

Cornerstone

VMCH

Volunteers hold
the key to a
happier life

Achieving dreams
in regional Victoria

Making a
difference
in aged
care

Edition Two

“A candle loses
nothing by lighting
another candle.”

- Father James Keller

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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Bundoora Residential Aged Care resident, Frank.



Contact the editorial team at cornerstone@vmch.com.au

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. November 2019.

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VMCH

You're invited to our Christmas Mass



The Chair and Board of VMCH invites you to our Christmas Mass.

We welcome everyone in the VMCH community to come to Mass and celebrate the Christmas spirit.

No need to RSVP. We hope to see you there.

Thursday 19 December, 3pm
St Patrick's Cathedral
1 Cathedral Pl, East Melbourne

If you have any questions, please contact Taryn on (03) 9926 2083.

A note from Julien....



Welcome to edition two of Cornerstone. This edition marks the end of 2019 and a time of celebration for many of us, Christmas.

As a proud Catholic organisation, our mission is to care for others. While we recognise that Christmas is a time of joy and hope, as we celebrate the birth of Christ, we must also keep in mind that it can often be a time of hardship for those who are marginalised in our community. Instead of bringing joy and eliciting reflection, Christmas can be a time of loneliness and isolation.

Our Mission team is once again supporting some of our vulnerable clients at this time, by providing hampers to over 500 of our affordable housing residents. Our staff volunteer their time and resources to create and distribute hampers filled with donated items, to those who may need some extra support at this time of year. If you'd like to get involved, have a read on page 25 and 26 to find out how you can contribute.

Our feature story in this edition focuses on a topic which has been very popular in the media recently. ABC's "Old People's Home for Four Year Olds" captured the hearts of the nation when a group of kindergarten children attended their local aged care residence as a social experiment.

Unsurprisingly, there were some extraordinary benefits for young and old, as well as several heartfelt moments. We are big supporters of intergenerational programs, and on pages 5 and 6 we share three of the programs we have been running at our residences and respite homes. It is plain to see that age is no barrier to friendship.

I sincerely hope you enjoy this edition of Cornerstone. There are so many stories for us to tell, and we will continue to provide you with a small snapshot of the wide and varied services we offer, and people we meet in each new edition.

I wish you and your family every blessing for a wonderful and safe Christmas and New Year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julien O'Connell'.

Julien O'Connell AM
Chair
VMCH



Making a difference in aged care



Above Lysterfield students and Carinya clients enjoy a game of Connect 4!

“One of our residents doesn't usually come out, he gave it go, and he made paper planes. The children queued up to get one!”



The ABC's Old People's Home For 4 Year Olds has tugged at the heartstrings of people across Australia, when seeing the great things that happen when you pair our oldest and youngest members of the community.

Intergenerational programs aren't a new idea, with aged care residences, kindergartens, schools, and community groups regularly spending time together.

We have seen the value of these programs first-hand, with our own aged care residences and respite homes seeing positive outcomes for the health, wellbeing and happiness of our residents and clients.

Carinya and Lysterfield Primary School

Once a week Grade 4 students from Lysterfield Primary School walk from their classroom to Carinya House, Lysterfield, a respite home for those aged 65 or older, or those with early-onset dementia.

Together, the students and our clients spend the morning playing games and doing art and craft activities, ending with a shared morning tea.

The school's Grade 4 teacher Rachel said that the children are always excited to visit the clients at Carinya and want to plan activities for the next time they visit.

“They've made real relationships with the clients; they remember each other, and they have even given each other nicknames which is so lovely and funny.”

“Some of our students don't tend to talk about their day too much at home, but parents are telling me that they can't wait to talk about what they've been up to, which is fantastic,” says Rachel.

Seeing the two groups interact, the students are engaged, confident, and caring, and the residents

are laughing, and revelling in the presence of the young ones. They enjoy having conversations and the activities on offer, which range from snakes and ladders, Jenga and mini golf to painting and drawing.

One student, Emerson chats to Robert about his picture and sharing “I really like coming here,” he said. “We get to meet people that we haven't met before and have conversations with them.”

Rachel says there is often a lot of laughter coming from the two spaces which are utilised for the group's visit. “The clients are really interactive with the kids. They always say how much they enjoy having them here, and that they're laughing all the time. It's just really nice.”

A common theme from the clients around why they enjoy having the students come and visit is simple – it brings back memories of their own children.

Client Robert remembers “It really brings back the memories of my kids when they were younger. I have five children and I remember them from this age, through school and now. So, I know all about little sneaky school children,” he says with a laugh.

Providence and Pentland Kindergarten

Providence Aged Care Residence, Bacchus Marsh and Pentland Kindergarten are another example of a joint program which is benefitting young and old.

Providence hosts the 4-year-old kinder class every two months, with young and old participating in various activities.

Lifestyle Coordinator Julie said she reached out to the local kindergarten to bring the community together.

“I think it's important we remember that residents don't need to be isolated just because they live in aged care.



"The kids love coming here. They always get very excited before we come, they can be a bit nervous but once they're here, they're fine and really enjoy themselves.

"I just love seeing the interaction; children bring so much joy, they don't have a script to follow, they just be themselves, anything goes.

"One of our residents doesn't usually come out, until recently, he gave it a go, and he made paper planes. He had a queue of children waiting for him to make them paper planes. It was such a positive outcome, it was beautiful."

Bundoora and Parade College

Intergenerational programs aren't only for the youngest members of the community. Secondary School students from Parade College, Bundoora are regular visitors to their next door neighbours at Bundoora Aged Care Residence.

