

Cornerstone

VMCH

Specialist
school
with bright
future

Meet Nathan
and his blooming
business

Leading the way
with dementia
support

Edition One

“When you learn, teach.
When you get, give.”

- Maya Angelou

Publishing Details

Cornerstone magazine features articles, commentary and information about the services provided by VMCH to our clients, community and partners.

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St Paul's College Student



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The information in this publication has been prepared by VMCH (Villa Maria Catholic Homes) as a general guide to our services and operations. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, VMCH accepts no responsibility for any loss or inconvenience caused by reliance on the information set out in this publication. Please contact us if you require detailed information about any of our services. August 2019.

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Disability
Services

Now I have
my crew, it's
smooth sailing.

We help people of all ages and abilities become more independent and more involved with the community. We work side by side with our clients and their loved ones to uncover what that means for them. For Wayne, it's being on the water. So every Wednesday, with our support, he goes sailing. It's just one of the ways we help him live the life he chooses.



1800 798 921
vmch.com.au/disability

VMCH

A note from Sonya....



Welcome to the first edition of Cornerstone.

Cornerstone is our new magazine, bringing to you stories and information from across the many and varied services we offer, with news from the industry we work in. It's all about what we have in common, highlighting people, communities and friendships.

Our feature story is a subject close to my heart. Coming from Perth, we worked hard to develop a model of supporting people living with dementia called 'Care with Purpose'. Basing our practice on the principals of Montessori, the underlying methods used ensured we prepared a person's surroundings to be familiar. VMCH has just launched a new memory support unit, Cluny Memory Support House in Clayton. We have a dedicated team working on this residence which will support 12 individuals to live safely and comfortably in this specialised residential house, striving for better outcomes for people living with dementia.

It's the age of technology with smart phones and devices a constant companion to people of all ages. Although many parents bemoan their children's addiction to phones, technology has created so much potential in keeping people connected and reducing social isolation.

Our goal is to ensure all aged care residents have access to an iPad with training to support skills development. Read more about Ross Alcock and how he has used his skills to educate older people on how to use technology.

I sincerely hope you enjoy reading Cornerstone. There are so many more stories to come, but for now please enjoy reading about some of the wonderful people we have the pleasure of meeting every day.

Sonya Smart
Chief Executive Officer
VMCH

Have a question for us? Email:
cornerstone@vmch.com.au

Residents take the reins in memory support house

Residents with dementia will be encouraged to gain more independence in a new and innovative memory support house.

Below The open living area is bright and inviting

Twelve residents from Corpus Christi and St Catherine's have moved to the co-located Cluny Memory Support House, which has been refurbished to suit a Montessori style dementia care practice.

Unlike conventional aged care, the VMCH approach is based on a Montessori environment and is distinguished by people doing and participating. Montessori environments are rich in opportunities for individuals to do as much for themselves as they can. This can be as simple as making their own beds, a cup of tea or assisting with chores within the residence.

We have introduced our care practice to support people with dementia living in aged care residences across Victoria. It aims to support people in a practical, respectful and enriching way. Residents are encouraged to be as independent as possible; to have a meaningful place in their community, make choices and contribute to life in their home.

Corpus Christi's Residential Service Manager, Sarah Pryor, says the new environment is light, bright, fresh and innovative, but still intimate. "We have created a space which is designed in the Montessori approach," says Sarah. "There is a feeling of openness, with glass hallways and doors that can be opened by residents, it gives the illusion of going outside, providing a sense of freedom."

A feature of the memory support house are the visual aids which encourage residents to function independently in the space. This includes descriptive labels on drawers and doors, large name tags worn by all staff members, and tactile and brightly coloured furniture.





“We have created a space which is designed in the Montessori approach.”

To give purpose in their day, under the new care practice, residents will also be provided with opportunities to contribute to the running of the house. Normal everyday tasks such as the laundry, which can be washed, ironed and folded by the residents, and additional personalised activities are arranged to suit each resident's interests.

“We cater to residents' lifestyle needs and work around their day-to-day preferences. Of course if they don't wish to participate they don't have to,” says Sarah.

“There is full access to the kitchen; they can choose their own meals from a bain-marie, make a coffee or have a snack. This will enable a level of independence and add more function to their days.”

Sarah believes that this new approach, along with higher staff-to-resident ratios will lead to increased participation and an improvement in residents' quality of life. It is also anticipated that there will be a decline in disruptive behaviours and a reduction in the number of falls, due to the ability to better meet individual care needs.

“We are excited to welcome our first residents to the house. It's such a bright and inviting space, and we think there will be a number of great outcomes achieved through this environment, and the new VMCH Care Practice.”

Above A Cluny
Memory Support
House resident Martha
with VMCH Clinical
Manager Julie



Specialist school with bright future

Learn more about St Paul's College and its innovative educational programs by contacting the school on **9595 2470** or email **stpauls@vmch.com.au**



Above St Paul's College students enjoying their new library

“The whole school community is in awe of the buildings and grounds.”

Right Archbishop Peter Comensoli receives gift from school captain Zoe

Left New and specially designed playgrounds



VMCH's specialist school, St Paul's College has a proud history and is now looking forward to a bright future at its new campus in Balwyn.

