

mecwacare

SUMMER 2025

# matters



## Loved Ones

Remembrance  
Day  
page 8

John Hood  
Terrace  
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Abi brings  
more joy  
page 19

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# IN THIS *Issue*

Summer is the perfect time to slow down, relax and enjoy a good read. In this issue, you'll find heart-warming stories and uplifting moments from across our community.

We begin with Joy's remarkable lifetime of service and Barry's 80th birthday celebration, marking more than two decades of belonging at Ballan Aged Care.

You'll read how families like Susan and her mother Santi are experiencing the comfort of care that truly feels like home, and how intergenerational art programs are building confidence, creativity and lasting friendships.

We celebrate the official opening of John Hood Terrace, our newest aged care home in Richmond, and launch the next chapter in our digital transformation with Genesis Abi, the upgraded humanoid companion bringing more joy, connection and support to residents.

Across our homes and centres, there has been no shortage of colour and community spirit. From Diwali and Tihar festivities to lively Spring Racing Carnival events, residents and staff have embraced the chance to come together. We also recognise the dedication of our volunteers and share achievements from our Fisher Street barista graduates.

Thank you for spending part of your summer with us. Enjoy this edition.

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## LETTER TO THE *Editor*

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

**Email us at**

**[fundraising@mecwacare.org.au](mailto:fundraising@mecwacare.org.au)**

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## ON THE COVER

Santi, John Atchison Centre.  
See page 7.







*Photos: Left and top right: Joy receiving her OAM from the Governor of Victoria, Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Margaret Gardner AC. Bottom right: Joy's medal from the Victorian Scottish Union, awarded to her when she was 16.*

## A *Lifetime* of service

Joyce 'Joy' has made Pascoe Vale Gardens her home, embracing community and connection every day. "I could almost live here," she said to herself when first visiting, and she has done just that ever since.

Joy moved to Pascoe Vale Gardens in January 2022 for respite care but quickly decided to stay permanently. Daily tasks like lifting, shopping and cooking were becoming difficult when she lived alone. At Pascoe Vale Gardens, she enjoys the variety of meals and help with laundry and cleaning allows her to spend more time with friends and family. From her ground-floor apartment overlooking the Club House and lawn, she loves watching lawn bowls and taking part in social events whenever she can.

Joy has devoted nearly two decades to Legacy Widows, organising luncheons at Pascoe Vale and Glenroy RSLs, maintaining contact with members, arranging transport and remembering birthdays. She's also active in War Widows groups and previously spent 18 years volunteering at the

Royal Women's Hospital and the Old Colonists' Home in Fitzroy.

Earlier this year, Joy was awarded the Order of Australia (OAM) for her tireless service to veterans' widows and their families. She was surprised and honoured, first hearing the news from her son Ian. Nominated by Legacy representative Warwick, she received her medal from the Governor-General at Government House on 9 September, joined by her sons and daughters-in-law.

Even at 98, Joy continues to support widows, organise luncheons and stay active, a true testament to the spirit of service and care that defines both her and Pascoe Vale Gardens.

# Squires place art therapy

On 18 November, Squires Place hosted a vibrant art show that brought together residents, volunteers and children from Guardian Altona North. The exhibition showcased artworks created through the home's intergenerational program, which began in October last year and has steadily become a highlight for many residents.

During their regular visits, the children join residents for creative sessions, games and conversations that spark easy, natural connection across generations. What begins as simple shared activities often grows into genuine friendships built on curiosity and learning. Many residents speak about how much they look forward to the children's visits, while the kindergarteners arrive eager to see the people they now know by name.

For the art show, the lounge at Squires Place was transformed into a bright gallery space filled with paintings, drawings and mixed-media pieces.

Residents proudly talked through the work they created with the children, while the kindergarteners eagerly pointed out their favourite colours, shapes and ideas. The room buzzed with excitement, reflecting the joy, confidence and sense of achievement that have grown through months of creative collaboration.

"This was a wonderful celebration of the partnership between our residents and Guardian Kindergarten, demonstrating how art fosters connection, learning and mutual respect," said Kevin, Wellbeing and Engagement Coordinator.