The students volunteer their time to assist with and participate in the activities, which is usually the weekly, and very competitive, bocce game.

The students collect the residents who need assistance, helping them to find the perfect spot for the game. They hand out the bocce balls, place the jack, and facilitate the game.

The residents clap and cheer for each other or show their disapproval for a misguided throw. At the end of the game, resident Alf often helps the students work out which team has won. There are often some heated discussions about whether Alf's interpretation is, in fact, correct!

"We have seen so many benefits with this program," said Lydia, Lifestyle Coordinator. "The residents are so much happier when they see the students coming in each week.

"They've made real relationships with the clients; they remember each other, and they have even given each other nicknames which is so lovely and funny."

"The bocce game is not only physically beneficial for the residents, but there are so many great mental and social outcomes that come from being active and spending time with each other."

"For the students it changes their perceptions about aged care, and older people, and breaks down the stigma of what aged care residences are like.

"For the residents they know that they'll always have the boys to assist them to get to the game, and then have that time to teach them and play together."

Bundoora resident Terry says he appreciates the approachable and friendly nature of the students who come along each week and enjoys seeing them get involved in the sport.

"Over the years we get to know them, and I love finding out and hearing about what they have planned for their future."

And some words of wisdom for the younger generation?

"Be positive, plan for the future and be true to yourself."

Good food makes for good health

If you walk into any of our dining rooms, you'll find that there's more on the menu for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

As part of our new care practice, our aged care residences are becoming more inclusive, more inviting, and more appetising, with the addition of food buffets.

"I want people to come to us knowing that we are the best, that we have good food, the best in the industry," says Wayne Wallis, VMCH Hospitality Manager.

"There's the perception that the food in aged care is terrible. As an organisation and an industry, we need to break down that stereotype."

Wayne explains that each residence has qualified chefs that are cooking really good quality food, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

"Our chefs are really doing the best that they can for the residents. We want the community to know that aged care doesn't mean a reduction in quality of life. We want to provide a life that is equal to, or better than it was before they came to live with us.

Part of Wayne's plan to improve catering services across the organisation includes the introduction

of the buffet-style food service where residents either serve themselves or choose from several options. This is in contrast with the model of serving pre-prepared plated meals to residents.

"It enables the resident to make their own choices in their care. This includes simple choices of 'what am I going to eat today'.

"The older style of food service doesn't allow for choice on the day, it's made in advance, or not at all. People may forget what they had ordered last week, or they don't feel like that meal today.

"It also changes the dynamics of the dining experience, suddenly the interaction changes between the residents, and with the staff. It becomes more of a social event.

"And if you don't feel like peas, you don't have to have them. If you want less food, or a second helping, it's the resident's choice."

The next phase of Wayne's plan includes more training for staff around food presentation and introducing an innovative solution for texture-modified foods.

"We want our residents to be happy, and good food makes people happy."



Volunteers hold the key to a happier life

Whether it is for social connection, a desire to help others or share a passion – there are many benefits to include volunteering to your routine.

“Volunteers don't get paid, not because they're worthless, but because they're priceless.”

9 Sherry Anderson

About 600 people volunteer for VMCH at over 36 locations across Victoria. Each week, 803 of our clients and residents enjoy more activities and community connections because of our volunteers. They are crucial to our ability to deliver quality services.

We asked some of our volunteers to share their stories about why they decided to volunteer and how it has enriched their lives.

Brigitte's story

Brigitte Abraham has been a volunteer since 2008. Two days a week she helps the lifestyle team at Bundoora Aged Care Residence with everything from bingo, celebrations and entertainment.

“I like it when you do something, and people appreciate it.”

One of her big jobs is running the footy tipping competition. She quickly learnt that this was an important job, despite not following football much when she started. “Footy is like religion to some of the residents. For six months you can feel their joy in doing the tips and checking the board if they are winning or not,” Brigitte said.

Brigitte also assists with an activity program for people living with dementia. She admits that at first it was confronting to work in this area.

“When you go into the dementia house, some people will understand you and some won't. But there is a way that you are trained in how to talk and how to support them. When you are interacting with them you can feel they understand what you are doing for them and this gives you a bit of a buzz and you keep going.”

Gail's story

Gail Tabor is a retired Anglican Minister, she volunteers each week and enjoys meeting new people in her volunteering role.





“I like it when you do something, and people appreciate it. When you see that what you're doing is appreciated it gives you confidence too.”

Gail lives at our retirement community in Pakenham, Shanagolden, and she visits the neighbouring aged care residence for a few hours each week to sit with residents, talk to them and keep them company.

“There is a pleasure in meeting new people and hearing their stories. I receive as much as they hopefully receive from me. You meet such interesting people. It's about sharing and building relationships,” she said.

Michael's story

Michael Bodey worked in administration and accounts before he retired early due to health reasons. He also lives at our Shanagolden Retirement Village.

He says that volunteering has been a great way to stay busy rather than dwelling on his own health problems.

“It takes your mind away from your illness and you can focus on other people rather than focusing on yourself which sometimes can make the problem worse,” he said.

“Volunteering does make you happy. Just being involved is great, rather than stepping back.”

Each Monday he visits the aged care residence to run bingo and also a meditation class. “I enjoy helping people out and putting a smile on people's faces. They're happy to see me and I'm happy to see them.”

Above Gail and Michael at Shanagolden Retirement Village.

Volunteer with us! If you would like to learn more about volunteer opportunities call our friendly team on **1800 036 377** or email **volunteers@vmch.com.au**

Inclusion is more than just a word

It's a feeling I get at the bottom of my stomach. It lingers longer than I'd like it to and never fully disappears.