St Paul's College relocated from its home of 62 years in Kew, to a modern and purpose-built campus in Balwyn, for the beginning of the 2019 school year. The school teaches students from Prep to Year 12 and welcomes children with a range of additional needs.

The new campus includes an Assistive Technology Centre, a Sensory Room, a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) centre, and specially-designed inclusive playgrounds. There is also a café and kitchen garden to help senior students develop vocational skills.

The school's principal, Tim Hemphill, said the new campus has been designed to use technology and modern design to support the learning needs of a diverse range of students.

“The whole school community is in awe of the buildings and grounds. We are all very excited with how the new site will continue to evolve over the coming months and years,” Tim said.

A proud history

The school was known as St Paul's School for the Blind when it opened its doors to students on February 12, 1957. Its founding principal, Brother Patrick O'Neill, was himself blind and a passionate advocate for the school and its students. He rallied community support for the school when little government funding existed for such enterprises.

As times changed, the school's community has responded and in the 1970s it expanded to teach children with other disabilities.

Today, St Paul's College offers innovative programs for students with a range of goals and needs. The school supports students who wish to access dual enrolments through its innovative Dual School Program. These students divide their school week between St Paul's College and a mainstream school of their choice.

The Bridging Program is another initiative that provides pre-schoolers with additional needs and extra support to develop their social and academic skills.

Melbourne Archbishop blesses St Paul's College

The College celebrated the official opening of the new campus with a visit and blessing by Melbourne Catholic Archbishop, Peter Comensoli, on February 28.

More than 200 people came along to mark the opening of the new campus. This included Victorian Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers, Luke Donnellan, Victorian Member for Kew, Tim Smith and Member for Box Hill, Paul Hamer. It was a proud day celebrating alongside students, families and supporters, both past and present.



Housing struggle for culturally diverse older people

Above VMCH Case Manager Amy with the Chens

When Yin Chen and his wife migrated to Australia in 1999, they assumed family ties were all the housing security they needed.

A few years later, a relationship breakdown with the couple's son and daughter-in-law saw the pensioners facing the prospect of homelessness.

Luckily, support through VMCH and the Assistance with Care and Housing (ACH) Program meant the Chens were able to secure permanent affordable housing in Hawthorn East, where they've lived for nearly 10 years.

Speaking through their VMCH Case Manager and translator, Amy Yuen, Mr Chen, aged 92, said he felt "depressed, frustrated and desperate" before moving to public housing. He cites Amy as one of the "most significant people in his life" since migrating.

Sadly, the Chen's story reflects research that older people from CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) backgrounds are at higher risk of becoming homeless.

The reasons are many... language barriers, a lack of knowledge in navigating Australian systems and services, and poorer overall socio-economic status compared to older Anglo-Australians, are some.

Amy, who says about 30 per cent of the 120 older people she supports through the ACH program are from CALD backgrounds,

believes the type of housing, its location and ongoing support from services is crucial for older people's long-term housing success.

Mr Chen, a passionate photographer, wanted to be close to his photography club and social network in Melbourne's eastern suburbs. Without this, Amy says the couple would have become socially isolated.

"The couple were referred to us through their Chinese social club, and photography is Mr Chens life. He said he cannot survive without his camera and taking photos."

"Finding a secure, affordable home was, above all, about staying together."

Amy said the Chens were one of the "lucky ones" and that more should be done to help reach older people from CALD backgrounds who are socially isolated and unsure of where to turn.

"Along with more public housing, we also need to ensure that once they are housed, there is enough social, emotional and financial support for people to live happy, healthy and longer lives. A big part of this is community groups and organisations working together to identify at-risk people and link them with relevant services."

There's no place like home

It's hard to believe anyone could be grateful for having a stroke. But Colleen Fagan is.

Without it, she would never have learned about Home Care Packages (HCPs), which have allowed her and her mother, Lorna, to remain living together in their Moama home.

HCPs are government-funded packages of care services designed to help older people remain living at home for longer.

Lorna is 95. Though fiercely independent and in relatively good health, her age has predictably slowed her down. She relies on her daughter Colleen, 63, as her full-time carer. It's a role Colleen has embraced – though it elicited much fear when she suffered a stroke two years ago.

"I was really worried because Mum couldn't have lived here on her own and of course she doesn't want to go into aged care."

Lorna says: "I started to panic as I didn't know what I was going to do. I really want to stay home for as long as possible."

A local nurse told the mother and daughter about VMCH and that we currently provide 1200 HCPs to older people across Victoria.

"I thank God for the stroke to be honest because otherwise we never would have found out about the help available," Colleen said.

Lorna is on a level three HCP and receives support with meals, home maintenance and gardening, taxi and fuel cards, occupational therapy and equipment, under the guidance of her HCP Case Manager.

"The package took all the stress and worry away from me... I couldn't speak highly enough of it."

For Colleen, the in-home respite is important. "When I've had to stay in the hospital overnight, VMCH has organised someone to come and stay with mum, it's a godsend."

Colleen has found knowledge of HCPs is virtually non-existent in her social circles.

"I have told people about it since and they'd never heard of them either. It should be advertised more and the waiting list should be cut. We were lucky and got in at the right time... but if people are waiting two years, within that time health can deteriorate and they might have to go into permanent care. It's so much nicer if you can stay at home. I do believe (HCPs) are the best thing that can happen for older Australians, that's for sure".



