



Information Handbook

Home and Community *Services*

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Welcome

It's my pleasure to welcome you to mecwacare. We're proud to support you in living the life you choose and this handbook will help guide you through the care and services available to you.

For more than 65 years, mecwacare has served the community with compassion, commitment and a genuine passion for care. As a not-for-profit, non-denominational organisation, we exist solely to make a positive difference in people's lives.

Caring is at the heart of everything we do. Our mission is to empower individuals to live with purpose and dignity through high-quality clinical care and meaningful lifestyle choices. We are guided by our core values of caring, accountable, respectful and ethical, which shape every interaction and service we provide.

Across Victoria, we offer a wide range of services including residential aged care, in-home care, community services, retirement living and affordable housing for older people and individuals with a disability. Every year, we grow our reach to support more people, always with a focus on building strong, trusting relationships.

Our staff and volunteers form a dedicated and close-knit support network. We work in partnership with you, ensuring that care decisions are made together and your voice is always heard. Our team includes experienced nurses, allied health professionals and support workers who are committed to continuous learning and delivering exceptional care. As an organisation, we continually strive to improve and deliver excellence in care

using technology, making our processes easy, and providing clinical and non-clinical training and development of our staff

Whether you're accessing care at home or in one of our aged care residences, or are living in one of our retirement villages, we're here to support you through every stage of your life. We focus on maintaining independence for as long as possible and on being there for you with gentle, expert support, and more complex clinical care whatever is needed when its needed.

At mecwacare, we believe every stage of life holds opportunities for connection, joy and growth. From delicious meals and enriching activities to social outings and personalised support, we are here to help you live your life your way.

Thank you for choosing mecwacare. We're honoured to walk alongside you on your care journey with empathy, professionalism and respect.

Warm regards,



Anne McCormack
Chief Executive Officer
mecwacare



Follow us on



Proudly a not-for-profit, non-denominational charitable organisation

Information in this handbook is current at the time of publication and is subject to change.

Purpose, vision and values

Our Purpose

Partnering with the elderly and people with a disability to live fulfilling and purposeful lives.

Our Vision

Enhancing life changing experiences with our community.

Our Values

Our values are at the centre of everything we do:

- **Caring**
- **Accountable**
- **Respectful**
- **Ethical**

We passionately live these values through:

Proactive and compassionate care and services.

Responsible and professional conduct.

Empathetic and thoughtful communications.

Honest and fair partnerships.

Strategic Priorities

1. Co-located and drive synergies between services to meet growth aspirations.
2. Innovate and adopt solutions that positively impact the consumer experience.
3. Grow, develop and retain a highly engaged and skilled workforce.
4. Maintain the financial viability of the organisation within a social, environmental and governance agenda.
5. Explore a research and advocacy agenda for the rights of the aged and disability community.

Our Model of Care

Our Guiding Principles

Everything we do is guided by our core values of **Caring, Accountable, Respectful, and Ethical**. These values shape our commitment to delivering high-quality, compassionate care and support to the people who rely on us.



Our staff and volunteers

At mecwacare, our team is made up of skilled, qualified professionals who are dedicated to delivering safe, respectful and high-quality care that aligns with our person-centred model of care.

We carefully recruit staff with the qualifications and experience to meet your needs and preferences. We also invest in ongoing training and professional development to ensure our team remains knowledgeable, capable and caring.

All staff and volunteers follow the *Code of Conduct for Aged Care*, upholding the highest standards of integrity, safety and respect.

Professional boundaries

To maintain trust and provide consistent, high-quality care, our staff and volunteers follow clear professional boundaries. This means they:

- Do not share personal phone numbers, addresses, or email addresses

- Do not engage on social media with clients or representatives
- Always communicate in a respectful and courteous manner

Our staff and volunteers are not permitted to witness legal documents or be named as executors or beneficiaries in Wills if their relationship with you began through mecwacare.

While we know strong bonds may form, staff must not accept personal gifts, gratuities, or favours. In limited situations, small gifts under \$20 may be accepted if they reflect cultural or social customs, but these must be declared in line with mecwacare's Gifts and Entertainment Policy.

Thank you for helping us maintain a safe, respectful and professional environment for everyone.