It appears when somebody asks me a simple question like "what do you do for work?", knowing that the answer is "I'm unemployed and have never had paid work."

It appears when I can't go and see my favourite bands with mates because the venue has a steep flight of stairs, or when I can't find information because a website is inaccessible.

What most people take for granted in our society: work, access to transport, social interaction; they have all eluded me, because I live with a disability. This means often being excluded from society.

The feeling is slightly dulled now, as the inclusion of people with disabilities is becoming more than just an afterthought.

Slowly people are learning about the Social Model of Disability, which suggests that by fixing social, physical, communication and attitudinal barriers, people with disabilities can participate on an equal basis with the rest of society.

Prior to learning this I had thought that my lack of inclusion in society was my fault, that something was wrong with me. But it turns out society is just ill-equipped to deal with disability.

My friend Louise lives with Asperger's Syndrome and ADHD and confronts exclusion regularly. "People want higher functioning neuro-diverse people like me to fit into their neurotypical world and conform to it, but it's not always possible."

I am fortunate to have the opportunity to write about my thoughts on inclusion of people with disabilities for Cornerstone. But we need to think about those without a voice, those with intellectual disabilities or who are non-verbal, and how they would like to be included in our society.

I believe that an inclusive society will lead to a more cohesive society. We all have a responsibility to make sure inclusion happens. We must ask ourselves, are our homes, workplaces, schools, pubs, websites, inclusive enough? How do we keep challenging ourselves to make our world more inclusive?

"People want higher functioning neuro-diverse people like me to fit into their neurotypical world and conform to it, but it's not always possible."

Unfortunately, the memory of being excluded is hard to forget. I only hope that the feeling will disappear as we get better at including people with disabilities, so that we can feel valued while contributing to the world, just like anyone else.



This article was written by Communications Officer for Disability Services, Phin Meere (left). Phin writes regular articles about his lived experience with disability.

If you would like information on Disability Services and support with VMCH, call **1800 798 921**.



New standards a positive step forward

Above Our renovated living space at Providence Aged Care Residence.

As of 1 July 2019, organisations providing aged care services in Australia are required to be compliant with the new Aged Care Quality Standards.

VMCH Residential and Retirement Services General Manager, Voula Yankoulas, says the new standards focus on the customer and their choice and dignity.

“The new standards are a positive move forward, as they are based on customer feedback and outcomes, rather than processes and documentary evidence.”

Voula says the previous four standards have now been replaced with eight standards, with a strong focus on customer choice.

“In many ways, it challenges all of us as a society to be present to the issues around ageism. It also shows the benefits residents can obtain from being active participants in their care, as we do things with them, rather than for them.”

So what is VMCH doing differently?

We know that we provide top quality care, but we are also constantly looking at how we can improve the lives of our residents.

Part of this includes ensuring our residents' homes are modern, warm and inviting. This is why we have a long-term plan to build, renovate and refurbish our 11 aged care residences, to make each of them really feel like a home.

We have recently opened our brand new 59 bed extension at Providence in Bacchus Marsh, with Stage 2 now underway to renovate the existing residence. Our residents have all moved in, and have been getting to know their new home through walking groups, and a varied activities program.

St Catherine's in Balwyn is a beautiful heritage building which will now have an interior to match, as it is undergoing a refurbishment and extension project. Stage 1 of this project is complete and Stage 2 is well and truly underway.

Bundoora is the next of our residences to receive an upgrade, with additions and refurbishments in the dining and living room areas of the two houses. As with all of our residences, their kitchenette will be upgraded to align with our new dining experience with residents choosing daily what they want.

We want our residents to have dignity and choice when it comes to their aged care options, and this includes providing an inviting home which allows for more independence, and a sense of belonging.

We are always looking at how we can continue to do more for our residents, and determine what the standard is for our own care practice. We aim to go above and beyond, our residents deserve it.

For your diary....



November to December

Need a break from your caring role? We have a variety of activities, events and workshops on offer in the Eastern Suburbs. Take a look at the options available to support your carer role and provide a chance to take a break or learn something new! Download details at vmch.com/carerbooklet



Join us for an Open Day

We've had a little makeover at our regional locations. To celebrate we're hosting open days in December to meet our friendly staff and the chance to learn about our programs. Join us for a cuppa and cake. Locations and dates at vmch.com.au/opendays



International Day of People with Disability

A United Nations sanctioned day that is celebrated internationally to increase public awareness, understanding and acceptance of people with a disability. Let's celebrate their achievements and contributions together! Learn about activities planned at ldpwd.com.au



VMCH Christmas Mass

The Chair and Board of VMCH invite you to join us for Christmas Mass. Thursday 19 December at 3pm, St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne. Come celebrate the Christmas spirit.

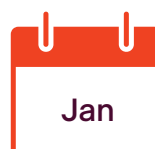


Christmas Eve Mass

Enjoy the celebration of Christ at St Patrick's Cathedral, Cathedral Place in East Melbourne at both 6pm and the Midnight solemn Mass. Details at cam.org.au



Happy Christmas!



If you're male and over 65 why not join our Men's Shed

The group enjoy woodwork, metal work, crafts, go on outings or just socialise and enjoy each other's company in a relaxed environment. Our Men's Shed is located in Wantirna South, call Lynne Cahir for details on **9800 7210** or **0434 561 123**.



Celebrating our supporters

Almost 40 of our most dedicated supporters gathered for the 10th annual Fawcner Fellowship Luncheon recently.