If you would like some more information on help at home with VMCH, call **1300 650 615**.

Left Colleen and Lorna Fagan at their Moama home

For your diary....



Op Shop Week

Monday 26th August is the start of National Op Shop Week! Grab a friend and shop for a bargain at one of our four locations: Balwyn, Heathmont, Ferntree Gully or Wantirna.



Dementia Awareness Month

September is Dementia Awareness month. Take the time to check in on a loved one or just learn more about how this debilitating condition affects more than 440,000 Australians every year.



Trentham Retirement Village

Looking for retirement living in Trentham? Take a tour of this brand new retirement village and get to know the locals! Call our sales partner, Harkin Property, today on 5424 1866, or join us for our next open day.



Volunteer Information Session

Thought about helping out as a volunteer, but not sure what to do? Come along to a volunteer information session! Upcoming dates are **14 August in Wantirna** and **10 October in Berwick**. Call 1800 036 377 or visit the website vmch.com.au/volunteer



Community Consultation

We know it's vital to understand the needs of our clients. If you are interested in contributing via our community consultations, please join us at an upcoming session. Visit yoursay.vmch.com.au for details.



Charity Week

16-20 September is Include a Charity Week. If you've ever thought about how to support a charity, then leaving a gift in your Will is a great way to help those in need for generations to come. Read more about it at vmch.com.au/bequests



Dell pays Wantirna residents a visit

Dell, the beloved VMCH pet therapy dog, has been busy visiting our aged care residents at Wantirna.

Dell was rescued three years ago and was trained by a current employee. She is now a valued part of the team and our residents always look forward to her visits.

With that face, who wouldn't!

What's On



people enjoy more activities and community connections as a direct result of volunteers.

Source: VMCH Annual Report FY18

Did you know?

In 2019, there is an estimated

447,115

Australians living with dementia.

Source: dhhs.vic.gov.au/ageing



bags of pre-loved donations from the local community and retirement living residents are collected by VMCH op shop drivers.

Source: VMCH Annual Report FY18



Kialla House gets a garden make over

Kialla House showed off the horticulture skills of clients, as they enjoyed a newly installed vegetable garden bed, wholly donated by Bunnings Shepparton.

Many of our clients have been orchardists, farmers or simply enjoyed gardening throughout their lives, and the garden allows them to reconnect with their interests.



Star of the Sea flag raising ceremony

Residents and guests gathered to watch their newly unveiled Australian flag fly for the first time.

Star of the Sea was one of three aged care residences in the region to receive a commemorative flag pole through a Department of Veterans Affairs grant program, coordinated by the Torquay RSL.

Get to know us....



Above Taryn loves her work as an OT

Starting out as a VMCH volunteer gave Taryn Muller a thirst for helping people to reach for their goals. Since then she's worked her way up from being a disability support volunteer to casual disability support worker, to occupational therapy student, to a fully-qualified occupational therapist.

What is your current role and what does it involve?

My role is predominately out in the community, supporting older clients and people living with disability to engage and participate in everyday tasks or activities that are meaningful to them.

Why did you choose to work for VMCH?

I chose to work for VMCH after starting out as a volunteer. I absolutely loved the environment, friendly staff and unique nature of the work and people we support. I feel that VMCH really value their clients and want to achieve the best outcomes for them.

Why is occupational therapy (OT) important for the people you support?

I believe that OT is an important profession as it fills and compliments a gap that other services don't provide. We do this through exploration of meaningful goals with a client that can be around any activity, task or role that occupies their time. A quote I love to tell my clients is that "the physiotherapist will assist you to walk again and the occupational therapist will help you get back your passion for dancing".

What is your future wish for the people you support?

I want them to have the opportunity to tell their story, identify goals that are meaningful to them and then be able to work with a therapist or support team to help to make this goal a reality.



Homelessness linked to elder abuse

There was shock across the world when a former business manager of the late comic book legend, Stan Lee, 95, was arrested on financial elder abuse charges.

It seemed extraordinary that such a respected and successful person was taken advantage of in this way.

Elder abuse, whilst seldom talked about, is more common than we know. It may be perpetrated by a family member, friend, neighbour or carer, and may take various forms, such as physical abuse, psychological or emotional abuse, financial abuse, sexual abuse or neglect.

Seniors Rights Victoria (SRV) says there is a growing acknowledgement of elder abuse as a form of family violence, but there is still a big disconnect when it comes to the highest incidence of abuse – financial.

Research undertaken by SRV has shown that financial abuse by a family member can result in an older person losing their home or their savings. Older Victorians, especially older women, are finding it increasingly difficult to find safe and stable accommodation and may be at risk of homelessness.

Elder abuse often leaves the victim ineligible for other forms of assistance, such as supported accommodation, due to assets they hold, or their

bank balance. This is often not enough to pay for private rental. According to SRV, the availability of affordable private rental has declined 40% overall in the last decade.

While there is a residential aged care system, it exists primarily to meet people's care needs. Older people who are in good health and don't have specific care needs may not be eligible for residential aged care. Also, it may not be what the older person wants, and it shouldn't be their only option just because they find themselves priced out of the rental market.

