

mecwacare

AUTUMN 2026

matters



CELEBRATING
25 YEARS OF

Partnerships

Annual Charity
Golf Day

page 4

International
Women's Day

page 10

70 year
love story

page 13

IN THIS *Issue*

Welcome to the Autumn edition of mecwacare Matters. In this issue, we celebrate the people, partnerships and stories that make our community so special.

Be inspired by Bob, a remarkable 92-year-old resident preparing for his fifth trek to Everest Base Camp, proving it's never too late to embrace a new challenge. We also mark a major milestone with highlights from our 25th Charity Golf Day, where generosity and community spirit came together to support people living with dementia.

Discover the power of connection through stories of friendship at The Pines and a beautiful 70-year love story from residents John and Mariam. We also share how personalised support is helping Rosa continue living independently at home while pursuing her passion for baking.

You'll find insights into the importance of nutrition in aged care, a celebration of International Women's Day, and a warm welcome to The School House Village in Maryborough as it joins the mecwacare family.

Finally, explore how gardens, nature and shared experiences are enriching lives and creating meaningful moments every day.

We hope you enjoy this uplifting collection of stories.

LETTER TO THE *Editor*

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

Email us at

fundraising@mecwacare.org.au

CONTENTS

- 3 92 and still climbing
- 4 Swinging for success
- 6 Growing together at The Pines
- 8 More than a meal
- 10 International Women's Day
- 12 Thriving at home in Torquay
- 13 A love story seven decades in the making
- 14 A warm welcome to The School House Village
- 15 Nature, friendship and purpose

ON THE COVER

James Nguyen from United Physiotherapy Group and mecwacare Executive General Manager, James Cramond on the green. See page 4.





92 and still *Climbing*

For many people, turning 92 is a moment to slow down. For Bob, a long-time resident at mecwacare’s Pascoe Vale Gardens Retirement Village, it’s another opportunity to take on a new adventure.

This November, Bob will embark on his fifth trek to Everest Base Camp in the Himalayas, a 10–12 day round trip that would challenge someone half his age.

Bob has called Pascoe Vale Gardens home for the past 18 years. His passion for trekking began at 77, soon after he and his late wife, Gloria, moved into the village.

“I’ve always been energetic,” Bob says. “I always need to be doing something.”

His first major trek was the Kokoda Trail. After completing it, Bob set his sights on an even bigger goal, Everest Base Camp.

“While you’re going up, you keep asking yourself, ‘why am I even doing this?’ But when you reach base camp, knowing that less than 50 per cent make it, you feel a deep sense of achievement.”

Family has joined Bob on some of his adventures over the years. Two granddaughters trekked with him in 2018, one son in 2024 and another in 2025.

Bob and Gloria had four children and their family has since grown to include eight grandchildren and soon 11 great-grandchildren.

Life at Pascoe Vale Gardens keeps Bob active and connected. He attends a daily coffee club, a group originally started by Gloria and her friends.

“When Gloria passed away, I stayed home for six months,” he says. “But the girls insisted I come back. Now I’m the only fella there – they’re like family.”

To prepare for his upcoming trek, Bob walks around 16,000 steps a day and uses the village gym each morning.

Asked why he’s heading back to Everest at 92, Bob smiles: “Because I can. I like a challenge and there’s still a bit more in me.”

**Photos: Left and bottom middle: Bob's many trekking adventures
Top middle: Bob with his granddaughter Eliza
Right: Bob in his garden**

Swinging for success

Now in its 25th year, the annual mecwacare Charity Golf Day continues to be our signature networking and fundraising event, bringing together businesses, community partners and supporters who share a common goal – improving the lives of older Australians in our care.

Held once again at the beautiful Heritage Golf and Country Club in the Yarra Valley, this year's event marked a special milestone as we celebrated a quarter century of golfing for a good cause. Despite some rainy weather, spirits were high as golfers arrived ready to enjoy a fantastic morning on the green, united by their support for the life-changing services mecwacare provides across Victoria.

Players took to the course for 18 holes of golf, enjoying friendly competition and the opportunity to connect with colleagues and

community partners in a relaxed setting. The event is always a highlight on our calendar, offering a chance to strengthen relationships while raising funds that directly support residents living in our aged care facilities.

Following the game, guests gathered at the Yarra Valley Lodge for a two-course lunch where the celebrations continued. The afternoon included the announcement of competition winners, as well as our ever-popular raffle and live auctions, which generated tremendous support from those in the room.





Thanks to the incredible generosity of our sponsors, community partners and guests, we are proud to announce that this year's event raised an outstanding **\$125,000**. These funds will directly contribute to enhancing the lives of residents across mecwacare aged care facilities, supporting our dementia care programs.

Congratulations to our first-place tournament winners – **Steve Balmforth, James Youlden and Simon Ciavarella from Kustom Living** – who delivered an impressive performance on the course.

Events like the Charity Golf Day would not be possible without the generous support of our sponsors. We extend our sincere thanks to our **Gold Sponsors – Alltech Ent, Recom Cleaning Pty Ltd, Aidacare Pty Ltd, Sheen Panel Service and FoodByUs; Silver Sponsors – United Physiotherapy Group, In2 Fire, Kustom Living**

and SJ Higgins Group; and Bronze Sponsors – MedSafe, LeasePLUS, Bunzl Australia & New Zealand, ERW Constructions, Spectrol, Southern Impact and Watson Young Architects – whose commitment played a key role in the success of the day.

For 25 years, mecwacare's Charity Golf Day has been more than a sporting event. It's been an opportunity for our community to come together, build meaningful partnerships and make a real difference to those in our care.

To everyone who played, sponsored, donated or participated in the auction and raffle – thank you! Your generosity and ongoing partnership ensure we can continue delivering the care, support and opportunities that help older Australians live with dignity, connection and purpose.

ANNUAL CHARITY **GOLF DAY** 2026

Congratulations
to our winners
**Kustom Living
Building & Design**



Growing *together* at The Pines

At mecwacare The Pines Retirement Village in Canadian, Ballarat, neighbours Mary and Annette have found a friendship that turns a place into a true home. They enjoy the comfort of familiar surroundings, the safety and support of their community and the joy of spending time doing what they love.

Annette moved to The Pines three years ago, while Mary has called it home for seven. Their shared interests quickly brought them together. From tending the community vegetable garden and exploring the neighbourhood, to enjoying coffees, dinners and happy hour with fellow residents. Nowadays, Mary drops by Annette's home almost every day and they make a habit of checking in on each other.

Their sense of community goes beyond their street. Both regularly visit former residents now

at mecwacare Wahroonga, just across the road, helping with small tasks, sharing meals and keeping in touch by phone.

Mary and Annette are also active members of the VIEW Club, which stands for Voice, Interest, and Education of Women. With five residents from The Pines involved, they sponsor nearly 15 children through The Smith Family and raise funds each year with activities like Christmas wrapping at the local shopping centre.



***Photos: Left, middle and top right: Annette and Mary enjoy being out and about
Top middle: Annette, Mary and Jenny
Bottom right: Ladies of the VIEW Club at The Pines***

Annette finds the work especially rewarding. "It's wonderful to see the children grow," she says, "and to hear about what they love and what they want to be."

For Mary and Annette, The Pines is more than a retirement village, it's a place where friendship, purpose and everyday joys flourish, supported by a caring and connected community.



Learn more about Retirement Living call us on **1800 573 950** or visit **mecwacare.org.au**



More than a meal

Food plays a vital role in our health, wellbeing and quality of life at every stage of life. As we grow older, nutritional needs can change, and maintaining a balanced diet becomes even more important in supporting physical health, cognitive function, energy levels and overall wellbeing.

At mecwacare, mealtimes are about much more than nutrition. Shared meals are often special social occasions where residents can gather, chat and enjoy each other's company. Sitting down together encourages conversation, connection and a sense of belonging. Simple moments that can significantly enhance emotional wellbeing and help reduce feelings of loneliness or isolation.

Our award-winning team of qualified chefs focus on creating dining experiences that reflect residents' cultural backgrounds, personal preferences and favourite dishes. To keep meals fresh and engaging, new menus are developed for each of our aged care homes every three months.

“Nourishing residents goes beyond simply providing meals. It’s about supporting health, celebrating individuality and recognising that food is one of life’s simple but powerful pleasures.”



Seasonal menus make the most of fresh, locally available produce and often reflect the cultural diversity of residents, as well as celebrations throughout the year such as Chinese New Year, Easter, Diwali and Christmas.

Food also carries deep emotional meaning. A familiar meal can spark memories, provide comfort and help residents feel more at home. That's why every menu is reviewed by a dietitian before being shared with residents through forums where they can provide feedback and suggest ideas.

By listening to residents and understanding their preferences, our team create menus that not only meet nutritional needs but also bring enjoyment and comfort.

As Hotel Services Manager Dinesh Subramani explains, “Nourishing residents goes beyond simply providing meals. It’s about supporting health, celebrating individuality and recognising that food is one of life’s simple but powerful pleasures.”

Photos: Left: Resident Santi enjoying a high tea at John Atchison Centre

Top middle: Resident Fenton and his wife Robyn sharing a Valentine's Day meal at Flora Hill

Bottom middle: Resident Keith enjoying a morning tea at Vincent House

Top and bottom right: mecwacare's fantastic Hotel Services team



Our Award Winning Team

Restaurant and Catering Association - State Award for Excellence 2025

- ★ Victoria and Tasmania Winner

Restaurant and Catering Association - National Award of Excellence 2025

- ★ National Winner
(across all Australian states)
- ★ National Gold Award of Excellence 2025

Luxlife Magazine Food and Drink Awards 2025

- ★ Best Aged Care & Community Meals Services 2025 – Australia
- ★ Resident Centred Hospitality & Innovation Excellence Award 2025



International *Women's* Day

International Women's Day, 8 March, is a global opportunity to recognise the achievements of women and reflect on the progress made toward gender equality.

In 2026, the United Nations theme is **'Rights. Justice. Action. For ALL Women and Girls.'**

It encourages communities and organisations to move beyond symbolic celebration and focus on real change, including stronger legal protections, equal access to justice and meaningful policy action.

Alongside this, global campaigns are promoting **'Give to Gain,'** highlighting the value of investing in women through education, mentorship, funding and leadership opportunities. The message is clear: when women are supported to succeed, everyone benefits.

At mecwacare, women make up the majority of our workforce and play an essential role across every part of the organisation. International Women's Day is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the more than **3,300 incredible women** whose skill, compassion and dedication help shape our communities every day.

While we're proud of the inclusive workplace we continue to build, we also recognise there is always more we can do to create fair opportunities for all.





**Photos: Left and top right: Noel Miller Centre team
Top left: CEO Anne McCormack and volunteer Madeline
Middle left: Rositano House team
Middle right: Gregory Lodge team
Bottom left: Celebrations at John Atchison Centre**

Thriving at home in Torquay

Support at home from mecwacare helps Rosa remain active and independent in the two-storey home she loves in Torquay. Warm and welcoming, Rosa always greets her care team with a smile and genuine kindness.

On a recent visit, she baked a batch of delicious Italian almond biscuits and served coffee to her Care Partner. It was a simple but heartfelt gesture that reflects the generosity Rosa shares so freely. True to form, she also encouraged her Care Partner to take the leftovers back to the office to share with the wider team.

Rosa is a talented baker and the proud owner of Rosa's Designs, a small business where she creates cakes for local markets. To help grow her passion, Rosa requested an iPad through her previous Home Care Package. Her Support Worker, Alicia – with whom she has built a close and trusting relationship – will help her learn how

to use it. The iPad will support her business while also helping her stay connected with family in Melbourne through recipes, photos and video calls.

More recently, Rosa explored physiotherapy with a mecwacare provider and reconnected with Jen, another local client she first met at a social support group. Their renewed friendship is a lovely example of how connections can grow through shared experiences.

Rosa's story highlights how personalised care, meaningful relationships and the right support can help older people continue doing what they love while living independently at home.



Do you need support at home? Chat to one of our friendly team on **03 8573 4980** or visit **mecwacare.org.au**





A love story *seven* decades in the making

At 91 and 88, John and Mariam are residents at mecwacare's Simon Price Centre, where their extraordinary love story continues – one that has spanned more than 70 years and crossed continents. This year, they celebrate their 65th wedding anniversary.

