps a photo album full of navy photos and writings. "It took me on many adventures," he said.

ANZAC Day brings those memories into focus. "Good memories and sad memories. It's very heartwarming to be with colleagues remembering the comradeship that we had and I hope it continues to the younger generation," he said.

This year, he joined fellow residents for a morning service led by long-time volunteer Don, who has supported remembrance events at Trescowthick Centre for many years. "We had our silent thoughts and it was all very poignant," John said.

Later, John met friends at nearby Prahran Central, where they raised a glass in quiet honour of those who served.

At mecwacare, we're proud to support residents like John in marking the moments that matter – and in keeping the spirit of remembrance alive.



Photos: Top: Young John (third from right) and his mates.

Right: John proudly showing an album full of photos from his Royal Navy days.





Photos: Residents Mary and Allan were wonderful spokespeople for Pascoe Vale Gardens.

Behind the Scenes at Pascoe Vale Gardens

Late last year, the team at Pascoe Vale Gardens (PVG) Retirement Living welcomed a film crew on site to capture the heart of village life – straight from the residents who call it home.

The day-long shoot featured candid interviews and lifestyle footage, showcasing the range of living options at PVG, including spacious independent living units and stylish serviced apartments. Residents shared their unique stories and reflections, offering a genuine glimpse into daily life at the village.

The crew captured vibrant moments throughout the day: residents enjoying the recreation facilities, perusing puzzles in the quiet corners of the library, making afternoon tea at home and socialising in beautifully kept communal spaces. The focus was on highlighting independence, choice and peace of mind – key reasons so many choose to make PVG their home.

While many wait until their late 70s to consider retirement living, PVG residents encourage others to explore their options earlier. Making the move sooner means more time to enjoy everything the village has to offer, from modern amenities and a vibrant social life to a low-maintenance lifestyle that supports independence.

By sharing real resident experiences, the video reinforces PVG's welcoming community and all it offers – not just for today but for the years ahead. Scan the QR code below to watch the final video.





Pascoe Vale Gardens village life video

A Lifelong friendship

When Pat visits mecwacare Vincent House for afternoon tea, she's not just catching up with an old friend – she's reconnecting with over 70 years of shared history. Her lifelong friend Gloria, now a resident at Vincent House, has been a constant in Pat's life since their teenage years in Essendon.

Though they attended school at the same time, it wasn't until after graduation that their friendship began. Sunday dinners at Gloria's family home became a tradition, complete with singalongs around the piano led by Gloria's mother. "We had marvellous times," Pat fondly recalled.

In their twenties, they commuted into the city together – with Gloria working as a secretary at I.C.I. and Pat at MLC Insurance. Saturday nights were often spent dancing at Moonee Ponds Town Hall. Both later enrolled at The Elly Lucas School of Elegance, graduating after three months – a highlight for them both.

Gloria got engaged on her 21st birthday. "Her party almost ended in disaster as the zip down the back of her dress gave way," Pat shared. "Luckily we managed to pin her into it with safety pins."

Pat was by Gloria's side as chief bridesmaid on her wedding day and Gloria later returned the gesture as matron of honour at Pat's wedding.

Though life made regular catchups harder over the years, their bond never wavered. Now, they continue their tradition of connection through phone calls and regular catch ups at Vincent House.

"Gloria is a beautiful lady whose friendship has been constant and treasured," Pat said. "She has never been any different in all the years I've known her."

At mecwacare, stories like Gloria and Pat's show the value of lifelong connection. We're proud to support friendships like theirs through a welcoming environment and the time to simply enjoy each other's company.

Photos: Left: Pat and Gloria during one of their regular catchups at Vincent House.
Right: Gloria's wedding day with Pat as her chief bridesmaid.







He arrived in Eaglehawk, Bendigo from London in 1967 with his childhood sweetheart, Joyce, and her family. The pair married just months later. "When we came to Eaglehawk, they had horse troughs—it was like a proper cowboy town," he laughed.

Derek quickly found his feet. With a cousin nearby and a local hospital in need of nurses, he stepped into a career he hadn't planned on and stayed for nearly 30 years. "It was the first job that came up and I ended up making it a career."

A stint in Altona followed, working in a petrochemical plant. "My friend talked me into it and I earned triple what I was making at the hospital," he said. After six years, he returned to Eaglehawk, reclaimed his hospital job and built a house on land he'd held onto. A painting of that house, by his son-in-law, now hangs proudly in his room.

Outside of work, Derek helped launch the Bendigo Amateur Soccer League after answering a local ad in the late 1960s. Soon they were playing and beating teams from Shepparton and Ballarat. By 1971, the league had four teams. Derek played for Strathdale, a legacy later carried on by his grandchildren.

Though he warmed to Aussie Rules and supports Carlton, he still follows his beloved Queens Park Rangers in the English football league and rugby league's Melbourne Storm.

Today, life is slower – and happily shared with Joyce – but still full of stories.

Photos: Top right: Derek, a well-loved Bendigo local. Top left: A painting of Derek's Eaglehawk home. Bottom: Care Support Coordinator Michelle with Joyce, Derek's wife and fellow resident.



Generals support makes our 2025 Charity Golf Day a success!