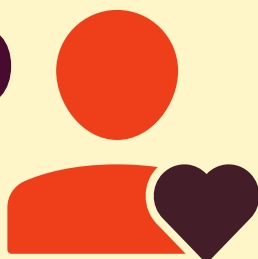
Board Chairman, Julien O'Connell, said the event was a fantastic opportunity for members of the Board and leadership team to thank supporters personally and inform them about new projects and developments at VMCH. "Our longevity and growth would not be possible without generous supporters who share our Mission to build inclusive, compassionate and sustainable communities," he said.

To our supporters, we thank you.

What's On

272,000

carers are under
the age of 25
which equates to around 1 in 10



Source: [Australian Bureau of Statistics (2015) Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers.]




LEA Award honour

Our specialist school, St Paul's College, was the fortunate recipient of a 2019 Learning Environments Australasia Victorian Chapter Award. The newly renovated campus in Balwyn, as designed by architect ClarkeHopkinsClarke, was successful in the Renovation/Modernisation Over \$5 million category.

The school's transformation has created a new amazing educational space to support student learning, engagement and wellbeing. We're so proud!

Vision Australia estimates there are currently **357,000** people in Australia who are blind or have low vision. They project that the number of Australians who are blind or have low vision will grow to

564,000

by 2030 

Source: [ABS population data and ABS Survey of Disability Ageing and Carers.]



The average volunteer gives
2.5 hours
per week 

Source: [Giving Australia 2016 Australian Individual Giving and Volunteering Webinar Series, May 2018]

Animal therapy

Residents at Shanagolden Aged Care Residence, recently had a visit from the Myuna Farm mobile animal nursery. The residents had a lot of fun with the animals, including some cheeky goats and cuddly rabbits.

Don: "I thoroughly enjoyed it, especially the baby goats."

Betty: "They were so adorable."

Thanks to Kathleen from Myuna Farm for bringing her animals out for a visit, it was definitely a highlight of our residents' week!

Get to know us....



Above Harley loves helping his clients everyday.

Harley's passion for sport saw him coach young people with disabilities, just after finishing high school. He loved it and many years later he is enjoying a rewarding and interesting leadership role in disability services, based in Wangaratta.

Tell me a bit about your role at VMCH?

I look after our National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) clients and programs in Victoria's regional north and west. We cover from Wodonga and all the way to Horsham. Our services include direct support and support coordination. We run programs for 180 people with a disability that reflect their interests and goals, and support 1,400 carers in the region.

What do you enjoy about working at VMCH?

I'm passionate about developing programs with community input and VMCH has been supportive of that. This organisation shares my belief that we create programs with the individual's input and not around what we think the individual needs.

What's the biggest myth or misconception about people with a disability that you come across?

It's the belief by some people that people with a disability won't be able to do certain things without even giving it a chance. What we need to do is look at things from the perspective of the people we support.

"I prefer to say to myself and my team, they will do it, and they will do it in their time."

What's your future wish for the people we support?

My future wish doesn't really count. I want their wishes to come true and not mine. I want them to reach their goals, whatever they may be.

What do you enjoy doing outside of work?

Outside of work I'm a dad and husband to my two young girls and wife. Just being in that moment with my girls and make sure I don't forget who they are! I like playing sport and also have a little hobby farm, so I like to potter around there.



Importance of Advanced Care Planning

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety was established on 8 October 2018 to look at how older people are cared for and work out what needs to change to make aged care services better.

When finished, a report will be provided to the Government recommending what should be done to make aged care services better for people who need them now and in the future.

We believe that the Royal Commission is a necessary step in ensuring that all providers of aged care services are held accountable and encouraged to provide services which enhance the lives of older people, as our population continues to age and demand on services increase.

As part of proceedings, the Royal Commission has released a number of background papers, with the latest focusing on Advance Care Planning (ACP) in Australia.

This is a process of pre-emptive discussions and planning that anticipates a future loss of ability to make or communicate decisions. The practice reflects principles of autonomy, self-determination and dignity.

Findings showed that those aged 65-plus years are often ill-prepared, with only 3% having a statutory ACP directive in place.

The directives enable people to express how they want to be cared for, and that decisions and actions taken on their behalf are consistent with their goals, preferences and values, if they become incapable of making those decisions themselves.

We are 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) aims to provide information, guidance, and resources to care providers to equip them 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.

Jeff Brooks, VMCH Clinical Manager says VMCH is the flagship organisation involved in ELDAC, being the first organisation with all residential aged care homes to participate.

“The goal for us is to build capacity within the organisation, and each home, 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.

“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 ACP when a resident first enters the home 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.”

**To view the interim report visit
agedcare.royalcommission.gov.au**

Wayne sets sail with help from his crew

From a young age Wayne has wanted to do what everyone else around him was doing. So, it was no surprise to his mum, Karen, that her son was very keen to move into his own place.

Wayne now lives in semi-supported accommodation and it has been a great experience for him.

“He’s quite proud when people come to visit him in his house. He’s very happy and he loves saying he’s got his own place” said Karen.

Wayne had several seizures as a toddler that affected his speech and mobility. Today he uses a wheelchair to get around. While his disability makes everyday tasks harder for him, Wayne does not let this stop him from doing the things he enjoys.





Above Karen and Wayne pre sailing.