Their journey began in Kerala, South India, when John returned home after completing his medical degree at Melbourne University. With plans to pursue a surgical fellowship in London, his family had one priority: find him a wife. Family friends mentioned an exceptional young woman, Mariam, who had just completed her own medical degree.

When John and Mariam met at a friend's house, there was an instant connection. A proposal followed quickly, and they were soon married. John left for London while Mariam finished her hospital internship in India, spending six months apart before reuniting abroad. Even then, their careers often kept them in different towns, travelling through snow and cold to see each other on weekends.

Their professional journeys took them from London to Aberdeen, Singapore to Melbourne, and finally Bendigo, where John worked as a surgeon. Through career demands, health challenges, and raising their son, they nurtured a partnership built on love, trust, and commitment.

After John's retirement in 2008, family encouraged them to move closer to home in McKinnon. They settled in Kew and North Balwyn, enjoying gardening and their beloved dogs.

Now at Simon Price Centre, their days are filled with visits from family and long-time friends. With mecwacare's support, John and Mariam continue to share life together, their enduring love story thriving in a place they now call home.



A warm *welcome* to The School House Village

mecwacare is pleased to welcome **The School House Village in Maryborough** to our retirement living community, further strengthening our presence in regional Victoria. With this addition, we now offer 441 homes across seven retirement villages.

The School House Village is a special place, centred around a beautifully restored 1880s school house that reflects the rich history of the local community. Family owned for many years, the village was thoughtfully developed after the owners recognised the growing need for retirement living in the Maryborough area. Their vision created a welcoming and vibrant community where residents feel connected and at home.

The village's history and community spirit make it a natural fit for mecwacare. Our shared commitment is to support older Australians to age well while remaining close to the people, places and routines that matter most.

For older people in Maryborough, this means greater choice when it comes to retirement living close to home. For current residents, it ensures the community they value will continue to thrive, now supported by the experience, stability and resources of mecwacare.

With our established presence in nearby Ballarat and Bendigo, this addition also strengthens our ability to support older people across the wider region.

We look forward to getting to know residents and being part of the next chapter of this wonderful village community.

Nature, friendship and *purpose*

At Jubilee House, the garden is much more than a shared outdoor space – it's a place where residents connect with nature, each other and a sense of purpose. As part of mecwacare's lifestyle program, the garden supports wellbeing while encouraging everyday enjoyment and gentle activity.

Research shows that spending time in nature can reduce stress, improve mood and support mental health. For older people, even simple moments such as sitting among greenery or watching plants grow can help boost cognitive wellbeing and create a sense of calm.

For Roman, a resident and former psychologist, the garden is something he feels deeply passionate about. "People who disengage from nature can become isolated and unhealthy," he says. "Spending time outdoors can be very therapeutic."

Roman helped develop the garden, which now features a vibrant mix of vegetables, herbs, fruits and flowers. Carefully planned plantings offer both colour and practicality, with chillies, herbs and other produce occasionally making their way into meals.

"There's a deliberateness here," Roman explains. "People are encouraged to touch the leaves, smell the herbs and enjoy the textures and colours around them. It's about really being part of the space."



The garden has also become a place where friendships flourish. Bruce, who loved gardening before moving to Jubilee House, now tends a tomato plant just outside his room. Peter, a former farmer from Mildura, waters the garden each morning.

"We each have different approaches," Roman says, "but we've found a balance and built a great friendship."

Families also contribute, bringing organic fertiliser and sharing their gardening knowledge. "The community wisdom is beautiful," Roman adds. "People have so much to share."

Through initiatives like this, mecwacare's lifestyle team continues to create meaningful opportunities for connection, wellbeing and purpose every day.

We offer high-quality residential aged care throughout Victoria. Call **03 8573 481** or visit **mecwacare.org.au**



Help us do better

We welcome feedback from residents, clients, families and representatives about your experience with mecwacare.

Your feedback helps us understand what we're doing well and where we can improve. Whether it's a compliment, suggestion or concern, we take every comment seriously.

Your voice makes a difference and helps us improve the services we provide.



Scan the QR code to share your feedback online.

mecwacare.org.au

Follow us on