We believe older people have a wealth of knowledge and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. Sometimes the best we can do is be ready to listen.

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

is commemorated in June each year to highlight one of the worst manifestations of ageism and inequality in our society.

Its purpose is to raise awareness that it exists as a real issue in our community, and it can affect the livelihood of our most vulnerable residents.

Why I choose to give

Long-time donor Frank Dibble is bucking a downward trend of Australians giving to charity.

As of March 2018, 61 per cent of Australians gave to charity at least once over 12 months – a steep drop from the September 2011 figure of 70 per cent (Roy Morgan).

And while the reasons for this are varied (slow wage growth is among the most popular reported), the fact remains many charities rely on donations to keep their services alive.

As a non-profit organisation, we rely on community support to fund many of our capital work projects and programs where government funding is not available.

Our specialist school St Paul's College is a major beneficiary of community generosity. More than \$220,000 has been donated to develop a modern and accessible educational site at our Balwyn campus.

How your support has made a difference

You need only visit a handful of VMCH services to see some amazing results of the power of giving to support marginalised people.

As a non-profit organisation, we rely heavily on the generosity of the community to help see many capital works projects and programs transform from dreams to reality.

Here is a little flash back to some of our most successful appeals, which have raised a combined total of more than \$330,000 and made an enormously positive impact on the lives of the people we support.

2015

Austin Street Sensory Garden

More than \$30,000 was raised to build a sensory garden at Austin Street, VMCH's home for young people with acquired brain injuries.

The beautiful garden – including walkways for wheelchairs, raised planter boxes, a water feature, colourful flowers, and vegetables – has given residents a safe, tactile and relaxing environment to enjoy nature.

2016

Young Carer Mentor Program

Our Young Carer Mentor Program connects young carers in regional Victoria with volunteer mentors who provide them with much-needed support and social opportunities.

A few years ago, this program was on the brink of closure, meaning children as young as nine who were caring for a loved one would be left with little support. Thankfully, our community heeded the call and more than \$30,000 was raised to save the program.



Frank's daughter Melissa, aged 47, was a student of St Paul's College 37 years ago. Though it's been decades since she graduated, Frank has chosen to remain a donor and continue supporting the school that had a profound effect on his daughter.

"St Paul's was very special to Melissa; she learnt a great deal and to a very high standard. Without it (St Paul's), it's quite possible she'd be a totally different person, not the social woman she is, who is able to mix with people the way she does."

As well as ensuring future students have access to the "marvellous" education his daughter had, Frank, aged 88, says he also gives to show "appreciation" and stay connected to VMCH.

VMCH Fundraising and Events Manager Dianne Taylor says Frank is typical of our donors; older Victorians with a personal link to the organisation.

"We are so grateful for devoted donors like Frank who continue to support us year after year. With 54,000 registered charities in Australia, it's a very competitive field from which to attract donations. Our struggle to attract new loyal donors reflects a common

problem across the fundraising landscape."

Giving Australia reports many people do not give because of concerns about how the money would be used.

"Though we have specific fundraising campaigns to support one-off projects, people can also donate and specify a particular area, such as an aged care site or disability services, where they'd like their money to go."

Dianne also said simple measures such as checking a charity's legitimacy via the ACNC Charity Register could help ease worries.

"Giving to charity is a legacy that lives on for generations and we're very grateful to donors like Frank whose generosity means a brighter future for the people we support."

If you'd like to make a donation to VMCH, call (03) 9926 2066 or visit: vmch.com.au/donate



2017

Teach and Tumble Appeal

More than \$140,000 was raised to buy new digital resources and equipment for around 150 children with developmental delays and disabilities supported by our Early Childhood Intervention Program.

Therapy using play, toys, sensory and digital resources can greatly assist these young children to learn, feel connected and have fun.

2018

Flexible Respite Service

Thanks to an enormous amount of community and donor support, our Flexible Respite Service for around 200 children and adults with disabilities was re-modelled into a modern, interactive and calming environment.

The upgrade includes a sensory garden, cubby house, climbing equipment and much more, making it a hugely enjoyable space for everyone it supports.



Bargain shopping in Balwyn for a good cause

For more information
about volunteering ring
1800 036 377 or email:
volunteers@vmch.com.au

We've opened a new opportunity shop in the heart of Balwyn.

With a focus on children's items including clothes, toys, books and accessories, the shop will raise money for a great cause, our specialist school, St Paul's College.

The school relocated its campus just around the corner earlier this year and will soon integrate activities with the store to deliver some real-world experience for senior students!

There are lots of ways people can get involved and support this wonderful op shop. Whether you donate pre-loved items, do some bargain shopping or even volunteer in-store, every little bit helps.

Visit our Op Shops:

Balwyn | Heathmont | Wantirna | Ferntree Gully

Mickey celebrates a century



When Mickey Loveday was born in 1919, movies were silent, women were protesting for the right to vote, and Flinders Street station opened to the public.

On February 20, Mickey (born Merville) celebrated her 100th birthday surrounded by family, friends and staff at our aged care residence in Wantirna.

Born in India to English parents, Mickey moved to Australia in 1949 with her husband Frank.