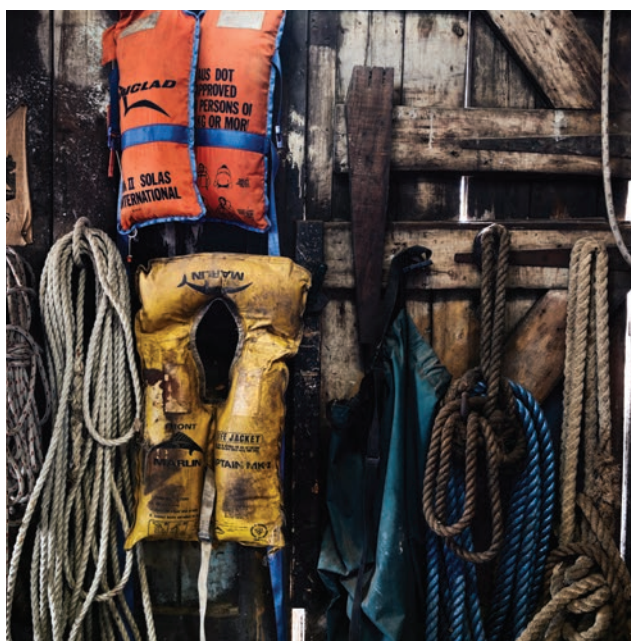
He loves visiting cafes, restaurants, watching movies, the footy and going to music concerts. His favourite band is the Rolling Stones and he's been to three of their concerts.

He also loves being on the water. With our support, Wayne enjoys sailing each week.

Wayne's support crew, VMCH disability support workers help him each week to sail with a group at Lilydale Lake.

At one of our Community Centres, he also learns useful independent living skills like cooking and self-advocacy. He also enjoys our lifestyle programs that include music, art and craft and social outings.

Wayne's next goal is looking for job opportunities. Karen says that he would love to find some work around his interests that include gardening and being outside.



Be part of our crew

All of us need a good crew to help us achieve our goals.

We are looking for passionate disability support workers who want to help our clients maintain choice and control over their lives.

VMCH's disability support workers help individuals during transitional stages of their lives, as well as those ageing with a disability, to learn, explore, experience new things and achieve individual goals and dreams.

Opportunities exist in Melbourne and regional Victoria.

Call us on **1800 798 921** or check out vmch.com.au/careers



Homelessness support is vital

Hans and Peter have led two very different lives but have one aspect of their lives in common. Both know what it is like to be homeless.

After the breakdown of his marriage Hans, 75, returned back home to Australia and found himself alone with nowhere to go. Staying with friends for a short time, he relocated to a rooming house in Glen Waverley.

While dealing with chemotherapy treatment for bowel and liver cancer, Hans prepared his meals in a rice cooker to avoid using the shared kitchen. His room was also located upstairs, which was unsuitable, as he found it difficult to walk up the stairs due to his treatment.

Hans connected with Amy Yuen, VMCH Case Manager for the Assistance with Care and Housing program (ACH), via My Aged Care.

With Amy's help he was offered a single bedroom unit through a community-based organisation, which provides affordable community housing for people over the age of 55.

"Amy has been excellent," says Hans. "She has been such a great help to me. I've been here for two months now, and I feel very relieved. I've got a new fridge, can now cook for myself and have my own space."

Peter agrees. He says he now feels safe.

He moved into the same community housing village as Hans, after 10 years of sleeping rough on the streets of the Melbourne CBD and outer suburbs.

Peter, 64, was previously a builder and owned two properties. He became homeless after several personal issues compounded. The death of his son from an asthma attack, the loss of his home in the Black Saturday bushfires, a diagnosis of Parkinson's and the breakdown of two marriages, left him living on the streets.

Peter says the last 10 years of his life were the worst he's experienced. "I would often say, what's the point, and at one stage I contemplated suicide. But I knew I still had two kids I had to take care of, which is what saved me."

Amy says Hans and Peter's examples show how important it is to have well-resourced housing and homelessness services.

"Having good service coordination is very important. All the different agencies and organisations across the housing sector have limited resources, and we need to work together, to increase our service provision."

"Without working together and additional funding, there is little more we can do to help those who are most in need and vulnerable in our community. Everyone deserves to be treated with respect and dignity," she says.

Celebrating Aged Care Employee Day



Thank you. Something so simple to say, can mean so much. On 7 August, we celebrated our amazing aged care staff to say thank you for the work they do every day.

Aged Care Employee Day is a national day to say thank you to the more than 365,000 dedicated people who care for and support around 1.3 million older Australians who receive care and services each year.

We celebrated how sweet our aged care employees are, and also celebrated an outstanding staff member from each residence, recognised for their outstanding work, caring nature, good attitude, and their belief in our vision, mission and values.

There are a lot of people who keep the wheels turning at our aged care residences, and they do a magnificent job.

From the nurses and care workers, to the chefs and hospitality teams, to the drivers, cleaners and laundry employees, to the volunteers, leisure and lifestyle officers and administration teams – everyone plays their part in ensuring our residents are happy and healthy.

Did you know?

Across Australia, around

15%

of the population is aged 65 years or older, and around 5.7% of this cohort live in a retirement village.

[Source: www.retirementliving.or.au/research]

In 2016 1 in 3

older Australians were born overseas; the majority of these were born in a non-English speaking country.

Source: [AIHW 2017]



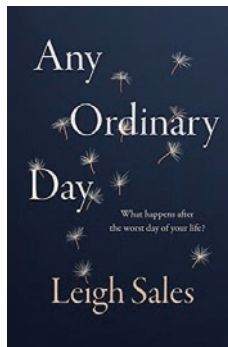
Book Week fun

Book Week brings out the kid in all of us! Students and teachers at VMCH's specialist school, St Paul's College, got into the spirit of the occasion by dressing up in their favourite book characters.