Against the stunning backdrop of the Yarra Valley, mecwacare's 2025 Charity Golf Day proved to be a resounding success. Held at the picturesque Heritage Golf and Country Club, the event brought together valued partners, sponsors and staff for a memorable day of networking, friendly competition and fundraising in support of people living with dementia.

A total of 92 golfers, across 15 teams, arrived bright and early to enjoy a light breakfast before hitting the immaculate greens of St. John's 18-hole course. Meanwhile, non-golfers joined in the fun with a spirited putting competition held in front of the clubhouse.

After the tournament, players and guests came together at the Yarra Valley Lodge to enjoy a delicious lunch and a relaxed awards presentation. Congratulations to the In2 Fire team for taking home the 2025 Winner's Trophy! Their impressive round secured the win, just edging out runners-up ProCafe on handicap.

During the event, our CEO, Anne McCormack, spoke about mecwacare's collaboration with Dementia Australia to develop best-practice guidelines for dementia-friendly environments. She also shared that funds raised from this year's Golf Day will go towards enhancing our dementia-focused lifestyle programs – supporting both stimulating environments and meaningful activities that promote wellbeing.

Thanks to the incredible generosity of our sponsors, community partners and guests, we're proud to announce that we raised an outstanding **\$115,000**. These funds will directly support improvements in the lives of people living with dementia in our aged care homes.

We are grateful to our amazing sponsors:

GOLD SPONSORS

Alltech Ent, Aidacare, Recom Cleaning

SILVER SPONSORS

In2 Fire, Bidfood Australia, United Physiotherapy Group, Sheen Panel Service, Kustom Living Building & Design

BRONZE SPONSORS

LeasePLUS, Spectrol, Majestic Services Group, Medsafe Pharmacy, Bunzl ANZ Hospitality, Citrus Commercial Group, Watson Young Architects, Bega Foodservice.

Thank you to everyone who took time out of their busy schedules to join us on the green, connect with fellow supporters and contribute to such a meaningful cause. Your support helps us continue making a real difference in the lives of those living with dementia.

Photos: Top left: Board Member Susan Barton and CEO Anne McCormack. Top right: Team Aidacare. Middle left: Team Watson Young Architects. Middle right: Team Sheen Panel Service.











Congratulations to our winners **In2 Fire**



CREATIVE

Submission

George, a resident of Rositano House, was born in 1943 at Epworth Richmond. He spent his early years in South Yarra, where his mum's grandparents ran a local dairy.

The oldest of five siblings, George is a proud father to two daughters and a grandfather to three grandchildren. He finds the greatest joy in spending time with family and friends, sharing stories from a full and adventurous life well lived. One of George's favourite memories is riding on a horse-drawn cart.

An avid reader and a passionate writer, George has written numerous poems throughout his life. His published poetry book, Bloody Brick Walls, is a collection of poems he penned as an outspoken advocate for workers' rights in the Builders Labourers Federation, later the CFMEU.

His love for storytelling is evident in his poem, Before Hot Water and Fridges, which pays tribute to a bygone era and the enduring spirit of everyday Australians. We're proud to feature his poem in this month's creative submission, along with a photo from his early years.





Before HOT WATER AND FRIDGES

Have you ever had a bath in the wash house

Before hot water come along

When the baker and the milkman

Drove horses

And ya could hear their carts

Trundle along

When the kids usta pinch ice

Off the ice cart

And never thought there was nothin' wrong

And we all used to draw on the footpath and the road

Before all the busy traffic come along

When the sparrow starver

Cleaned up for the council

But now all the horses are gone

But the spirit of the battlers in Australia

Is something that will always live on.

Wordsearch

D	Α	Ν	С	1	N	G	S	Ν	Ε	F	S	Α	Ε	S	N	L	Ε
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VOLUNTEER AUTUMN ANIMALS MOVIES PURPOSE FESTIVAL COLOMBIAN SUPPORTED COURAGE BENDIGO CHARITY
POETRY
CULTURE
CONNECTION
DANCING

INDEPENDENCE REMEMBRANCE ADVENTURE SOCCER CRAFTS



CREATIVE

Submissions

Do you have an artistic hobby? Are you a painter, knitter, woodworker, quilter, or poet?

Send any submissions to: media@mecwacare.org.au.

Keep your eyes peeled for your handiwork in the next edition of mecwacare Matters!





Annie's Court residents enjoy their regular bus trips along the coastline.





The Easter Bunny brought plenty of smiles and cheer to mecwacare Flora Hill.



Rivendell House participants decorated their own t-shirts for Harmony Day.



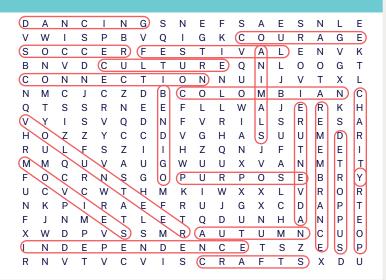


Gregory Lodge held a delicious morning tea to celebrate International Nurses Day.



Residents from The Pines Retirement Village spent a sunny afternoon at the Werribee Zoo.

Wordsearch solution







John Atchison Centre celebrated Mother's Day with a vibrant cultural fashion show.





"Following mecwacare on social media helps me feel connected to a wonderful community."



Instagram

Social media spotlight

Join our #caringcommunity to learn more about the wonderful people of mecwacare, along with exciting activities across our aged care homes, retirement villages and community centres.











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Contact us to find out more.

1800 163 292

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