Ballet, knitting, musicals, gardening and a “nice white cup of tea” are among Mickey’s loves, but nothing tops time with her family, including two grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Mickey is described as “beautiful and kind” and refers to most of the staff as ‘darling’. She loves to sing; her favourite tune is ‘Somewhere Over the Rainbow’.

Mickey was presented with an engraved medal, a red tiara, balloons, a cake, and of course, her much-anticipated letter from the Queen.

Happy birthday Mickey!

Did you know?

The number of Victorians aged 65 and above is set to triple by 2058.

Nearly

40%

of Victorians aged 65+ are volunteers.

Source:

<https://dhhs.vic.gov.au/ageing>

Each week 449 residents and clients enjoy one-on-one companionship with our volunteers.



Students supporting our students

A big thank you to students at St Columba’s College (Cater House) in Essendon for raising \$1,727 for our specialist school, St Paul’s College. Thanks to the girls’ efforts, students have been enjoying brand-new sports equipment.

Over the last four years, the Cater House crew has raised over \$6,500 for our students, as well as making social connections through hand-made Christmas cards for their student ‘buddies’ each year. Well done girls!

Podcast review:



Wilosophy

Australian comedian Wil Anderson's podcast, Wilosophy, is a good mix of fun banter with smart guests and great insights about what makes them tick. And, of course, there's lots of laughs.

A recent interview with successful Australian comedian, Andy Lee, unfolded in an unexpected direction – which made for great listening!

"I want to raise something with you which is pretty confronting," began Lee. "Hamish (Blake) and I didn't like you for a very, very, long time."

He went on to tell Wil Anderson that the now hugely successful comedy duo did not understand why Wil – an established comedian – used to make so many uncomplimentary jokes about them when they started their careers as comedians. To Wil's credit, he was very open to hearing Andy out, apologised and went into some detail about what he was thinking at the time.

Wil is a prolific podcaster and has great guests. So there is something for everyone.

Rating: ★★★★★

Eyes on Gilead

Only die-hard fans of the Handmaid's Tale need apply. Eyes on Gilead was the winner of the 2019 Australian Podcast Awards for best Fancast and is a fantastic weekly companion podcast for fans of SBS's award winning series, The Handmaid's Tale. The hour-long podcast is a chatty, funny, in-depth analysis of the highs and lows of each episode.

Rating: ★★★★★

Conversations

Join Richard Fidler & Sarah Kanowski in the regular podcast from ABC Radio called Conversations. Their wonderful interviews draw you deeper into the life story of someone you may, or may not, have heard about – someone who has seen and done amazing things. With so many episodes to choose from, there is something for everyone. Richard and Sarah have exemplary interview styles and great rapport with most of their guests.

Rating: ★★★★★



Our seasonal health tips

A runny nose. Itchy, watery eyes.
Difficulty breathing. Sound familiar?

What is hay fever?

Hay fever is a common condition caused by the nose and/or eyes encountering allergens.

Most people associate hay fever with spring, when airborne grass pollens are at their peak. However, hay fever can occur at any time of the year. This is usually caused by a reaction to allergens around the home, such as dust mites, moulds, animal hair or fur, or occupational allergens.

How does hay fever occur?

Our nose acts as a filter, and the tiny hairs and mucus that line the nasal passages trap microscopic particles.

These particles then cause an allergic reaction, which is the immune system treating a harmless substance as if it is dangerous and launches an 'attack', resulting in inflamed nasal passages which produce more mucus.

Managing your hay fever

Identifying the allergen causing the symptoms is an important part of managing hay fever. This cause may be obvious, or you may require referral to a specialist.

“There are medications that may relieve the symptoms of hay fever, however speak to your GP or pharmacist about what will work best for you.”

There are also other things you can do to reduce the effects of hay fever, including:

- avoid being outdoors on high pollen days and avoid thunderstorms during grass pollen season. You can monitor the pollen count via www.melbournepollen.com.au
- avoid activities such as mowing grass
- use re-circulated air in the car when pollen levels are high
- wear sunglasses to protect your eyes from pollen
- regularly splash your eyes with cold water
- reduce your exposure to dust mites, animal hair or fur.

Hay fever and thunderstorm asthma

People with hay fever may be at increased risk of epidemic thunderstorm asthma, which can be sudden, serious and even life threatening. Visit <https://www.asthmaaustralia.org.au> for more information.

Nathan's passion blooms into a job



“One of the things he missed was the mateship with his co-workers. So he loves that now.”

It did not take long for Nathan Hoare's new boss to work out that he had a good employee on his hands when he started working at Glasshaus Nursery, in Richmond.

“I can see that Nathan gets a lot of benefit from being in a beautiful environment and dealing with nature as all of us that work here do, that's one of the reasons we do it,” Paul Hyland says.

Nathan, 31, lives at VMCH Austin Street, Victoria's first purpose-built residence for 10 young people with an acquired brain injury who may otherwise live in residential aged care. Nathan's passion is horticulture and one of his goals since arriving at Austin Street has been finding paid employment.

Paul, who owns Glasshaus Nursery, admits that there is another reason Nathan has the boss' approval.