Our values:

Caring.

Accountable.

Respectful.

Ethical.





Planning your services

At mecwacare, we are dedicated to supporting your right to make informed choices about your care. This includes how services are delivered, who is involved and when and how they participate. Your preferences and rights are always at the heart of what we do.

We see you as a partner in the ongoing assessment and planning of the care and services that support your health and wellbeing. Together with you and your nominated representatives, we develop a personalised care plan based on your needs, goals and preferences. We use a 'Wellness and Reablement' approach that focuses on maintaining your independence and quality of life.

Your care plan outlines the goals that matter most to you, along with the services and actions that will help you achieve them. You will receive a copy of this plan, please keep it in your mecwacare folder, as it helps guide our staff in delivering the best possible care for you. Your plan will be reviewed regularly to ensure it continues to meet your evolving needs.

We value your involvement in every step of the journey. Your preferences about how and when care is delivered are always respected. If your situation changes, we'll work with you to review and update your care plan.

We also understand that care relationships can take many forms. You have the right to decide who you want to involve in your care. We support and respect your choices and encourage your nominated representatives to participate in your care planning and delivery as much as you'd like.

At your request, we will make sure that your nominated representatives are:

- Acknowledged, valued and treated with respected as individuals
- Receive support and recognition in their role as your carer or advocate
- Encouraged and included in planning, managing and delivering your care and services, when appropriate.

Supporting your personal values and relationships

We recognise that sexual health and intimacy are important parts of life and wellbeing, no matter your age, background or living arrangements. You have the right to express your personal preferences, needs and relationships in a safe, respectful, and private environment. If you'd like, we're here to support open, respectful conversations about how your care plan can reflect and support this aspect of your life.

Ensuring you feel heard and understood

If you speak a language other than English, we can help you access interpreter and translation services to ensure your voice is always heard. This includes assistance with understanding and translating mecwacare documents, if needed.

You can also contact the **Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 131 450** for support.



Your life, your choices

At mecwacare, we aim to provide care and services at times that work best for you. Our team will work with you to plan visits around your daily routines and personal commitments.

Your care plan is developed in consultation with you and updated regularly as your needs or preferences change. Our goal is to support your independence, wellbeing and quality of life so you can keep doing the things you love.

We'll also discuss any specialist referrals that may be needed and always seek your permission, especially if there's a cost involved.

Need to reschedule?

We understand that plans change. If you're not available at the time of a booked service, please let us know at least 24 hours in advance so we can reschedule. If you're not home at the time of your scheduled service, we will:

- Try to call you
- Contact your case manager or emergency contact if there's no answer
- In some cases, notify the police to ensure your safety

Delays and arrival times

Sometimes staff may be delayed due to traffic or an earlier appointment taking longer than expected. Please allow up to **one hour after your scheduled time** before calling our office. If there's a delay, we'll do our best to keep you informed.

Extreme weather or emergencies

During events like extreme heat or bushfires, we may need to:

- Change the time or location of services
- Reschedule appointments to earlier in the day
- Cancel or modify services in high-risk areas

We'll always communicate any changes with you.

Accidental damage

Our staff take care in your home, but accidents can happen. mecwacare is not liable for damaged or broken items during routine service delivery. Please ensure your home contents insurance is up to date.

Need additional services?

mecwacare offers a wide range of services, including:

- In-home and community support
- Day programs and allied health
- Respite and permanent residential care
- Retirement living and affordable housing

To learn more, see page 23.

Safe use of antimicrobials

Antimicrobials like antibiotics help treat infections, but correct use is essential to avoid resistance and side effects. While mecwacare may not manage your medication directly, we support safe practices:

- Promote good hygiene and skin care to reduce infection risk
- Encourage you to speak with your GP to understand when and how antimicrobials should be used

If you have concerns about antimicrobial use, we welcome open discussion with your care team.



Advance care planning and palliative care

We understand that conversations about end-of-life care can be difficult. At mecwacare, we're here to support you every step of the way with sensitivity, respect and understanding.

Advance care planning gives you the opportunity to express and document your preferences for future care, ensuring that your values and wishes are

honoured. This planning helps guide the delivery of palliative care services that align with what matters most to you.