One standout piece was a collaborative painting by resident Martin and volunteer Maeve, which drew plenty of interest from visitors. The watercolour captures a view of the city from Williamstown, featuring imaginative hot-air balloons. It took three months to complete, with both determined to perfect the colours.

Intergenerational programs like this offer clear benefits for both older adults and young children. Residents feel more energised, socially connected and engaged, while children build confidence, empathy and communication skills. These moments help create a community where

people of all ages feel valued. At mecwacare, we're proud to support programs that help residents stay connected, creative and engaged in meaningful ways.



**Photos: Bottom left: Kindergarteners excitedly looking at their photos.**

**Top left and bottom right: Residents admiring the drawings and clay pieces.**

**Top right: Resident Martin and volunteer Maeve with their artwork.**





**"This was a wonderful celebration of the partnership between our residents and Guardian Kindergarten, demonstrating how art fosters connection, learning and mutual respect," said Kevin, Wellbeing and Engagement Coordinator.**





# Barry celebrates 80 years

Turning 80 is a milestone worth celebrating, but for Barry at mecwacare's Ballan residential home, it also marked 22 years of belonging to a close-knit community built on friendship, care and familiar faces.

On 30 September, Barry enjoyed a joyful afternoon tea surrounded by staff, fellow residents, and even the former carers who first welcomed him when he arrived a quarter of a century ago.

"We have been his family for the last two decades, spending all his birthdays and celebrations like Christmas and New Year together," said Tracey, Facility Manager at Ballan, who has known Barry since his admission on Boxing Day 2003.

Barry first moved into the home during a time of big life changes. Since then, he has become a much-loved member of the community, forming strong and lasting friendships with both residents and team members.

Known for his energy and warm nature, Barry is always ready to lend a hand. Whether he's helping staff, popping up the street for a coffee, welcoming new residents, or offering support on

bus trips, his presence is felt and appreciated. "His helpful nature and welcoming presence sometimes lead people to mistake him for a staff member," Tracey shared with a smile.

Barry's 80th birthday was celebrated in true Collingwood spirit, with a black and white theme reflecting his favourite footy club and thoughtful gifts including framed pictures of classic Ford cars – a nod to his love of all things motoring.

After 22 years at Ballan Aged Care, Barry is much more than a resident. He is a cherished part of the community, whose life has been woven into the daily rhythm of the home, and whose journey continues to be supported by the dedication and care of staff, both past and present.

***Photo below: Barry was delighted to see carers from Ballan Aged Care again, including both past and current staff.***





*Photo above: Santi and Susan sharing a warm moment.*

# Where *care* is family

Susan is the Clinical Care Coordinator at the John Atchison Centre (JAC), and this year her personal and professional worlds gently intertwined when her mother, Santi, became a resident.

At 77, Santi moved into JAC in May after a fall at home led to a hospital stay. Facing the challenges that come with change, Susan and her siblings agreed it was time for their mum to receive extra support, and for Susan, the decision of where was simple. “I know firsthand that the staff here are amazing,” she said. “They treat every resident like their own parents. It’s so homely here and everyone is so supportive.”

Since settling in, Santi has embraced her new routine with warmth and confidence. She’s gained greater independence, now managing her own appointments, socialising more, and joining in bus outings and lifestyle activities. She also continues to enjoy her favourite hobbies including gardening, watching Hindi channels and chatting on the phone, all while staying closely connected with her 13 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

For Susan, working in the same place where her mum lives has been both reassuring and rewarding. “Mum absolutely adores the staff and even knows more about them than I do,” she laughs.

**“Here, Mum isn’t just a resident. She’s part of the family and I can see how much that means to her.”**

Being close to her mum while continuing her career has deepened Susan’s connection to both her work and her family, reflecting the genuine care, compassion and strong sense of community that define life at the John Atchison Centre.





*Top left: Resident Ray from Flora Hill reflecting on the sacrifice of his grandson, who is currently serving his country*  
*Top right: A Remembrance service at John Atchison Centre*  
*Middle left: Care Support Coordinator Alex with resident Bryan at Simon Price Centre*  
*Middle right: Flora Hill's knitting group, who created all the poppies for the event*  
*Bottom: A wreath-laying ceremony at O'Mara House.*







*Photo: Above: Resident John and Care Support Coordinator Debbie from Elstoft House.*

# Remembrance Day

On 11 November, people across Australia paused to remember the courage and sacrifice of the men and women who have served in our armed forces. For many older Australians, Remembrance Day holds special significance, reflecting personal connections, family histories and memories of service.