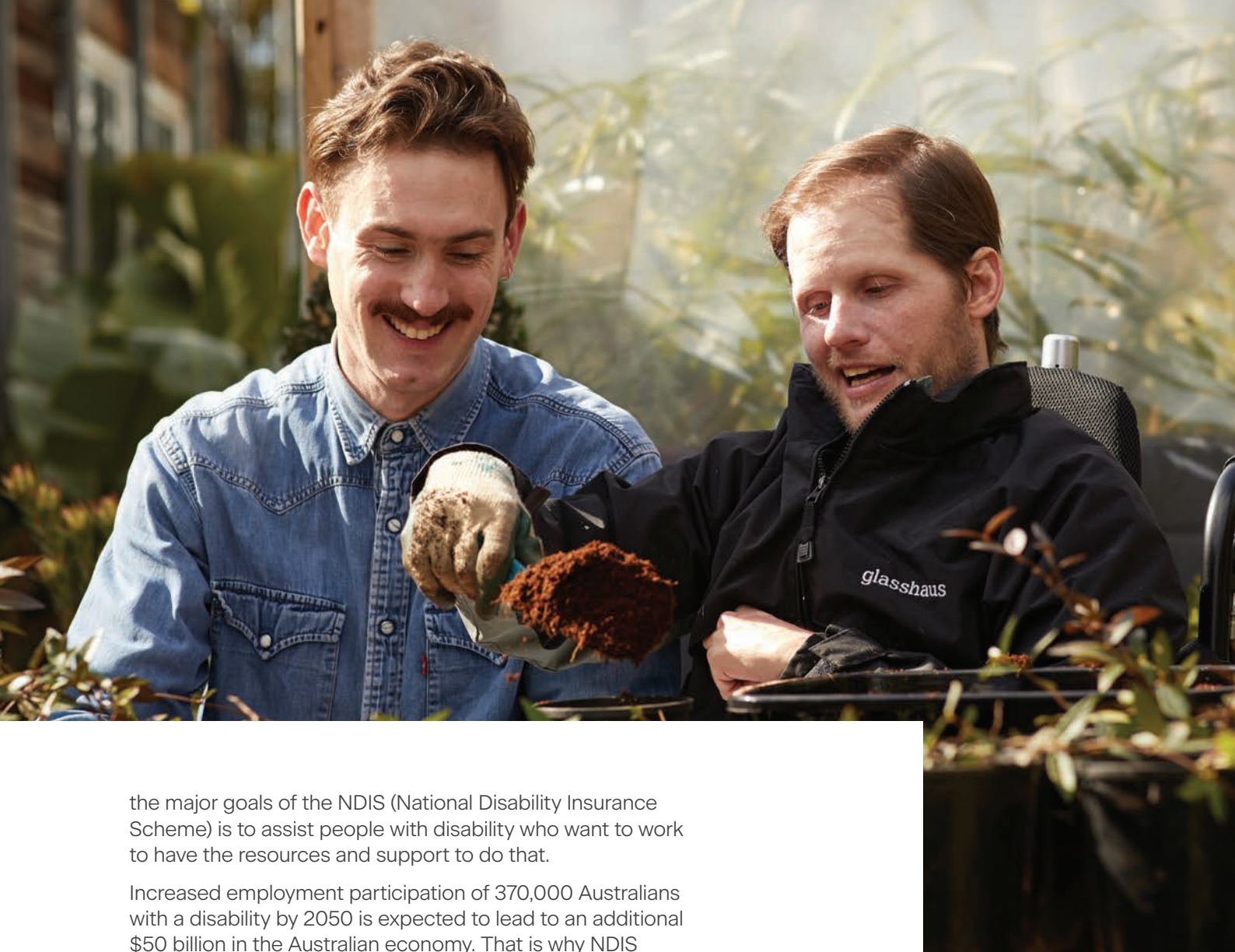
“It helps that he's got an infectious personality and he happens to barrack for the same footy team as I do, so it all works out well. He comes in, pots plants and we have a bit of a joke about the footy.”

Austin Street Manager, Jo Herbert, says before Nathan's accident, where he fell from a two-storey building, he was a plumber's apprentice.

“One of the things he missed was the mateship with his co-workers. So he loves that now,” she said.

With support and thanks to Nathan's can-do attitude, he has been able to achieve something that is out of reach for many people with disability – a job.

About 50 per cent of people with a disability are employed compared to 83 per cent of the general population. One of



the major goals of the NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme) is to assist people with disability who want to work to have the resources and support to do that.

Increased employment participation of 370,000 Australians with a disability by 2050 is expected to lead to an additional \$50 billion in the Australian economy. That is why NDIS advocates say it is not only a socially responsible policy – it pays for itself.

For Nathan, the journey to his goal started with Austin Street staff and other supporters fundraising more than \$20,000 for Nathan to purchase a standing wheelchair that would allow him to stand up to work in his garden, sell his plants at local markets and interact with customers face-to-face when talking to them.

His support team also worked closely with Nathan to help him set up his own business selling his plants at community markets on weekends, with a support worker to accompany him.

His boss, Paul, says bringing Nathan on board has been a good experience and he would encourage other employers to make their workplaces more inclusive.

“We enjoy having him around and I’m glad that he enjoys it too,” Paul says.

“It’s really good for staff members here as well. When you see somebody who has had an accident like Nathan’s had and they can still have such a positive outlook on life, it’s pretty inspirational.”