Book Week is also a great opportunity to think about including a book (or two) about diversity and inclusion to your library or reading list.

There are some wonderful books out there that can help adults and children discover the beauty of inclusion and diversity.

Book review



Any Ordinary Day, Leigh Sales

The day that turns a life upside down usually starts like any other, but what happens the day after? Journalist Leigh Sales investigates how ordinary people endure the unthinkable.

After facing her own mortality, Leigh went searching for answers about what happens when we are impacted by a life-changing event, and how people deal with the wide-range experiences and emotions that come next.

This book makes you think about how easily your life can change, why we should appreciate the time that we do have, and to embrace the ordinary days. A must-read book, but be warned, you may need to have some tissues handy!

Rating: ★★★★★



Wonder, R J Palacio

The story follows Auggie, a young boy born with a severe facial difference and his new journey into mainstream school. His school friends, teachers, family and community struggle to accept without prejudice and the book entwines the journey from Auggie's point of view and then on to his classmates, sister and others.

He is a hero for the ages, one who proves that you can't blend in when you were born to stand out.

This book is a beautiful reminder about the importance of inclusion, to embrace our differences and approach life with the most important value, kindness.

Rating: ★★★★★



Boy Swallows Universe, Trent Dalton

This prize-winning novel deals with the themes of love, crime, magic, fate and coming of age, inspired by the author's childhood. It is set in Brisbane's violent working class suburban fringe. Trent Dalton is a first-time novelist and has won a slew of awards for his efforts.

It's the coming-of-age story of Eli Bell and his mute brother August, as they navigate a complicated environment of drugs, crime and domestic violence — while doing the normal teenage stuff like having reckless adventures and falling in love.

A story of brotherhood, true love and the most unlikely of friendships, this will be the most heartbreaking, joyous and exhilarating novel you will read this year.

Rating: ★★★★★



Top tips to stay safe this summer

Christmas may invoke images of snow, but in Australia, Christmas and summer often means weather conditions that can be hard to manage.

The 2019/20 summer season is expected to see dry conditions and higher than normal temperatures across Victoria.

There are many health and safety risks associated with the hotter weather in the summer season. Here are some reminders on ways to stay safe and cool during the days of high or extreme temperatures:

- Drink plenty of water, even if you don't feel thirsty
- Keep yourself cool by using wet towels, putting your feet in cool water and taking cool (not cold) showers
- Spend as much time as possible in cool or air-conditioned buildings
- Block out the sun at home during the day by closing curtains and blinds and open the windows when there is a cool breeze
- Stay out of the sun during the hottest part of the day
- If you must go out, stay in the shade and take plenty of water with you
- Wear a hat and light-coloured, loose-fitting clothing
- Eat smaller meals more often and cold meals such as salads

- Make sure food that needs refrigeration is properly stored
- Avoid strenuous activity like sport, home improvements and gardening
- Watch or listen to news reports that provide more information during a heatwave.

Bushfires

You don't have to live in the country to be at risk of fire.

If you live near areas that have significant bush, forest, long grass, or coastal scrub, then you need to plan for the fire season. If you are travelling to regional and remote areas, we suggest that you check to see if there are any bushfire alerts issued.

If there are bushfire alerts, it is strongly recommended that you consider your need to travel and reschedule any trips.

You can download the Emergency Victoria App which will keep you updated and take the time to complete or review your own bush fire plan or check the website [emergency.vic.gov.au](https://www.emergency.vic.gov.au)

Achieving dreams in regional Victoria

“I’m enjoying
getting to know
the participants
their passions and
interests. I really
enjoy the chats
we have.”

Sean likes having a laugh, high adrenaline sports, keeping fit, playing wheelchair basketball and spending time with his adorable puppy, Ruby.

The 30-year-old has cerebral palsy and has never let his disability or people’s attitudes get in the way of achieving his goals and having fun.

“I’ve had a lot of people over the years telling me that I can’t do this, and I can’t do that, and I like proving them wrong.”

One thing that was holding him back though was a lack of support outside of his family in regional Victoria. That changed when he got his first National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) plan and turned to VMCH.

We opened services near Sean’s home in Ararat in late 2017 and have helped him make the most out of his new NDIS plan. We linked Sean with disability support worker, Kevin, and they go to the gym and the swimming pool. They also go fishing and jet boating when the weather is good.

“Before the NDIS I was not getting any support. It was a lot of stress on my family,” Sean said.

“Having Kevin takes a lot of the stress off my family, Kevin is a really nice guy. He has a sense of humour. He definitely pushes me to keep going in the gym and gives me confidence.”

Services help combat isolation and change lives

Harley Dalglish is the Regional Manager of our Disability Services Program for Victoria’s north-west. He is based in our Wangaratta office, which supports more than 200 people and employs almost 40 people.





Harley believes that working in disability services is a daily opportunity to change people's lives. Whether it's programs that provide vocational training, life skills, social connections, fun outings or pathways to further study or employment, he has a simple message for his team.

"I tell my team that sometimes it only takes one person to make a difference in someone's life – that can be over five minutes or five years," he said. "When I was young, I had a footy coach and that person changed my life, or for other people it might be a teacher. If we can be that person in someone's life, what a privilege."

More than just a job

Another great outcome of opening offices in regional Victoria is the job opportunities it has created for many people looking for a career change.

Craig Quilliam is one of those people. He spent most of his working years in the building industry as a carpenter.

"I found myself feeling really bored in the work I was doing. Sitting at a workbench, building window frames in a factory, I wanted more social interaction," he said.

He had family that worked in disability services and they suggested it might be a good career change.

Now he is part of our after-school program in Wangaratta for children with a disability, where his carpentry skills have come in handy for designing and building a range of things.

"I'm enjoying getting to know the participants, their passions and interests. I really enjoy the chats we have. I'm enjoying the relationships I'm building with staff and the people we support."

Above Sean and Kevin ready for fishing.

Need help to achieve your NDIS dreams in regional Victoria?

Call us on **1800 798 921** or email: **hello@vmch.com.au**



Below John receiving a Christmas Hamper from staff member Anna.

Finding a path to Christmas peace

Christmas is considered one of the six most stressful life events, along with divorce, moving to a new house and changing jobs.

A Relationships Australia study also found that family relations are highly negatively affected at Christmas due to work-life balance factors for 31 per cent of men and 33 per cent of women.

So, what causes Christmas stress and how can we reduce it in our lives and for the people around us?

The root of Christmas stress is different for every individual and family.

Liz Winston is part of VMCH's Mission team, and she says that a big part of their role during Christmas is supporting people that are struggling.

These are people who may be dealing with a loss, separation from loved ones, illness, stress, financial problems, loneliness and social isolation.

"These problems do not disappear during Christmas and in many ways the holidays can have a bit of a magnifying effect for the struggles that people are dealing with," she said.

"Parents that are struggling financially may feel guilt that they can't buy their kids the things they want for Christmas, or they put themselves into more debt to do this."

If you would like to donate or support our Arts in Action program, please contact the Mission team on **1800 036 377**.

“It's not usually about having the answer. It can be as simple as sitting with them and acknowledging 'yeah that must be really tough for you.'”

Below Sister Lorraine supporting people with a friendly ear.



“Older people may be in aged care and miss a partner that has passed away. They may not be able to celebrate Christmas the way they used to.”

Liz says that lending an ear can make a big difference.

“Sometimes we want to give people the answers, to fix it: ‘you’ll be alright, don’t worry’. These things don’t actually help,” she said.

“It’s not usually about having the answer. It can be as simple as sitting with them and acknowledging, ‘yeah, that must be tough for you.’”

She would love to see more people take the time to look around them and support people who are doing it a bit tough around Christmas.

“When we talk about things, it doesn’t take it away, but it helps lift some of the burden.”

She even has some tips on how to do that.

“My advice to people is that it’s not always about having the answer, it’s just listening to their story.

Some of the best presents don't have a price tag

Many gifts don’t come with a price tag. It would be easy in today’s consumer culture to dismiss those presents as less valuable. However, this is usually not the case.

Things like your time and some kind words – written or said – can be amazing gifts to the right people.

Donating some time to charity can also be a great way to achieve perspective during Christmas.

Our VMCH Mission team are behind a project that blossomed from one woman’s desire to do just that – give something back to people less fortunate than her.

Arts in Action

It all started when an aged care resident, Norma, told Liz of a deep and unfulfilled desire to give back to others.

That was back in 2015 and since then we’ve distributed thousands of Christmas hampers to people in need.

Each year the Mission team coordinate the program called Arts in Action. It is a collaborative project where the VMCH community comes together to create hampers filled with festive treats that are distributed to clients and residents who benefit enormously from some Christmas cheer.

The hampers are packed and delivered by staff members and volunteers, with items donated and purchased through fundraising and staff giving.

Months before this, residents at our aged care residences and disability services create thousands of items including decorations, soaps, notepads and pens. The process is popular amongst individuals who benefit from social connections, a sense of purpose through giving to others, hand dexterity, joint movement and mental stimulation.

Balwyn affordable housing resident Michael Cutler said he was thrilled to have received a hamper over the years.

“We all really appreciated the hampers and were very pleased to get one. I think it means a lot to a lot of people, especially if they’re alone (around Christmas).”

There is a beautiful saying that goes a bit like this ...

“Everyone you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about. Be kind always.”



Need a sea change?

If you are interested and would like to know more, please call our friendly Admissions team on **1300 845 526**.



It's just before 7am and the only sounds that can be heard are the waves crashing, a light wind, and the occasional seagull.

This is Torquay, June's new home.

Before she moved to Star of the Sea Aged Care Residence, June lived in the busy, and growing, town of Sunbury.

Wanting to spend more time with her family and have help with her daily needs, June made the decision to move closer to her son in Ocean Grove.

"I want to be living closer to my family. One day I saw an ad for Star of the Sea in the Herald Sun, so my son and I went down to have a look, and we were very impressed!"

June says the coastal change has been nice, and living so close to the sea is wonderful, with the lovely fresh air.

"I love the peace and quiet here, and the staff and residents here are just wonderful. It's been nice to be able to move on, change my environment, get extra help and make some new friends."

At Star of the Sea you'll find a safe, close-knit community where you can be cared for, participate in our lifestyle programs or indulge in some 'you' time.

This is something June agrees with.

"The lifestyle here makes a big difference to every resident. We always have fun and enjoy the entertainment and activities on offer!"

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.

As a Community Support Assistant (CSA) you will provide support to aged clients in their own homes. These rewarding roles assist clients with services including:

- Home care and domestic assistance
- Personal care
- Meal preparation
- Respite, social support, and companionship
- Transport, shopping, and running errands.

Ready to help those in your community?
We'd love to hear from you.



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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Two blokes and a retirement village

They began their lives in neighbouring Celtic countries. Now, Peter MacDiarmid and Michael O'Donoghue enjoy a firm friendship as neighbours at Providence Retirement Village in Bacchus Marsh.