If you have any questions or would like to talk about your options, our caring team are here to help. We're committed to providing the support you need to make informed and confident decisions.



Your safety and wellbeing

At mecwacare, your safety, and that of our staff, is our top priority. We're committed to providing a safe and respectful environment in your home and ask for your support in reducing any risks.

What we do:

- Conduct a safety check of your home during your first visit and annually, or as needed
- Discuss any hazards with you and explore solutions
- Work with you to manage risks and keep everyone safe

Staff safety monitoring

Our in-home staff use a mobile app to log arrival and departure times. This helps us ensure staff are safe and providing care as scheduled.

Your role in a safe home:

Our staff will not enter a property if they feel at risk of injury or harm due to people, pets, or environmental conditions in the home. To support a safe workplace, we kindly ask that you:

- Keep walkways clear and accessible
- Secure rugs, mats or loose flooring
- Allow safe access to the areas where staff work
- Understand that staff must keep their shoes on for safety (alternative plans can be discussed during your assessment)
- Remove any trip hazards, where possible

Respectful interactions

We ask that all interactions remain respectful. Staff cannot perform tasks outside your agreed care plan. If inappropriate behaviour occurs including verbal or physical threats, services may be paused or cancelled for everyone's safety.

Smoke alarms and emergency readiness

By law, working smoke alarms must be installed before our staff can visit. Please test your alarm regularly and replace batteries yearly. We also recommend keeping a fire extinguisher, fire blanket, and first-aid kit in your home.

If you have any questions or need help addressing safety concerns, our team is here to support you.

Be prepared, stay safe

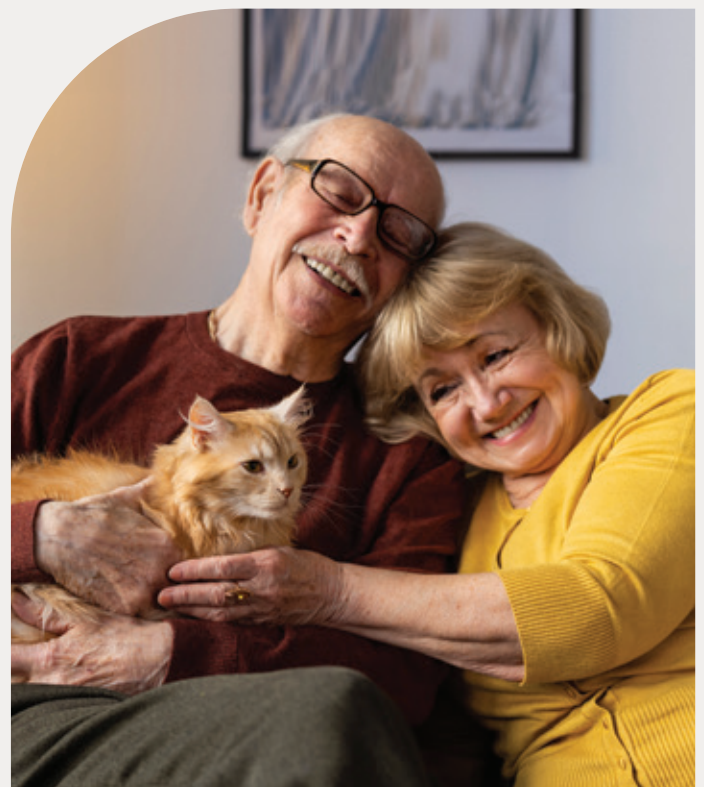
Emergencies like bushfires, floods and severe weather can happen at any time. For up-to-date alerts and advice in Victoria, visit **Vic Emergency** via their website, app or social media.

We encourage all clients to create a personal emergency plan including knowing when to leave, where to go, how to get there and what to take.

Need help? Ask our team, we're happy to provide a template. If you live in a high-risk bushfire area, the safest choice during **Extreme or Catastrophic** fire danger days is to leave early, either the night before or first thing in the morning.

Pets

We understand pets are part of the family. To ensure the safety of our staff, any potential risks will be assessed and we'll work with you to agree on appropriate arrangements. If needed, we may ask that pets be restrained or placed in another room during visits. This helps create a calm and safe environment for everyone.



Smoking

mecwacare staff are not permitted to smoke while at work, including during visits to your home or when accompanying you in the community. To support a healthy space for everyone, we kindly ask that:

- No one smokes (including e-cigarettes) **for at least 30 minutes before** a scheduled visit
- Smoking does not occur **while staff are present**
- If you are a smoker, please air out your home before your appointment

For safety reasons, services may be paused or cancelled if smoking occurs during a visit. We also recommend using high-sided ashtrays or sealed containers for safe disposal of cigarette butts.

At our day centres, please use designated smoking areas only.

Alcohol

Alcohol is not permitted at mecwacare community centres. For home care, we ask that no alcohol be consumed before or during visits. Services may be postponed or cancelled if anyone present is intoxicated.

Infection control

Good hand hygiene is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of infection. Please provide a clean, dry hand towel and liquid soap for staff to use during their visit.

Our staff wear single-use gloves when there's a risk of contact with blood or other body fluids.

If you or someone in your household has symptoms of a contagious illness such as COVID, influenza, or gastroenteritis — please let us know before your scheduled visit. This helps us take the right precautions to protect your health and the wellbeing of our staff.

Electrical safety

All electrical equipment our staff use must be in good condition, free from damage or exposed wires. When using portable devices, staff always connect them to power points with safety switches.

For their safety, staff will not use portable heaters or radiators in bathrooms or other wet areas. We kindly ask that any heaters in these spaces be wall or ceiling mounted.

Cleaning products and chemicals

At mecwacare, we prioritise the health and safety of our clients and staff, as well as protecting the environment. We prefer cleaning products that are:

- Environmentally friendly e.g., biodegradable
- Ethical (not tested on animals, no animal ingredients, Australian made and owned)
- Multi-purpose, to reduce the number of different chemicals used

We also recommend using microfibre cloths to make cleaning easier and reduce chemical use.

For safety reasons, our staff cannot use chemicals classified as hazardous or dangerous (as noted on product labels), including those containing bleach, ammonia, methylated spirits, or many oven cleaners.

Staff will only use labelled products and will never mix chemicals. Please keep all cleaning products in their original packaging. All products will be used strictly according to the manufacturer's instructions.







Looking after everyone's safety

Your safety and that of our staff, is very important to us. That's why we check for any manual handling risks or hazards during your first visit and continue to review them regularly. Our team is trained to follow your personalised care plan and use the right equipment for each task. This ensures you receive safe, high-quality care every time.

What is Manual Handling?

Manual handling involves activities like lifting, lowering, pushing, pulling, carrying, holding or restraining something. These tasks are a common cause of injury for staff providing home and community-based care.

To keep everyone safe, proper techniques and equipment must be used. If a lifting machine is needed, two people are required to assist. This may include a trained and physically able family member or carer, if available.

To reduce manual handling risks, our staff may adjust how tasks are done. For example, they might:

- Carry lighter loads
- Fill buckets only halfway
- Ask that equipment be stored within easy reach (between shoulder and mid-thigh height) rather than on the floor

These simple changes make a big difference in ensuring tasks are done safely for both you and our team.

How we reduce manual handling risks

To help keep everyone safe, mecwa care staff may adjust the way certain tasks are carried out to minimise the risk of strain or injury. This may include:

- Cleaning floors on hands and knees
- Wringing mops by hand
- Standing on chairs, tables, or unstable steps
- Changing light bulbs
- Moving or lifting heavy items or furniture
- Lifting people or helping them off the floor without a hoist

Our staff always follow your care plan and will support your independence wherever possible.

If you need help getting in or out of bed or a chair, we'll assess your needs and make sure you have the right support in place.

Equipment safety

To keep everyone safe, any manual handling equipment in your home, like electric hoists, must be well maintained. As the owner, you're responsible for:

- Regular servicing to meet safety standards
- Ensuring lifting slings are less than five years old
- Providing up-to-date maintenance records

If equipment is unsafe or hasn't been serviced, our staff won't be able to use it.

For clients receiving domestic assistance

If our staff help with household tasks, please note the following:

- You'll need to provide cleaning equipment such as a vacuum, mop, and bucket
- Equipment must be lightweight, safe, and in good working order
- Please supply rubber gloves for cleaning tasks
- If cleaning is needed upstairs, equipment must already be stored there
- Cleaning tasks are done in 20-minute intervals to avoid strain
- Heavy mats will be cleaned around, not lifted
- Beds need to be accessible from both sides for safe making
- Staff are unable to turn mattresses

Helping you stay safe at home

Your safety matters to us. If something goes wrong, or nearly does, please tell your care worker. We have systems in place to respond quickly and learn from every incident. You'll always be supported to speak up and your feedback helps us keep improving safety for everyone.

Your privacy

We understand that your privacy is important to you and we care about protecting the privacy and security of your personal (including sensitive) information. We protect all personal information in accordance with Australian privacy laws.

You can find out more about our privacy policy at mecwacare.org.au and from the Privacy Statement signed as part of your application form.

To ensure we provide you with the correct level of service, we need to collect certain personal information, including sensitive information about you. This information enables us to process your applications, respond to your requests and provide you with care and services appropriate to your needs.

We only use your personal information that is reasonably necessary for one or more of our functions or activities (the primary purpose), a related secondary purpose that would be reasonably expected by you, or for an activity or purpose to which you have consented.

If you wish to access or correct your personal information, please contact our Privacy Representative.

All privacy complaints are taken seriously. If you have any concerns about our management of your personal information, please contact:

mecwacare Privacy Representative
1287 Malvern Road
Malvern VIC 3144
P 1800 163 292
E privacy@mecwacare.org.au

If we do not fulfill our obligations or you are not satisfied with the response from the Privacy Representative, you have the right to take the matter up with the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner on 1300 363 992.



Fees and accounts

Fees and accounts

If you have any difficulties with fee schedules and invoices, please contact our office and ask to speak with a manager.

Accounts will be sent to you or your nominated representative monthly. Fees can be direct debited from a nominated bank or financial account. You will be notified of any fee increases under the Aged Care Act.

Handling money safely

If you request a service that involves our staff handling your money, we will:

- Document any money handling arrangements in the care plan, eg: a shopping shift

- Provide a receipt every time money changes hands, including when change is returned
- Request a separate authority to perform banking on your behalf.

Please note staff cannot:

- Make transactions for you
- Use your debit or credit cards
- Accept a loan from you for any amount
- Lend money to you.

We remind you to keep your personal items safe.





Your feedback matters

We value your feedback and encourage you to take part in surveys, audits, and to share any concerns. Your input helps us improve the care and services we provide.

If there's ever something you're not happy with, such as feeling disrespected or concerned about any aspect of your care, please let us know. We're here to listen and work with you to make things better.

Have your say – join an Advisory Body

We're committed to delivering high-quality care and welcome your input to help us do even better.

You can get involved through:

- **Consumer Advisory Body (CAB):** Share feedback and suggestions about your care and services to help us tailor what we do to better meet your needs.
- **Quality Care Advisory Body (QCAB):** Help guide the quality of our care by contributing to discussions and reviews that influence key decisions. The group meets at least twice a year.

We invite Expressions of Interest (EOIs) for both groups each year - keep an eye out for details by mail or email.

Compliments, suggestions and concerns

We know we may not always get everything right but your feedback helps us do better. Whether it's a compliment, suggestion or concern, we welcome hearing from you or your representatives, without fear of negative consequences.

There are many ways to share your feedback:

- Speak directly with staff
- Fill out a green '**Have Your Say**' form
- Visit mecwacare.org.au
- Talk to a manager
- Take part in audits, surveys, meetings or face-to-face discussions

All concerns are handled respectfully, confidentially and as quickly as possible. The relevant Manager will work with you to address the issue.

If you feel your concern hasn't been resolved, please contact:

Feedback Management

P 1800 163 292 (freecall)

E complaints@mecwacare.org.au

You can also raise your concerns directly with the following agencies at any time:

Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission

P 1800 951 822

E info@agedcarequality.gov.au

NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission

P 1800 035 544

E ndiscommission.gov.au



Your rights and responsibilities

The new Aged Care Act introduces a **Statement of Rights**, a set of principles that clearly outline what older Australians can expect when receiving aged care services. Your Admission Officer will take you through your rights during the intake process.

At mecwacare, we are committed to delivering aged care that fully support these rights. They are designed to put your needs, preferences and dignity at the heart of the care you receive. The Statement of Rights helps ensure that all aged care providers, including mecwacare, deliver care that is respectful, safe and tailored to your individual needs.

This means you can expect:

- To be treated with respect and compassion
- To have your choices and preferences heard and valued
- To receive safe, high-quality care
- To be included in decisions about your care

The Statement of Rights creates a shared understanding between you and your care provider, helping us work together to achieve the best outcomes for your wellbeing.

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants

mecwacare is a proud registered NDIS provider with the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission. We're committed to supporting people with disability to live with dignity, respect and safety, free from abuse, exploitation and harm.

We do this by:

- Empowering you to make choices and have control over the support you receive
- Responding to concerns and managing complaints respectfully and promptly
- Promoting safe, high-quality services you can trust
- Following the NDIS Code of Conduct and Practice Standards
- Managing and reporting incidents, including abuse or neglect, to the NDIS Commission
- Encouraging positive behaviour support

- Ensuring you receive consistent, reliable support throughout your service agreement
- Explaining any unavoidable changes to your care and making sure alternative arrangements meet your needs, goals and preferences, with your agreement.

Advocacy Support

You know what's best for you and sometimes, having someone by your side can help make sure your voice is heard.

An advocate is there to support you, work alongside you, or act on your behalf to ensure your wishes and rights are respected. They can help you:

- Make informed decisions about things that impact your quality of life
- Understand your rights, responsibilities and available options
- Speak up or support you through a complaints process

An advocate might be a trusted family member or friend, or a trained professional from an advocacy organisation.

If you'd like more information or help finding an advocate, the services below may assist you:

Office of the Public Advocate **1300 309 337**

Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN)
1800 700 600

Senior Rights Victoria **1300 368 821**

Aged Care Information Line **1800 200 422**

Health Complaints Commissioner **1300 582 113**

Carers Victoria **1800 242 636**

Disability Advocacy Resource Unit **03 9639 5807**
or visit **daru.org.au**

NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission
1800 035 544 or visit **ndiscommission.gov.au**

These services are free and all information is confidential.

Our Services

Home Care *Services*

E intake@mecwacare.org.au

- Personalised support to help you remain independent and safely living at home.
- Trusted, reliable help with housework, maintenance, gardening, shopping, personal care, nursing and allied health.

Retirement *Living*

E retirementliving@mecwacare.org.au

- Secure, independent living in a vibrant and welcoming community.
- Contemporary, low maintenance homes, shared spaces, social activities and support when needed.

Residential Aged *Care*

E admissions@mecwacare.org.au

- Round-the-clock care from a dedicated and highly trained team.
- Tailored support that promotes independence, dignity and quality of life.
- Comfortable and homely facilities, chef prepared meals with engaging lifestyle programs.

Affordable *Housing*

E housing@mecwacare.org.au

- Housing designed to provide comfort, safety and independence for people with a low income who are over 65, or living with a disability.

Disability *Services*

E community@mecwacare.org.au

- Life and social skills-based programs to empower individuals living with a disability achieve their life goals.
- Dedicated team of highly trained professionals focused on compassionate care.

Community *Services*

E community@mecwacare.org.au

- Wide range of services, including social activities, support groups, exercise classes, arts, crafts, outings and carer assistance for wellbeing and community connection.

Op *Shops*

- Pre-loved items at budget-friendly prices, from clothing and kitchenware to books and toys, every purchase helps fund vital community programs in aged care and disability services.

Freecall 1800 163 292 • mecwacare.org.au

Follow us on



mecwacare is proudly a not-for-profit,
non-denominational charitable organisation that
has been caring for Victorians since 1959.

mecwacare

Freecall **1800 163 292** • **mecwacare.org.au**



Corporate Services

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E enquiries@mecwacare.org.au

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MEC-HC-001 / 201025



Registered
NDIS
Provider



Supported by the Australian Government
Department of Social Services. Visit the
Department of Social Services website at
www.dss.gov.au for more information.