Above Nathan at work with his support worker Simon

We work in partnership with the people we support to help them achieve their life goals, whether that be pathways to work, learning new skills towards independence or making friends. Call 1800 798 921.

Visiting Rome

VMCH Chair Julien O'Connell and CEO Sonya Smart recently visited Rome for a comprehensive tour to further develop their personal formation as Catholic leaders.

The five day tour was full with visits to historical sites and meetings with theologians who provided insights into the emergence of today's Catholic services.

The tour included visits to Assisi, an immersive experience into the life of St Francis and St Clare, mass at St Peter's Basilica and lectures linking the work of St Francis to the contemporary application of service delivery for the Common Good.

The learning visit culminated in a Papal Mass where the Pope Francis greeted Julien.

Sonya found the experience difficult to articulate given the richness of the learnings from the tour.

"The five days were full of history as well as modern day interpretations and future developments needed to ensure the longevity of Catholic services to all people."

Sonya believes VMCH can benefit greatly from the lessons of Sant'Egidio and create real opportunities for people to succeed and to join together in community through prayer and peace, while serving the poor.

"The five days were full of history as well as modern day interpretations and future developments needed to ensure the longevity of Catholic services to all people."

Right Julien relished the opportunity to meet Pope Francis





Leading the way in palliative care

VMCH is leading the way in improving Australian palliative care services, by playing a key role in a national specialist advisory service.

End of Life Directions for Aged Care (ELDAC) is funded by the Australian Government. ELDAC aims to equip care providers with skills and information to help older Australians receive high-quality end of life care in familiar surroundings with little or no need for hospitalisation.

ELDAC has provided funding for each of our 12 Aged Care Residences to improve the provision of on-site palliative care.

Jeff Brooks, VMCH Clinical Manager says the goal is to build capacity for each residence, to provide excellent palliative care services, and better utilise the local external resources as a support when needed.

Jeff says the ability to recognise when a resident is entering the palliative approach phase of their life is vital. This may be identified many months before the resident dies. Early recognition allows for case conferencing with the resident, their GP, their family, external palliative care (if required) and care staff. This ensures that that advanced care directives are reviewed and followed, and a plan of palliative care is devised in line with the residents wishes.

“We want to educate and empower our staff to recognise when a resident is about to enter the palliative approach phase, as early as possible.

Often these indications occur well in advance, which is why we need to be confident in assessing each resident.”

Creating an Advanced Care Plan (ACP) when a resident first enters the residence is an essential step in ensuring that their family and staff are aware of the resident's wishes for their care. This can include pain management, medical intervention, music preferences, or spiritual care.

A prepared ACP can make it easier for the family as their loved one's wishes have already been communicated, and an appropriate plan can be put in place for the comfort of the resident. It also means that we know the resident wishes will be considered when they can't communicate their preferences for care.

Most people wish to die at home in preference to a hospital. By good planning and supporting the families well during this period, in a comfortable, supportive environment with excellent pastoral care, we will make each residents death – a good death.



Taking the terror out of technology

Ross Alcock helped people understand computers for a living. That has not changed in retirement. He lives at Providence Retirement Village, in Bacchus Marsh, and residents turn to him when their gadgets break down.

The 79-year-old, whose job it was to implement computer networks for schools, sympathises with people who struggle with the digital age.

“When you throw a computer at some older people – be it an iPad or a smart phone – there’s a bit of terror involved of the unknown. They are scared they are going to break it,” he said.

Ross’s advice is to persevere. He knows that older people have a lot more to gain than lose by becoming digitally connected. His approach when helping his friends master their gadgets and the internet involves humour and fun.

Asking Apple’s digital assistant Siri a few silly questions to get a laugh is always popular with his friends.

“They realise here’s something they can talk to and have some fun with. It takes the fear out of it.”

**“It just makes
the world much
smaller and brings
so many things
to their doorstep.”**

Below Charles, a student from St Kevin's College assisting St Catherine's resident Dennis with his iPad.



He then shows them the great things they can get from technology.

Things like finding new recipes on the internet, online shopping for gifts, reading newspapers, paying bills, banking and of course keeping up with friends and family on social media.

Staying connected at any age

Did you know that social isolation is worse for your health than smoking 15 cigarettes a day? Staying socially active is a bigger influence on your overall wellbeing than exercise and maintaining a healthy weight.

Well being can become more difficult when we age thanks to changes like leaving the workforce, children moving away or illness.

In the digital age where so much communication happens online, how do older people stay connected?

VMCH Residential Services Clinical Manager, Jeff Brooks, said some of our aged care residences have programs to help residents learn how to use iPads and engage with the internet. We are now looking to expand this program.

Volunteers and students from near-by schools get a real kick out of showing residents how to use iPads. Some of the things that are most popular with residents is learning about social media and connecting with their children and grandchildren.

“They love being able to keep in touch with the news, email people, learn how to use services like Skype to video-stream with loved ones that live far away.”

Nothing beats visits from loved ones. When that's not possible, being able to see their faces and speak to them via a tablet can be the next best thing.

For some people it is the difference between having regular updates about their loved-one's lives, and watching their grandkids grow up. Rather than only seeing relatives, who sometimes live interstate or overseas, a few times a year if they are lucky.