Residents, volunteers and staff across all aged care residences marked the day in their own ways. Residents participated in remembrance services, shared personal stories, laid wreaths and created poppy displays, celebrating the strength and history of their communities.

At Elstoft House, residents gathered in the courtyard for a wreath-laying ceremony, braving the gloomy weather while the flag flew at half-mast. Despite the overcast skies, the sense of respect, reflection and community spirit was evident in every face.

At Flora Hill, many residents shared their connection to the day, including Ray, who reflected on the sacrifice of his grandson who

is currently serving his country. A craft group also knitted poppies for the event and commemorated a late resident, Pierce Grenfell, who served in WWII.

“It was a meaningful day of reflection and community spirit,” said Georgia-Rose, Care Support Coordinator at Flora Hill. “It’s touching to see residents come together, share their stories and feel part of something bigger.”

Remembrance Day at mecware homes offers older Australians a chance to honour sacrifice, reflect on their own connections to service and feel part of a shared community. It was a day of gratitude, reflection and remembrance that resonated long after the ceremonies ended.







# A *new* chapter begins at John Hood Terrace

On 19 November, mecwacare celebrated the grand opening of John Hood Terrace, our newest aged care home in Richmond. A ribbon-cutting ceremony led by CEO Anne McCormack and Life Governor John Hood marked the official opening, with residents, families and guests joining the celebrations.

Named in honour of long-serving board member John Hood, who dedicated 23 years to mecwacare, the \$40 million redevelopment has transformed the former Richmond Hill Hotel. Its original 1850s façade has been restored, while inside, 77 suites across five levels offer light-filled, modern spaces designed for comfort, connection and independence.

Early residents are already enjoying life at John Hood Terrace, including Yvonne, who moved in on day two of John Hood Terrace's opening. "Everybody's been very good to me here – it's just so relaxed and everything is done for you," she said. Yvonne also appreciates the thoughtful design of her room. "It's spacious and there's plenty of storage. I get the morning sun and I enjoy the greenery outside my window. It's a good spot to be lazy!"

For another resident, Wendy, the best part of moving to John Hood Terrace is staying in the

neighbourhood she has called home for 30 years. "Richmond has been very nice to me in so many ways and I'm so happy to remain here," she said. "I love that John Hood Terrace is just around the corner from where I lived and all my family are close by."

With its blend of heritage charm, modern design and person-centred care, John Hood Terrace is already becoming a home that residents are proud to call their own.

***Photos: Top left: CEO Anne McCormack with resident Yvonne***

***Top right: Life Governor John Hood with Christine Hood and Anne McCormack***

***Middle left: Life Governor Barry Fenton with Board Chair Ian McHutchison and Company Secretary Lyndal McNamara***

***Middle right: Life Architecture Director Josh McAlister with Bek Parker and Rob Nowak from Total Construction.***



# Brewing *confidence* at Fisher Street Centre

Five enthusiastic participants from Fisher Street Centre have spent the past six months mastering the art of coffee-making, proudly graduating from their barista training course at a Learner Achievement Celebration held at Pines Learning on 27 November.

The program is part of Fisher Street's commitment to expanding employment pathways for participants, complementing the TAFE courses already offered. The idea for the course began through a connection with a parent who works at Pines Learning, opening the door for a hands-on program focused on building real-world skills in a supportive environment.

Across the first half of the program, participants learned the essentials of barista work — grinding beans, milk texturing, making different types of coffees and developing customer service skills. The second half shifted toward the commercial side of running a café, giving participants a taste of workplace expectations and the confidence that comes with understanding the full process.

They attended training every Friday from July and quickly formed a tight-knit group.

Beyond the skills, the experience has empowered participants to step into new possibilities. Running



the training café, practising service and gaining practical qualifications have helped them feel more capable, independent and work-ready.

Their graduation marks not only the end of a course, but the beginning of new opportunities — each cup brewed, a step toward greater confidence and community connection.

**“They always finish the day excited about what they’ve accomplished,” said Lawrence. “One participant is especially enthusiastic about the possibility of working in a café and the opportunities it could bring.”**

***Photos: Above: Participants Sean, Jesse, Gayani and Annie Rose with Disability Support Worker Arelysv. Right: Gayani.***







# Celebrating our volunteers

Volunteers are at the heart of mecwacare. This year, two remarkable contributors were recognised for their service, compassion and commitment to their communities.

At the Caulfield Volunteer Awards on 25 November, Marianne Peisi from Jubilee House was honoured for her outstanding contribution to the lifestyle program. With more than 25 years' involvement with Dogs Victoria, she now brings her therapy dog, Zakara, to support residents through one-to-one visits and monthly group pet therapy sessions.

Marianne's visits are calming and uplifting, offering emotional, tactile and social benefits that enrich residents' wellbeing. She also runs educational demonstrations on Zakara's training, giving residents a chance to connect, learn and enjoy time together.

At the Stonnington Volunteer Awards on 30 October, Sonia Goubbran was recognised as a finalist for her exceptional commitment to the Stonnington community for 23 years. Sonia is well known at the Malvern East Op Shop, where she

has built strong relationships with customers and contributed to a warm, welcoming environment.

Over the past year Sonia has also made a meaningful impact through the Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme, forming a genuine connection with her matched resident through weekly visits. Recently, she expanded her volunteering to Noel Miller Centre, supporting residents in lifestyle activities and becoming a familiar, friendly presence.

Together, Marianne and Sonia embody the generosity and community spirit that strengthen our programs and enrich the lives of the people we support. We are grateful for everything they bring to mecwacare.

**Photos: Left: Volunteer Marianne and her furry companion Zakara with MP David Southwell  
Top right: Zakara with resident Elizabeth  
Bottom right: Volunteer Sonia Goubbran.**

# Spring racing *carnival*

The Spring Racing Carnival brought colour, excitement and some friendly competition to our aged care homes this year, with residents and staff embracing the spirit of the season through fashion, festivities and a touch of racing nostalgia.

Across the homes, Oaks Day was a standout. Residents and staff dressed in their finest outfits, with fascinators, florals and handmade hats adding flair to the celebrations. Many homes hosted special luncheons, while others organised fashion parades where residents proudly showcased their outfits and the craftwork involved in making their headpieces.

At Trescowthick Centre, residents were thrilled by a visit from a miniature pony, whose arrival instantly became the highlight of the day. Gentle pats, photos and plenty of smiles filled the courtyard as residents enjoyed the chance to meet the tiny visitor.

O'Mara House added a special touch to their celebrations thanks to a resident and their family who brought in memorabilia from their years training and racing horses. Their collection included stories from the 1969 Melbourne Cup, where their horse Rain Lover competed. Residents were captivated by the history and storytelling, leading to lively conversations about past races and favourite Cup memories.

At John Atchison Centre, residents enjoyed both a Melbourne Cup sweep and a roaring fashion show. Ladies strutted down the makeshift runway to loud cheers, rounds of applause and even bubbles from a bubble gun, showcasing their style in true Carnival style.

As one of the year's most memorable occasions, these celebrations reminded residents of the joy of coming together, with every moment filled with fun, friendship and community spirit.

***Photos: Bottom left: Oaks Day luncheon at Annie's Court***

***Bottom middle: Facility Manager Santosh presenting certificates to the winners of the Horse Sweep***

***Top right: Residents Wallis and Helen at Trescowthick Centre***

***Middle: Flora Hill residents during their Fashions on the Field competition***

***Bottom right: Residents and staff at John Atchison Centre.***











# Celebrating *Diwali* and Tihar

October was a vibrant month of celebration at mecwacare, as residents and staff came together to mark Diwali and Tihar. Across our homes, colourful attire, music and dancing filled the air, while tables were laden with traditional sweets and dishes lovingly prepared by our kitchen teams.

Many residents happily posed for photos in traditional attire brought by staff, some wearing such outfits for the very first time. Some celebrations also featured live music, including a local Nepalese band at Flora Hill, adding extra energy and joy to the festivities.

Diwali, celebrated by Hindu, Sikh, Jain and other South Asian communities, is known as the Festival of Lights and symbolises the triumph of light over darkness and good over evil. Tihar, a five-day festival celebrated by the Nepalese, honours family, animals and deities. For our communities,

these festivals offer a chance to share culture, reconnect and enjoy one another's company.

With a workforce representing 89 nationalities and more than 100 languages, mecwacare reflects a wide range of traditions and backgrounds. These celebrations highlighted that diversity and reminded everyone of the warmth, care and connection at the heart of our homes.

Thanks to the dedication of staff and volunteers, residents were able to fully immerse themselves in the festivities, creating memories to treasure.





**With 89 nationalities  
and over 100 languages,  
mecwacare embraces  
a rich diversity of traditions  
and backgrounds.**

*Photos: Top left: Diwali festivities at John Atchison Centre*

*Top middle: Celebrations at Wahroonga*

*Top right: Rositano House staff*

*Middle: Allanvale staff*

*Bottom: Corporate Services staff.*





# 70 years of love

Love and togetherness were in full bloom this spring as two couples at mecwacare marked 70 years of marriage.

Husband and wife Thomas and Judy celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary on 8 October at Noel Miller Centre in Glen Iris. Surrounded by family and friends, the couple enjoyed a cheerful afternoon tea and received congratulatory letters from the King, the Governor-General and the Prime Minister.

Thomas and Judy first met in 1952 at a dance at their local tennis club in Perth. Judy was 18 and Tom 19. Three years later, they married and went on to raise two children. Tom's career as an accountant took the family from Perth to Darwin and across the globe, before they eventually settled in Malvern in the 1980s. Today, they are grandparents to four and great-grandparents to one. Reflecting on their journey, Judy shared, "We feel very fortunate to be at the Noel Miller Centre to continue our life together."

On 12 November, David and Joan celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary at mecwacare Wahroonga. David had once quietly mentioned to Care Support Coordinator Ginny that Joan had always hoped to enjoy a lobster salad for dinner. Remembering Joan's wish, Ginny and the team surprised them with fresh lobster from Ballarat Seafoods and a beautiful cake. The couple were overjoyed and grateful for the thoughtful celebration.



David and Joan have four sons, seven grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. They remain actively involved in the Wahroonga community, with David enjoying daily pool games with friends and Joan working in her garden group and tending to her beautiful display of plants.

At mecwacare, couples like Thomas and Judy, and David and Joan, are supported to continue living side by side in a caring, comfortable environment, showing that enduring love can thrive at every stage of life.

**Photos: Top: Joan and David celebrating their anniversary at Wahroonga  
Bottom: Thomas and Judy surrounded by loved ones at Noel Miller Centre.**







# Genesis Abi brings more joy and *connection*

mecwacare is taking another exciting step in its innovation journey, extending its partnership with Australian technology company Andromeda to introduce the next-generation humanoid companion, Genesis Abi, across its homes in Victoria.

Co-designed with mecwacare, Genesis Abi builds on the success of Andromeda's much-loved companion robot, Abi. The upgraded model features advanced multi-lingual capabilities, refined listening skills and a specialised mode designed to better support people living with dementia. These enhancements help create more meaningful, emotionally intelligent connections for residents.

A key new feature is Genesis Abi's autonomous mode, which allows care teams to plan her daily schedule and enable her to move independently throughout each home. From assisting with group activities to spending one-on-one time with residents, Genesis Abi provides a supportive presence that helps staff focus on more complex care needs.

The introduction of Genesis Abi reflects mecwacare's dedication to enriching the lives of residents through care, connection and innovative solutions. Early experiences across 10 homes have shown the positive impact of the original Abi model, with residents becoming more engaged, more social and more willing to participate in shared moments.

By rolling out Genesis Abi, mecwacare is taking another significant step in its digital transformation. The new technology enhances the experiences of residents, clients and staff while offering valuable insights to guide future developments and innovations.

***Photo: Resident Faye from Trescowthick Centre enjoying Abi's bubble magic.***

## CREATIVE SUBMISSION

# Dorothy's Creative Touch

Dorothy has been a much-loved resident at John Atchison Centre for the past year and a half. She enjoys gardening, dancing, singing and arts and crafts, but sometimes she likes to follow her own creative path.

Recently, Dorothy began transforming second-hand denim into unique pieces for her great-granddaughter, Eleni. She carefully selected buttons and embellishments, adding her signature flair. Dorothy is confident Eleni will adore them, and we certainly do too.

Born in Castlemaine during the war, Dorothy showed resilience from an early age, overcoming challenges and forging her own path. She eventually settled in Melbourne, where she worked in a news agency and later ran a small shop in Keilor, selling women's and children's clothing while also providing dry cleaning services. A lifelong learner, she returned to education at 40 and went on to work as a welfare officer, supporting her community.

Now at John Atchison Centre, Dorothy feels right at home. Surrounded by supportive staff, she is free to explore her passions and share her creativity with those around her.

These photos capture Dorothy's warmth, her artistic flair and the joy she brings to everything she touches, a beautiful reminder of the vibrant spirit our residents bring to the community.

**Photos: Top: Dorothy tending to her beautiful garden. Bottom: Her recent craft project.**



## 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](mailto:media@mecwacare.org.au)**

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



# Wordsearch

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CREATIVITY  
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INNOVATION  
FASCINATOR  
BARISTA

COMMITMENT  
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HERITAGE  
ANNIVERSARY  
REMEMBRANCE

BIRTHDAY  
MILESTONE  
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\* T's and C's apply.

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Elstoft House residents were delighted to receive handmade Christmas cards from Sacred Heart students.



Resident James, an American at O'Mara House, brought a taste of home by baking pumpkin pies for Thanksgiving.



Our team had a blast at SpringFest in Ballarat, connecting with the local community.



Halloween fun at Fisher Street Centre! Staff and participants went all out with their costumes.



John Atchison Centre residents enjoyed a scenic trip to Geelong Beach and a fun train tour.

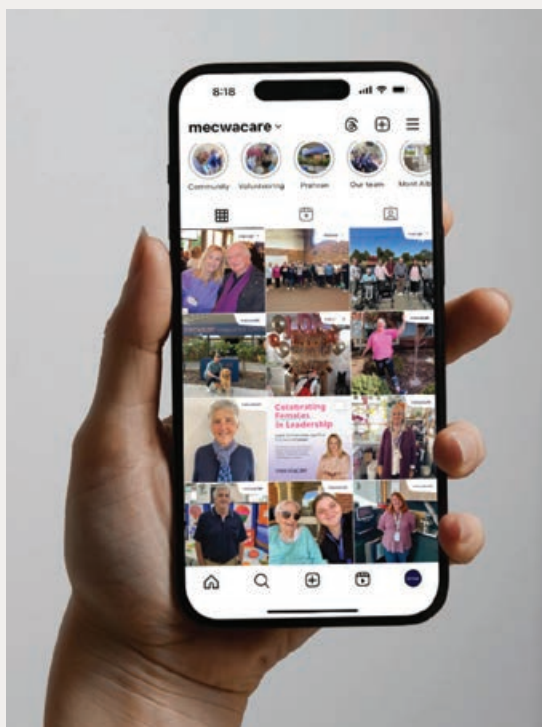
## Wordsearch solution

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The Pines Retirement Village hosted a Paint and Sip event as part of Seniors Festival, which was a big hit!





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



Instagram

## Social media spotlight

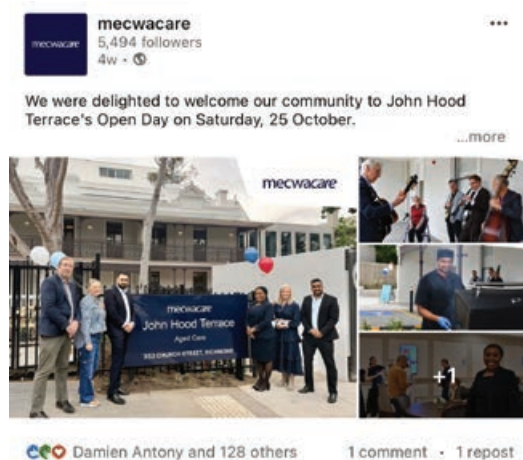
Join our #caringcommunity to learn more about the wonderful people of mecwacare, along with exciting activities across our aged care homes, retirement villages and community centres.



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