The Irishman and the Scotsman have been through a lot together in four years; with an ability to look on the bright side, a game of pool, and a tippie of Scottish whisky helping them along for the ride.

Peter

My wife Sheila and I moved here in September 2014 and met Michael shortly after. We discovered he was going to have a cataract dealt with, so I offered to run him into the hospital. One thing led to another and we found that we got on extremely well! We're from similar cultures... I'm from Scotland and he's from Ireland.

We talk sometimes about growing up in the country and what it was like, but mostly we tend to reminisce about Australia and life here in the 70s and 80s – how good it was in those days!

We go out for lunch every Tuesday to the Irish pub with Sheila and play pool at least twice a week. In my working years I was employed in the aviation industry, dealing with computers and so on. Michael believes he has “technical depravation” so I enjoy helping him out here and there with his mobile and iPad problems!

We're on the same wavelength but we're radically opposite in politics. We don't shy away from sharing our opinions with each other. It doesn't get us anywhere but we're constructive and it's a bit of fun.

Michael's a very honest and honourable man, and he's got a hell of a sense of humour. Some of his stories from way back are a scream! Dear me, he's a bit of a lad.

Life here wouldn't be quite the same without him. It's easy enough to make acquaintances but to meet someone who you're really friendly with is very rare.

Michael

I moved to Providence with my wife Rose about four years ago. One morning I was talking to my neighbour about getting a taxi to go and get my cataract done. Then half an hour later Peter banged on my door and said, “I'm your taxi”. I barely knew the man. From that day to this we've been best of friends.

My wife Rose was in co-located aged care for three years. I'd go over there every day and bring her back here for afternoon tea. After Rose died Peter and Sheila did everything for me. I spend every Christmas with them now. Whenever there's anything on, I'm classed as one of their family.

Peter's got a great sense of humour, otherwise I'd have nothing to do with him! Nothing seems to bother the two of us; we just take life as it comes.

When Rose died, the staff were encouraging me to go home to Ireland to see my sister. I hadn't been there in nearly 40 years. Peter and Sheila joined in with the insisting and I've been there twice since then. It made me very happy. Peter arranged my flights and transport and everything – nothing is any trouble to him.

He's a great man. To be quite honest, I suppose I'd be lost without him.



Left Peter and Michael enjoying their weekly pool game!



At-Home Aged Care

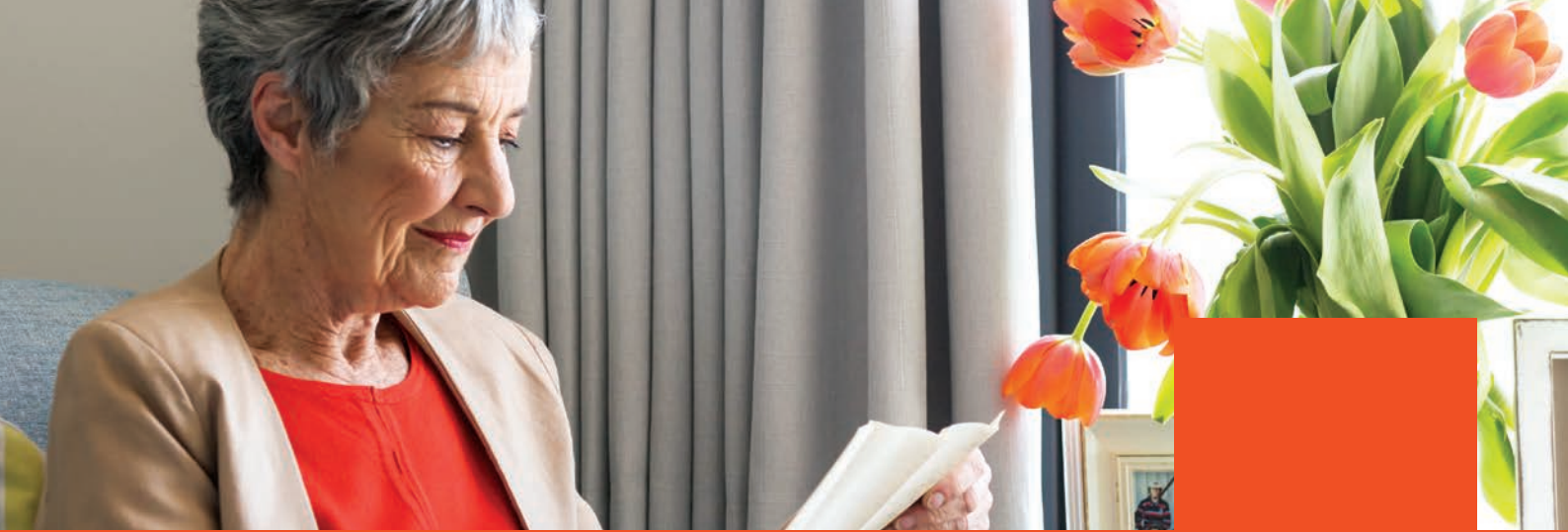
Now I'm getting
help at home,
I have more time
for family.

We help people stay independent, connected to their community, and most importantly, in their own home. By having Kitty's home cleaned for her, we make sure she has more time to spend with her family. With our support, she gets to live the life she chooses.



1300 698 624
vmch.com.au

VMCH



We're here to take the journey with you.

Caring for Victorian Catholics for over 100 years.

Residential Aged Care | Retirement Living | Affordable Homes
At-Home Aged Care | Disability Services



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