“It just makes the world much smaller and brings so many things to their doorstep,” Jeff said.

You can help

We have 11 aged care residences located throughout Victoria and we're launching our In-Touch program to help more residents stay connected.

Our new fundraising campaign aims to provide residents with new iPads and assist them to get the most out of them, just like our Providence residents, thanks to Ross!

If you would like to donate or find out more about our In-Touch appeal, please contact the Fundraising Team on **1800 036 377** or donate securely online at **vmch.com.au/donate**



Retiring with a tree change

To book a tour and learn more, contact Harkin Property on **5424 1866** today.



Life changes in many ways when you retire. Working provides not only money but a lifestyle with purpose and great friendships

Our new retirement village, McAuley, located in historic Trentham, is perfect for those looking to downsize, meet new friends and stay connected. All while still enjoying your privacy.

Frances Harkin from Harkin Property, the real estate agent appointed to sell McAuley, says this style of property would be ideal for local farmers, and those with larger properties, wanting to downsize.

“A small retirement village like McAuley means you can maintain your independence, create new friendships, and continue feeling safe, content and well connected.”

The properties are designed to be low maintenance and stress-free. All units are generously sized and have been thoughtfully designed to help residents transition comfortably to low-maintenance living.

Each unit features stone bench-tops, a spacious bathroom with additional powder room, reverse cycle air conditioning and heating along with quality appliances and fittings.

“McAuley is a beautiful place to live and is a great addition to the Trentham community.”

Career opportunities

Working at VMCH is much more than just a job, it's a chance to be part of a community of dedicated individuals who share a common goal – a commitment to helping those who need it, to live their best life.

- Nurses
- Cooks
- Care Advisors
- Personal Care Assistants
- Disability Support Workers
- Residential Services Workers
- Teachers
- Physiotherapists
- Accountants
- Leisure and Lifestyle Assistants

We offer a range of career prospects regardless of your background and/or experience.

If you're ready for change, we'd love to talk.



1800 036 377

hr@vmch.com.au

vmch.com.au/careers

Get Social

Come and connect with us! Stay in the loop with lots of information and stories about our services, clients, residents and staff, there's something for everyone.



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Friendship and fun

Margaret Russell and Bettina Williamson became friends after moving to St Thomas Retirement Village in Greensborough.

Known as 'Thelma and Louise' in the village, the ladies have shared much laughter, some tears and many adventures in caravan trips across Australia.

In their own words, the ladies talk about their friendship and adventures.

Margaret

I moved into St Thomas in 2011. My husband had passed away and I felt a retirement community would be good because of the support networks and the social atmosphere.

I met Bettina on a Friday afternoon at Happy Hour. We are both very easy going and we both love travel and Australia.

One day Bettina mentioned going to Tamworth Country Music Festival and asked if I'd be interested. I didn't get a chance to do much travelling with my husband because we were both working. We planned to do that in retirement, but we never got to that stage.

Bettina and I took her caravan to Tamworth and have been a few more times since then.

We travel well together I think... you're in very limited surroundings in a caravan! We've had some really good times. Now we're planning a trip for next year to Cape York from Cairns.

Bettina is a lovely lady. She's very easy going and very pleasant to be with. We're among the younger residents here (in the village) and you see how some people's health is failing and they're not able to get around. Our motto is, 'you've got to do it while you can' – and that's what we do.

When I came here, I thought I'd be having a bit of a quieter life. If anyone had said you'll meet someone and go travelling in a caravan, I would have thought they were crazy! But it's just amazing, it's been wonderful.

Bettina

We moved here in February 2012. My husband Noel was diagnosed with cancer and given two years (to live) but passed away in ten months. He knew I'd settled and made friends... it's one of the best moves we made.

I met Margaret at the end of 2012. We just seemed to get on well together. I could talk to her.

I'd been to Tamworth with Noel and we always thoroughly enjoyed it, it's just a different scene. I was telling Margaret and she said: "that's one place I wouldn't mind going", so we went.

Travelling by yourself can be lonely. It's great to have Margaret's company. Our friendship just grew over time. We're both very easy going.

Margaret and I have a similar outlook on life. She's been through the same thing (losing her husband). I believe you don't let the grass grow under your feet. You've got to get out there and enjoy life.



Left Margaret and Bettina getting ready for another adventure



Betty

See me. Know me.

Join us at a special Seniors Festival event! **Conversations over high tea**

Rendezvous Hotel
Flinders St, Melbourne

Monday 7 October 2019
2:00 pm – 4:00 pm
\$5 seniors

Tickets:
www.seemeknowme.org.au
or call 8387 2274

As we age, some people only see lines and grey hair rather than the stories, feelings, beliefs and experiences that make us who we are.

Join Meaningful Ageing Australia at a special high tea. Guests will be treated with sumptuous delicacies, as well as the opportunity to talk about what matters most. Bring a friend or come on your own - there will be someone to talk to who wants to hear about your reflections on life. Each table will be provided with our conversation-starter cards and all participants will be given a small gift to continue the conversation after you leave. It's sure to be an enjoyable afternoon out that gets you thinking.



*This event is part of our national
See me. Know me. campaign.
Thank you to Betty (pictured) and
everyone at VMCH for your help.*

Proud members:

