

Cornerstone

VMCH



VMCH chefs
in the spotlight

New beginnings
across our SDAs

Push for greater younger
onset dementia support

Edition Eight

“Find happiness in
making others happy.”

- St Mary MacKillop

Publishing details.

Cornerstone magazine features articles, commentary and information about our residents, clients, community, partners and services.

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VMCH aged care resident Bob from John R Hannah.

VMCH

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You come first - VMCH Home Care

If you're looking for a local home care provider, look no further!

We'll listen to what you need, then build and deliver home care services shaped around you, to help you remain living independently at home.

Our local workers across Victoria are eager to meet you, so call our friendly team today!



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VMCH

Ballarat | Bendigo | Geelong | Moe | Shepparton | Pakenham | Wangaratta | Wantirna

A note from our Chairman

Welcome to the eighth edition of Cornerstone.

As we edge closer to the end of 2022, it's been a pleasure to reflect on our achievements and consider how many of these milestones will continue to make a difference to those we support into 2023 and beyond.

It's also been wonderful to get out and about and attend various events across our organisation, and see first-hand the fantastic work of our staff and volunteers as they support people from diverse backgrounds to live their best lives.

The importance of having a safe, secure and happy home is a common theme running through this edition.

I read with interest, for example, about the huge difference we're able to make to people's housing situations through the Assistance with Care and Housing program. On page 21 you'll meet Tony, who fled China years ago in hope for a better life. Unfortunately, he's faced huge adversity, with accommodation the main obstacle. Thanks to his tenacious VMCH case manager Amy, Tony's been able to find the right home and support he needs to live a safe and fulfilling life.

On page seven you will meet Helen, who has also struggled with housing following the breakdown of her marriage. Our affordable homes have given Helen what she's searched for over three decades – a place of her own. I thank Helen and Tony for sharing their stories with us; they go such a long way to creating awareness and understanding of important issues.

Meanwhile, our Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) homes provide the perfect environment for people with disability to reach their goals. It was lovely to hear from housemates Sally, Christina and Nicolie, who get along famously and are supporting each other in the transition from their family homes to where they now live in Lilydale.

Our aged care residences are home to hundreds of older people, and the care and support they receive within them is outstanding. On page nine you'll meet some dedicated staff members, who go above and beyond in their roles.



On page 27 you'll meet some chefs who pride themselves on creating fresh, nutritious, home-cooked meals for residents to enjoy.

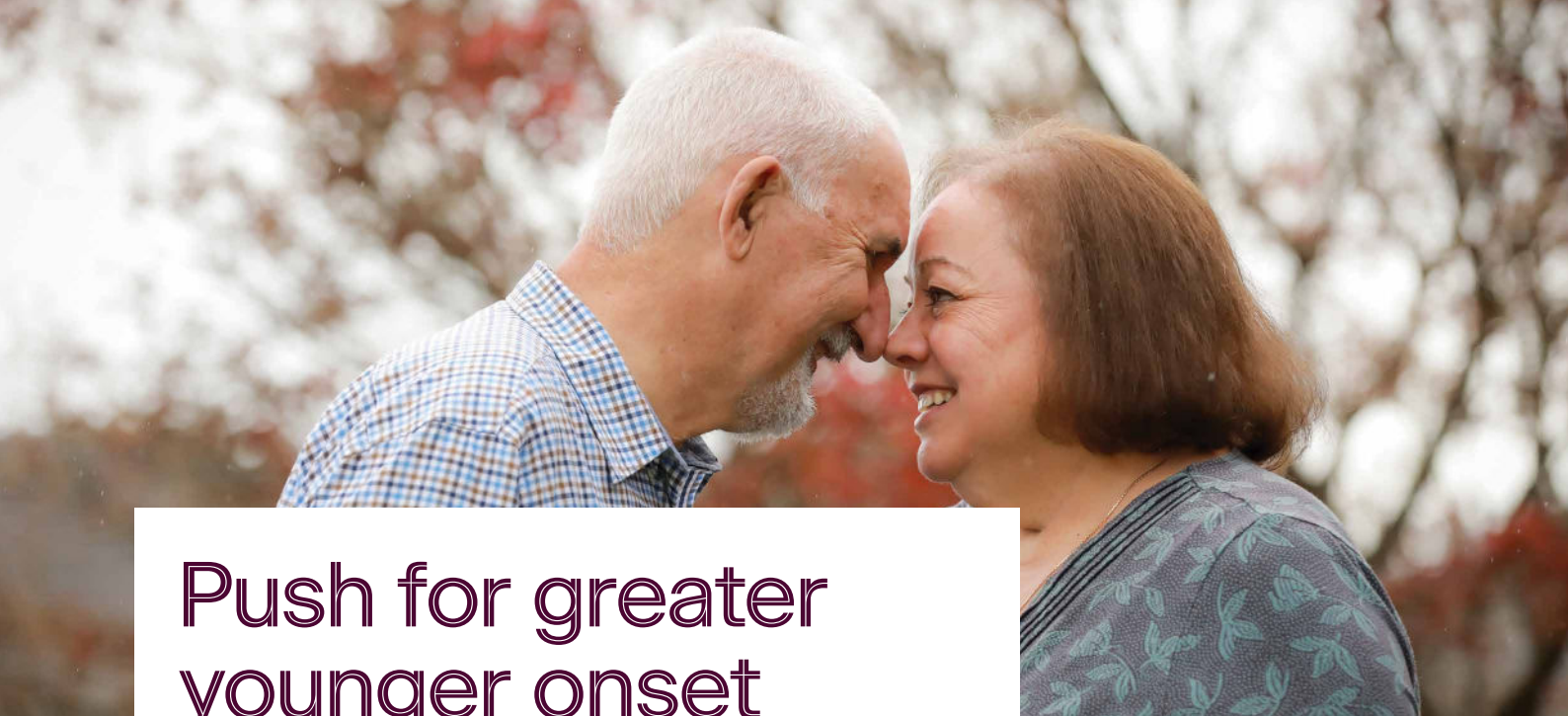
As always, we are extremely grateful to our loyal supporters who help us sustain our services. Incredibly, we've been gifted more than \$85,000 in donations through our Real Shot appeal to further our job skills programs for people with disability with the purchase of a coffee van. I was also humbled to join some of our most loyal supporters, those who have left a gift to VMCH in their Will, at our recent Fawcner Fellowship Luncheon. You can see some photos from this fantastic event on page 18.

As we approach the end of the year, I'd like to thank you for your support and interest in our organisation. I take this opportunity to wish you every blessing for Christmas and a happy and safe New Year.

Please take care and God bless.

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

Julien O'Connell AO
VMCH Board Chairman



Julie and Frank De Napoli

Push for greater younger onset dementia support

Picture this: you're approaching retirement, and those things you've worked hard your entire life to achieve – more travelling, spending time with your grandkids, perhaps making a sea change – are almost within your grasp.

Then you get the news: your husband has younger onset dementia (YOD) – a disease you thought only applied to 'old people'. You're blindsided. Worse still, it feels like nobody understands and you have nowhere to turn.

This is the situation Julie De Napoli found herself in eight years ago when her husband Frank, then aged 58, was diagnosed with YOD. The former GM, responsible for hundreds of people in his working life, could barely arrange the hands on a clock face in a cognitive test.

“It was a shock, I can't tell you how I felt. It was heartbreaking. Walking out of there, I was devastated,” Julie recalls.

And so began the couples' YOD journey; one that, according to Dementia Australia, is experienced by around 28,000 Australians.

YOD is used to describe any form of dementia diagnosed in people under the age of 65. It can be diagnosed in people in their 50s, 40s and even 30s. Without a major medical breakthrough, Dementia Australia reports this figure is projected to increase to 41,250 people by 2058.

Despite this, Julie couldn't find any local support that was suitable, with services geared towards older people or those with more advanced dementia. Frank's dementia is thankfully slow-progressing, and while he still relies on Julie as his full-time carer, the couple remains active and social. “The traditional places would have been detrimental to him,” Julie explains.

Elizabeth Baxter is a Dementia Services Specialist with VMCH. She's passionate about creating positive change for people living with dementia and their families, with 16 years in the sector.

Sadly, she says the De Napoli's story is not uncommon.

“Funding for YOD support now falls under the NDIS, which means there's more red tape involved and as a result, many organisations have dropped their programs for YOD. There are very slim pickings for support in Melbourne's east – it's a huge service gap.”

With this in mind, VMCH has joined Caladenia Dementia Care to form the Dementia Knowledge Network. Its aim? To collaborate with others in the sector, learn about new research, and find out what support people with dementia and their carers actually want and need to improve their quality of life.

Julie and Frank participated in some network focus groups dedicated to YOD, where Julie suggested a weekend away to Bendigo to visit the Elvis exhibition (Frank's a huge fan). Much to her delight, VMCH agreed and recently, five people with YOD and their carers enjoyed a weekend away.

“We’ve always done everything together, so this was a lovely piece of normal,” Julie says.

Frank also attends a twice-weekly social group at Caladenia, which is an hour round-trip away from their home. “He absolutely loves it there, but it would be great to find something in addition to this that was more local,” Julie says. She’s also signed up to VMCH’s Carer Support Program, and looks forward to connecting with other carers and taking time out.

Elizabeth says VMCH’s ultimate aim is to promote connection, social opportunities and independence for people living with a YOD diagnosis.

“We acknowledge the overwhelming and emotional challenge in receiving a diagnosis, however we encourage people to speak up for what they need.”

Much like Elizabeth, Julie is determined to see more positive outcomes for people in her family’s situation. She hopes sharing their story, and some advice, will help.

“I’d like people to know it’s ok to talk about it (dementia diagnosis). That’s what I struggled with in the beginning. I didn’t tell anyone other than our immediate family what was happening. I thought I was protecting him, that others may judge us. Now Frank tells people he has dementia – and it’s really made life easier,” Julie says.

“Also, consider yourself. This was the hardest thing for me, to be kind to myself and to take time out. I didn’t do that for a very long time and it wore me down. But then I saw that Frank was happy, and I thought, I’ve got to try to be happy too.”



Frank and Julie join their YOD peers at the Elvis exhibition



Elizabeth chats with Julie and Frank at their home

Elizabeth would like to hear from anyone living with YOD, their carers, or any organisations interested in offering YOD support. Call 0409 413 709.



Helen at home

Affordable homes help support older women in need

Think homelessness couldn't happen to you? Neither did Helen Simmons.

Forty years ago, Helen, now aged 79, “had it all”. A husband, three children, a nice house with a pool, many friends. It was the 80s; a time of dizzying highs and living large – until the stock market crashed – and then came the spectacular lows.

Helen is one of 436 people aged over 55 living in VMCH's 21 affordable homes communities. She's also among the fastest growing cohort of people experiencing homelessness, women aged over 55. Around 90% of VMCH's affordable homes residents are female.

The number of older Australian women accessing homelessness services has increased by 63% in the last five years (The Australian Human Rights Commission – Older Women and Homelessness, 2019).

The Retirement Living Council reports “the largest proportion of older women facing homelessness in Australia have led conventional lives ... they've been employed, had stable homes and families. (Homelessness) is forced upon them after critical life events, like a relationship breakdown, financial troubles, or the onset of illness.” They describe these women as “the missing middle”.

Helen's story is an eerie reflection of these statements.

Back in the 80s, Helen's husband made some bad business decisions, and had (unbeknownst to her) remortgaged their house twice to stay afloat. When things went south, the stay-at-home mum found herself divorced and homeless.

She and the children moved in with her mother with not a penny to their name.

“I was completely blindsided,” Helen recalls, “I was surprised how so many of my ‘friends’ disappeared. The whole experience was life-changing.”

With three children to take care of, Helen sprang into action. Despite just a few years' experience as a teenage hairdresser, Helen secured a retail job with Katies and worked her way up to running its then bridal department.

The home front wasn't so stable. When Helen's parents passed away she was able to purchase a small unit with some money they'd left her. When her son started his own business years later, he bought her a beautiful home in Lower Plenty, but then was forced to sell when his business went under. Helen then moved in with her daughter, where she stayed for 10 years until it was recently time to leave.

The breast cancer survivor says a chance encounter with an old friend turned her life around.

“She told me about VMCH's affordable homes but I didn't think they'd take me, I didn't have anything to give,” she said.



Helen will move to a brand new affordable home soon

“But they accepted me anyway and now here I am, I love it. When I first came I asked if I could put anything up on the walls I was told ‘Of course, it’s your home, do what you like’. To know this place was mine was amazing. I just wish I’d known about this earlier.”

VMCH CEO Sonya Smart says providing affordable homes is part of VMCH’s mission to support the most vulnerable people in the community.

“All people, and especially older people, deserve to live in comfort with security and with dignity,” she says.

“There is a huge gap in housing for older people, particularly older women who are still very independent and many years away from requiring aged care services. That’s why we continue to actively grow our affordable homes across Melbourne, including the development of a new and modern affordable homes community in Ford St, Ivanhoe East, and providing land for peppercorn leases (where the lease payments do not reflect the fair value of the property being leased) for another 40-plus homes in Bundoora and Wantirna South through the Director of Housing.”

VMCH is also a supporter of the Everybody’s Home campaign, which calls for an additional 500,000 social and affordable homes to be built by 2026.

An exciting new start

Helen is among 23 residents living at our Ivanhoe community who have been invited to move to brand-new, purpose-built apartments in nearby Ford St, Ivanhoe.

Anticipated for completion in early 2023, the modern units will have new amenities and bigger shared spaces, as well as accommodating a further 16 residents.

VMCH’s vision for the site at Lower Heidelberg Rd is to develop a state-of-the-art retirement living community to provide much-needed housing opportunities for retirees.

Helen and her neighbours visited a display suite at Ford St recently to give them an idea of what to expect from their new homes.

“Residents gave very positive feedback,” said Affordable Homes Manager Amy Hudson. “Most are very pleased with the finishes and standard of the unit and are looking forward to moving in.”



An artist’s impression of Ford St

Celebrating our aged care staff

There's never been a more important time to thank and honour our aged care workers.

In August we celebrated Aged Care Employee Day, an annual event that recognises all those involved in supporting older people. There are more than 360,000 aged care workers in Australia, each dedicated to supporting 1.3 million older Australians.

We want to thank each and every one of our incredible team members for devoting their time to improving the lives of those in our ageing community.

Earlier this year we asked staff to nominate a colleague who they believe goes above and beyond in their role. Each of these individuals share traits of genuine compassion and an outstanding work ethic.



Chloe Rance

"It takes a special person to be an aged care employee, but Chloe is extra special."



Estela Manaog

"Compassionate, caring and comforting."



Mary Jaraba

"She's one in a million."



Rachel Blachfird

"She brightens up the day of both residents and staff."



Introducing, St. Clare

An artist's impression of St. Clare

VMCH is excited to reveal the name of our premium retirement living precinct in Kew.

St. Clare, on Studley Park Rd, will include 102 premium apartments and see the restoration of heritage buildings, plus spectacular amenities and expansive green spaces.

VMCH CEO Sonya Smart said the name embodied a sense of welcome and community that is the hallmark of all VMCH projects.

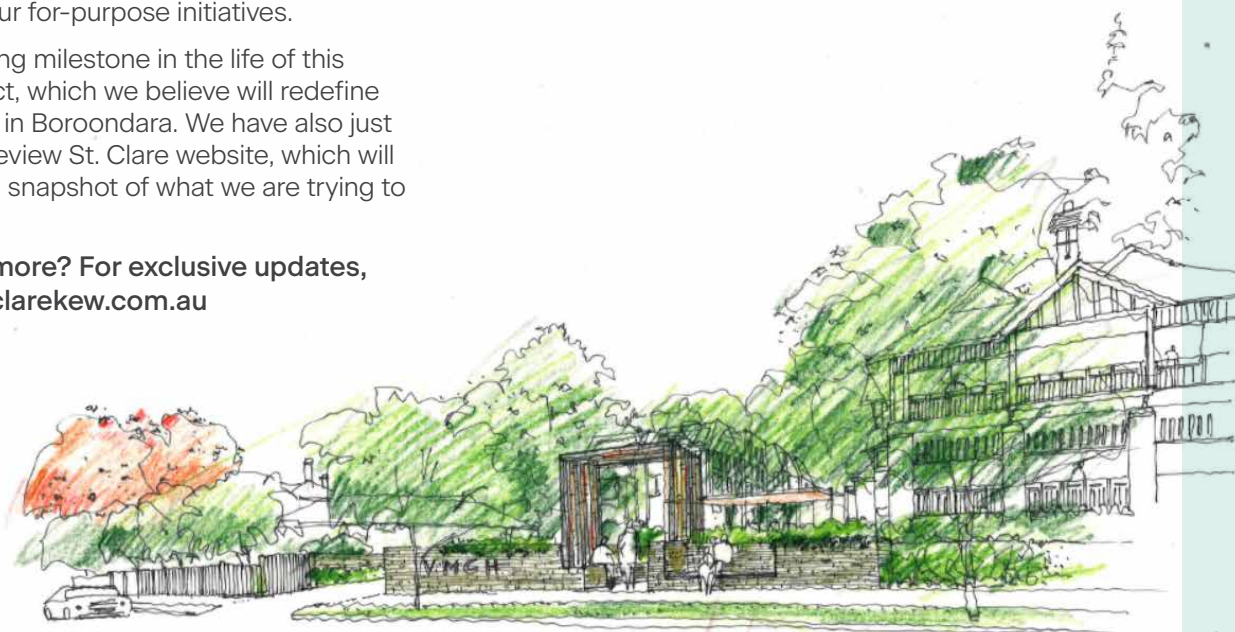
"Named after Clare of Assisi, Patron Saint, this project draws inspiration from the generosity of St. Clare, and her dedication to giving back, with all proceeds from St. Clare financially supporting the delivery of our for-purpose initiatives.

"This is an exciting milestone in the life of this incredible project, which we believe will redefine retirement living in Boroondara. We have also just launched our preview St. Clare website, which will give the public a snapshot of what we are trying to achieve."

Want to know more? For exclusive updates, please visit: stclarekew.com.au

ST. CLARE

STUDLEY PARK. KEW



Sketch hand drawn by project architects Woods Bagot for initial inspiration (not to scale)

New beginnings across our SDAs

Our Specialist Disability Homes (SDAs) give people with disability the opportunity to live independently, with housemates they connect with. Our 16 homes are designed with warmth, comfort and individual personalities in mind, and we're excited to reveal we have more homes on the horizon! Let's meet some of our residents who have been achieving some great milestones recently...

Patricia, Wantirna SDA

Patricia has been living in Wantirna SDA for two years now. An avid supporter of Collingwood Football Club, Patricia's room is adorned in the club's merchandise, alongside many photographs of her family. She is close friends with fellow residents, Adam and Maria, with the trio attending the same school years ago.

Recently, Patricia set a goal to find a job. With the help of her occupational therapist, Jacinta, and habit coach, Nathan, Patricia created a resume and was offered a role at Miss Pickle Café.

“I go in for a couple of hours every second Wednesday,” Patricia says. “I help to clear the tables, and in the kitchen, I help get some food ready and with the dishes. I also have my lunch there before I go home.”

Patricia loves her job so much she recently decided to get a second one, beginning a new role at Waverley Industries in the catering department.



Patricia loves living at Wantirna SDA



Patricia is a Pies fan



Christina, Nicolie and Sally, Lilydale SDA

Christina, 27, Nicolie, 35, and Sally, 47, have been housemates for a few months now and are loving life in their Lilydale group home.

Christina had already lived out of home, but for Nicolie and Sally, it's been a whole new experience. The pair moved from their respective family homes, and while a little apprehensive at first, are enjoying their independence, freedom and blossoming friendships.

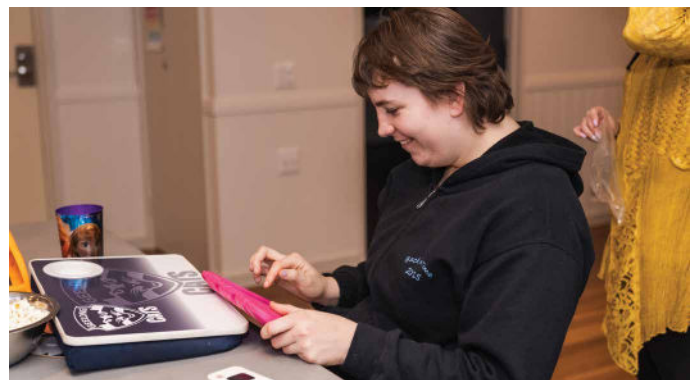
Showing her housemates the ropes has been a highlight for Christina!

“Getting to know the girls, helping them make their lunches and with their washing is my favourite part,” says Christina.

Sally, who loves colouring and sports, is thrilled to be in charge of her own day, and while Nicolie admits she misses her mum, she's very happy at Lilydale.

In their downtime, the ladies enjoy watching Home and Away, going out for coffee, and cooking together.

Nicolie, Christina and Sally in their Lilydale backyard



Christina enjoys time on her iPad



Sally loves colouring

If you would like to learn more about our SDAs, call us on 1300 698 624.



Welcome to our new aged care community

VMCH Ashwood

VMCH has purchased a 90-bed aged care residence in Ashwood, from Cabrini Health.

CEO Sonya Smart said she and her team were honoured to welcome Cabrini Ashwood residents, staff and families into the VMCH community.

“We have a long-term relationship with Cabrini, partnering and collaborating on many initiatives and projects over the years to help better serve the community,” Sonya said.

“Like VMCH, Cabrini Ashwood is a Catholic for-purpose organisation, guided by a similar mission and values to deliver high quality and compassionate care for people in need. We look forward to providing a seamless transition for residents, staff and families from Cabrini to the VMCH family.”

Cabrini Australia Chief Executive Sue Williams said the organisation was responding to the changing care needs of its community.

“Cabrini Ashwood has been a significant and highly-valued part of our service for 20 years and we are very proud of the high-quality, compassionate care our team has provided to residents and their families during this time.

“We are confident in our decision to transfer Cabrini Ashwood to VMCH, which has a strong alignment to our own mission, vision and culture.”

The purchase builds on VMCH’s existing portfolio of 13 aged care residences across Victoria, and will extend our reach into a new locale in Melbourne’s south-east.



VMCH Ashwood gardens

Where Is My Coffee? honoured with state award

VMCH's social enterprise café creating job opportunities for people with disability is a state award winner!

Where Is My Coffee? in Wangaratta placed first in the 2022 Victorian Disability Awards for 'Excellence in Employment Outcomes'.

The awards focus on recognising and honouring the achievements of individuals and teams that promote the rights and inclusion of people with disability. They are judged by Victoria's disability community, with recommendations made to the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers for final selection.

Where Is My Coffee? opened its doors in December last year. Since that time, it has mentored 20 trainees, with two going on to find paid employment, over a massive 2,688 hours of service.

VMCH General Manager Disability Services, Daniel Carter, said the team was "absolutely honoured" to win the prestigious award.

"I'm so proud of our dedicated team for their hard work over the past nine months, the outcomes we've seen for our trainees have been incredible. To witness their growth in confidence and independence is really encouraging, and this award is a reflection of the real and positive difference the café has made to many lives."

Bianca Paola was among a group of trainees, staff and friends who gathered at the café to eagerly await the announcement.

"I felt absolutely happy," Bianca said. "It took a while to sink in, but we were thrilled! I yelled out, 'let's open some champagne' and we did! It was great."

Daniel and Bianca also thanked the local community, who've flocked to the café to enjoy its delicious food, knockout coffee and inclusive atmosphere since it opened.



Café Team Leader Corneilius Scott, trainee Alex Graham and Café Coordinator Jodie Long celebrate the award

"Without their support, this award would not be possible," Daniel said. "Congratulations to finalists in all categories, including fellow locals Northeast Health Wangaratta's Tidy Team."

Daniel said VMCH was proud to offer meaningful opportunities for the thousands of people with disability across Victoria who are actively seeking to enter the workforce.

"There is obviously a huge skills shortage across all sectors at the moment, thanks to the COVID pandemic. Cafés like ours are an important piece of the puzzle to help solve that issue. Here at VMCH our goal is to support 100 people to find and sustain award wage employment by 2025, and we're well on our way to doing that."

VMCH recently opened its second social enterprise café, Star Café, at our Star of the Sea Aged Care Residence in Torquay.



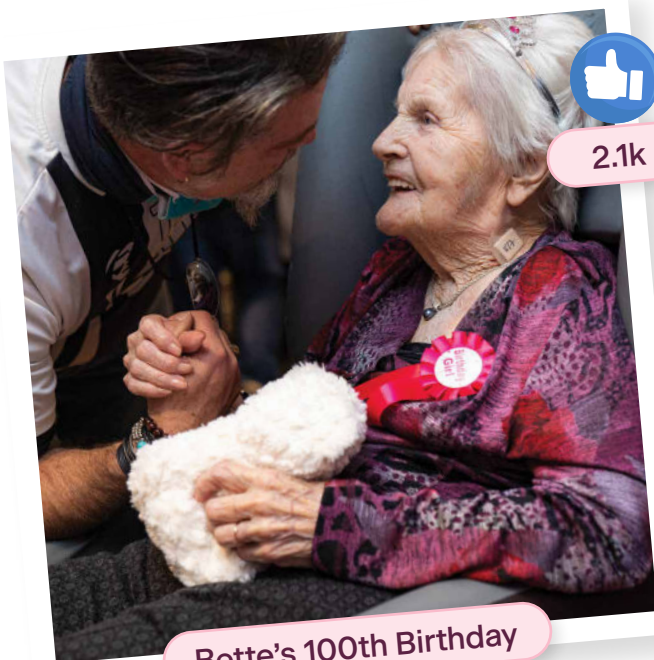
The WIMC team anxiously await the award announcement

To learn more about VMCH's job and life skills programs, visit: vmch.com.au or call 1300 698 624.

VMCH Social



This year has been very exciting for the VMCH community! We love sharing all the fabulous events and achievements from across our services, and the best way to keep up with these by following us on social media. From our social enterprise café Where Is My Coffee? snagging first place in the 2022 Victorian Disability Awards, to a humble high tea at one of our aged care residences, our socials cover it all.



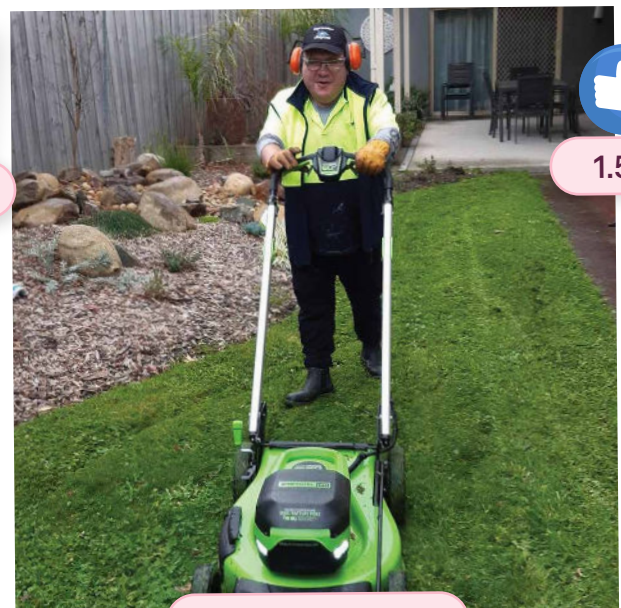
Bette's 100th Birthday



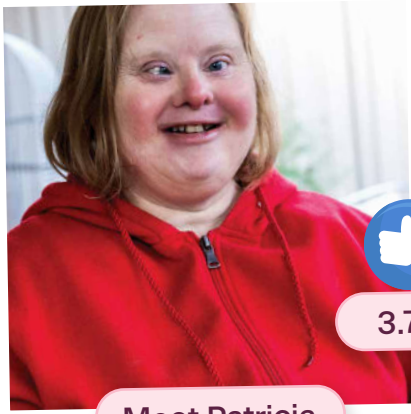
Providence high tea



WIMC wins award



The Green Team



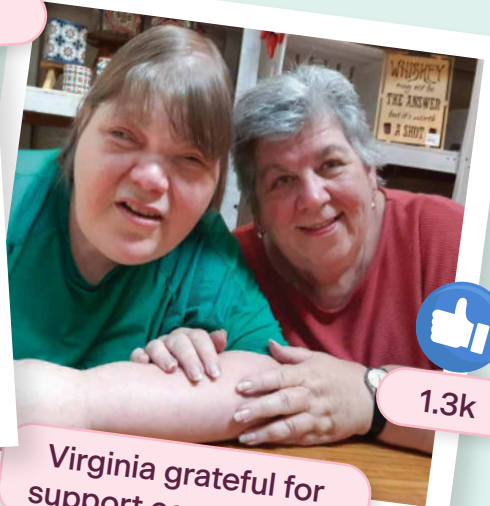
3.7k

Meet Patricia



1.6k

WIMC award nomination



1.3k

Virginia grateful for support coordination



866

Leslie turns 104



163

Happy Father's Day

Connect

Want to know what all the fuss is about?
Check us out on the following platforms:



• Facebook.com/VMCHVic



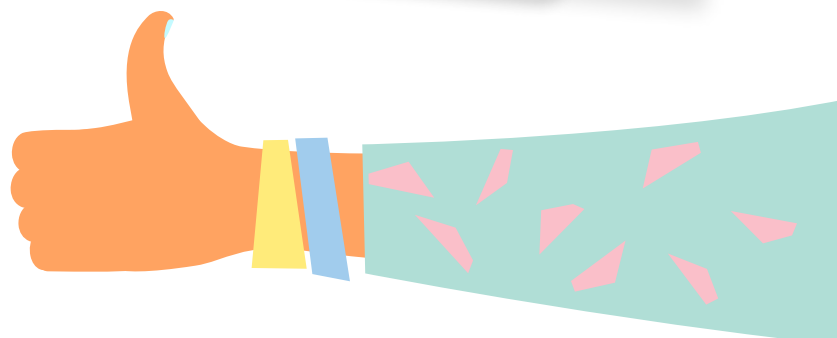
• Facebook.com/VMCHDisabilityServices




• Instagram.com/vmchvic



• Linkedin.com/company/vmchvic





No man is an island (not Cyril, anyway)

Beach view on French Island beach

Most of us have dreamed of living on an island. VMCH At-Home Aged Care client Cyril Kennedy has done it – but now he needs help staying there.

Cyril, aged 68, moved to French Island 15 years ago. Not familiar with the island? You wouldn't be the first.

Located in Western Port, it's the largest coastal island of Victoria, and was also once home to pop princess Kylie Minogue! These days it's a sleepy island town of around 100 people, with no water mains or electricity mains, no medical services, and only one small general store and post office. Access to the island is by daily passenger ferry, which is where VMCH Case Manager Scott Li found himself several weeks ago, on his way to access Cyril's health needs.

“I had to Google where it was,” Scott admits. “It was an adventure.”

Cyril has been living in a van since his cabin burned down a few years ago. Home modifications to help him move around safely, transport to medical appointments and meal provision are just some of the supports Scott is helping to arrange.

Thinking outside the square is a must, and Scott's coming up with some interesting solutions to the problem of remoteness, including the possibility of the island's café supplying his meals.

“It is a challenge, but everything Cyril asks for is reasonable, so we're trying to be flexible and investigate different options for special circumstances,” Scott says.

“As a case manager, I think the biggest, most important thing is that we have the empathy to care about these clients who are living in very regional areas. It's our responsibility to help ... we know the services are available, and we know how to communicate with the providers to deliver what our clients need. I know this industry well, and this is definitely the most interesting situation I've had.”

Cyril is hopeful Scott can help him remain living at home, despite his health problems.

The former logging and earthmoving contractor grew up in the Tasmanian bush, and says the island gives him the peace and quiet he craves.

“I came here initially for land clearing work, and then moved permanently. During the winter you don't do much, just go for a drive, a shoot or a fish. I go to the mainland about once a month for groceries. Living here is not everyone's cup of tea, but the tranquility ... you can't beat it.”



AHAC client Cyril and VMCH Case Manager Scott

**Do you need support to stay living at home?
Call us on 1300 698 624.**

Thanking our loyal supporters

It was wonderful to welcome VMCH's most loyal supporters to our 11th annual Fawkner Fellowship Luncheon on 8 September in Toorak.

Established in 2013, the Fellowship gives thanks to a very special group, those who have chosen to leave a gift for VMCH in their Will, or have established a trust or fund of which our organisation is a beneficiary.

Guests enjoyed speeches from VMCH Board Chairman Julien O'Connell AO, CEO Sonya Smart, Chief Mission Officer Bridget O'Shannassy, and Manager of Community Connections Harley Dagleish, who elaborated on some of the fantastic initiatives from across VMCH and our vision for the future.

VMCH Grants and Bequests Officer Sandra Rosano said after a two-year hiatus thanks to COVID-19, it was an especially significant event.

“We thank each and every one of our loyal donors and supporters – your significant generosity and ongoing support is so greatly appreciated.”

The 2022 luncheon coincided with Include A Charity Week, an initiative aimed at encouraging and educating people to leave a gift in their Will, once their friends and family have been provided for.



(L-R) Alistair Lloyd, Shirley Lloyd, VMCH General Manager Retirement Living Liz Hickey and Rosemarie Kennedy



VMCH Grants and Bequests Officer Sandra Rosano



(L-R) Ann Prowse, Judge Frank Shelton and Anna Shelton



VMCH CEO Sonya Smart

To find out more about leaving a gift in your Will, call 1300 698 624 or visit vmch.com.au

Mission in action

Christmas – God is with us and the spirit of gifting

Dr Zachariah Duke,
Formation and Ethics Advisor, VMCH

Christmas is a significant season in the liturgical life of the Christian Church as it provides an opportunity for Christians around the world to celebrate the birth and life of Jesus Christ.

**“Look, the virgin shall
conceive and bear a son,
and they shall name him
Emmanuel,” which means,
“God is with us”**

(Matthew 1:26-27; NRSV).

Jesus Christ is a gift Christians receive, and in turn, Christians are called to gift Jesus Christ to others, particularly during the season of Christmas. This might be referred to as “The gift of Jesus Christ” at Christmas and is especially relevant for people who are experiencing disadvantage and marginalisation.

At a time of great turbulence locally, nationally and internationally, our communities need the message of Jesus Christ now more than ever. Let us spread the good message of peace, hope, mercy, compassion, forgiveness, love, joy, and wonder this Christmas.

This Christmas, let us pray for peace and hope so that the world can continue to be nourished, strengthened, and prosper. A happy and holy Christmas to you and your loved ones!



Catholic Matters: Arts in Action

The Arts in Action program was formed in early 2016 at the request of Norma, a VMCH aged care resident who advised a pastoral care practitioner it was important to her to give to the community. A committed group of staff, volunteers and residents across the VMCH community use their artistic abilities to create craft for people less fortunate. These gifts are included in our annual Christmas hampers that are distributed to people who are experiencing disadvantage in our local community, including our affordable homes residents, specialist school and early learning and therapy communities and clients receiving home care packages.

To find out more about this important initiative, and how you can help, please see page 24.

VMCH aged care resident Mary enjoys creating items for the Christmas hampers



Volunteers make the world go round

Ben with his teacher Hygenia

“The smallest act of kindness is worth more than the grandest intention.” – Oscar Wilde

At VMCH, we have over 500 volunteers who selflessly dedicate their time to creating a positive impact on the community. An integral part of our organisation, volunteering can be a rewarding endeavour that promotes happiness whilst also benefiting those around you.

Back in August, we celebrated National Student Volunteer Week, an initiative that recognises student volunteers and promotes volunteering to young people across Australia. This year's theme was 'Passion. Opportunity. Change.' and explores how students can realise their dreams and create change across the world. We can't think of a better example of this than St Paul's College student, Ben.

Ben, aged 18, set himself a goal at the start of the year. The Year 12 student and school captain wanted to find work and contribute to his community. Working closely with his teachers, Ben created a resume and began his search. Before long, he was offered a position at our Balwyn Op Shop.

Ben volunteers once a week on a Tuesday and is thriving in his new role.

“My favourite part is sorting out the puzzle pieces,” Ben says, “and I like to help with the plants.”

Aiding him in his new endeavour is Ben's teacher, Hygenia Lobo. Having taught Ben since he was five years old, Hygenia believes this role will aid him in becoming an independent young adult.

“This is Ben's stepping stone to understanding what work means,” she says. “Things like being on time, following instructions and being a team member will start to become clear. He is so excited about this position and feels valued by the community.”

While Ben is the first student from St Paul's College to volunteer with Balwyn Op Shop, he won't be the last! This is just the beginning of a great partnership that will see more students volunteer in the near future.

If you'd like to find out more about volunteering with us, please call 1300 698 624.



Older migrants need more housing support

Amy meets with Tony at his home

Guanghui (Tony) Huang fled China in December 2014 for a better life in Australia. Months later he found himself completely isolated and living in a tiny room in an over-crowded share home. He was in poor health, with limited finances, no job, and no support.

“I was down and even thought I was lessened and forsaken,” recalls Tony, who suffers from depression.

Then Tony met Case Manager Amy Yuen from VMCH, and his life turned around.

Amy supports 66 seniors who are on a low income and are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, through the Assistance with Care and Housing (ACH) program. Of her clients, 30% are from CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) backgrounds, a group already at higher risk of housing distress.

Housing for the Aged Action Group (HAAG) reports many older migrants, particularly those from China and India, often come to Australia later in life and haven’t been able to buy a house, or have come to live with family and if it hasn’t worked out, have nowhere to go.

According to the 2021 census, 15% of the homeless population are migrants (arrived in the last five years). That’s more than three times the ratio of new migrants in the general population. Language barriers and a lack of knowledge and understanding around Australian systems and services are among the obstacles.

All rang true for Tony, who also struggles with poor eyesight, rheumatoid arthritis and anemia.

“I tried my hardest to find a job here in Melbourne, I am well educated, but no employer would hire me because they thought I was too old, and I did not hold a diploma or skills certificate accredited in Australia,” Tony explains.

His greatest worry was accommodation, and he was forced to choose between paying for better quality rentals, or his medication. He chose the latter, and so his only option was a small, windowless room inside private rental accommodation shared with several families.

With restricted access to the kitchen and bathroom, he took a bath once a month and cooked meals in his rice cooker in his room.

“I often woke up during the night because of the cold. I felt stifled in scorching hot weather in summer.”

Thankfully, Amy helped Tony apply for public housing, and in June, he moved into a comfortable home in Box Hill, complete with newly-donated furniture from Eastern Emergency Relief Network.

He says living in the new house gives him hope for the future.

“Now I can cook what I really like, read in the house and take a bath every day. Hopefully, after living in the new environment, my health will gradually improve and I will be able to do something good for society, in return for the benefits I have received from the government and for the help from VMCH.”

Amy says helping people like Tony to find suitable housing and support (she's also linked him with medical and age-related care) is a huge collaborative effort, and she works closely with government agencies, councils, health services and other non-profits, including, the Migrant Information Centre.

Personally, Amy finds achieving positive outcomes for her clients rewarding but says more needs to be done across the board to help older migrants settle into their new country.

“We need more community education for health care professionals, housing and migrant support services on the vulnerability of new migrants who are socially isolated and need to access the public housing system or affordable housing,” Amy says. “The government also needs to have close supervision of the owners of rooming houses to ensure they provide sufficient support for new migrants to meet their basic needs.”



Tony is happy in his new home

How support coordination is helping Leon live his best life

Leon Ahmat is an outgoing guy. He loves music, dancing, drama, swimming and spending time with his animals. Food is a passion, he's a big MasterChef fan. Leon also wants to build on his independence, but some pretty serious health setbacks and challenges accessing funding have hampered his plans for the past few years.

Enter Megan Keady, Support Coordinator with VMCH. Megan's role is to support Leon and his family to navigate the NDIS and find the right services and funding to best meet his needs.

Megan has known the family for many years, having worked at Leon's day program when she was just starting out.

Leon's mum Loretta cannot imagine where they'd be without Megan's support, navigating a NDIS that is "ridiculously exhausting".

"To have someone by your side who knows all the ins and outs is so important. Megan is so efficient, caring, and so good at her job. The changes she has made for our family are massive, I can't really put them into words."



Loretta, Leon and Megan

A battle with testicular cancer, bouts of anxiety and depression, serious spinal problems and numerous infections – exacerbated by the challenges of COVID-19 – have seen Leon's care needs increase and change over the past few years. Finding support workers and organising home modifications and therapists are just some of the things Megan has helped with. Now, Megan and the family are concentrating on supporting Leon, aged 42, to live independently in a house purchased by his parents.

"We're really looking forward to having him settle in his own place and enjoy his independence." Loretta says.

Megan says supporting Leon through the next stage of his life is a "privilege". She admits that even for professionals, the NDIS can be challenging.

"Obtaining the correct assessments, quotes, getting applications done ... it's very time consuming. Where do people with disability or their families find the time when the challenges of caring fill in the day already? It's great that support coordinators can take away that stress."



Leon and his dog, Snoopy

Megan's support to get Leon into his own home will also help change Loretta's life.

"I hope to work again part-time one day," Loretta says. "As Leon gets older, I've realised I need a good team around me to give him the best care. Megan has done that, and I feel lucky to have her support."

Do you need help to get the most out of your NDIS plan? Call us on 1300 698 624.



Affordable homes resident Marjorie

'Tis the season of giving - 2022 Christmas Appeal



Santa's little VMCH helpers are gearing up to begin the huge (and joyous) task of packing and delivering Christmas hampers to people who need it most – but they need your help.

Each year, VMCH creates and delivers around 700 Christmas hampers for our affordable homes residents, children, adults and families from our disability services, and clients receiving home care packages.

Some recipients say receiving items such as food, decorations, toiletries and toys is the highlight of their year – which says so much about the impact.

“This will be VMCH’s eighth year delivering hampers, and our biggest yet! The cost of living has risen significantly, and off the back of COVID, we have a huge number of people in need of essentials, treats and festive cheer,” says VMCH CEO Sonya Smart.

“We’re very thankful to our regular donors, supporters and volunteers who make this possible each year – but we need extra help in 2022 to deliver a record number of 750 hampers. We’re hoping community members will consider donating to our Christmas Appeal and ensuring each and every person who needs it receives a hamper.”

The family of one of VMCH’s specialist school students says their annual hamper “fills their hearts with joy and happiness”.

“Our kids’ faces light up with wonder and curiosity about the goodies in the hamper. It brings the spirit of Christmas and giving into our home ... it helps us teach our kids about giving.”

Affordable homes resident Marjorie, aged 85, says she still remembers receiving her first Christmas hamper more than six years ago.

“I was like a kid at Christmas,” she recalls. “I was just not expecting it and I was so impressed with the items inside.”

Marjorie says the arrival of hampers is eagerly anticipated by her neighbours, many of whom live alone.

“For some people, I know it’s the only present they receive at Christmas. To me, it’s not even about the gifts, but the gift itself that someone is thinking of you.”

Sonya said staff and volunteers cannot wait to knock on some doors and spread much-needed cheer this Christmas.

“We’re hopeful people out there may consider being a part of this beautiful initiative, by donating any amount they can.”



If you would like to make a donation, visit vmch.com.au/christmashampers call 1300 698 624 or scan the QR code.





New approach to dementia care improves lives

Lady Lourdes has been awarded for its interior design

Those close to someone living with dementia understand the importance of time. Time you've had creating precious memories before diagnosis, and the time after, before the disease takes complete hold.

In between, ensuring the person living with dementia lives their best life possible, with dignity and respect, is paramount.

Jenny Tadic believes the time her mum, Mary, has spent at VMCH's award-winning specialist dementia unit, Lady Lourdes House, has not only improved her wellbeing, but slowed the progression of her disease.

Lady Lourdes is part of our St Bernadette's Aged Care Residence in Sunshine North and funded by the Australian Government's Specialist Dementia Care Program (SDCP). The home is purpose-designed for its eight residents, who experience very severe symptoms of dementia, and offers up to 12 months of intensive, supportive care to help them manage their symptoms so they can transition into mainstream aged care.

Lady Lourdes is one of only three SDCP's in Victoria, and only 10 in the country.

Jenny is grateful to have found Lady Lourdes, following a series of traumatic events for her mum. Staff at Mary's previous aged care home were unable to deal with her escalating, and sometimes aggressive, behaviour.

As a result, the 75-year-old was removed forcibly from the home by police, and subsequently lived at Sunshine Hospital for three months.

"Then we found Lady Lourdes and within six weeks of moving in, we could see a huge difference in Mum," Jenny says. "She was calmer, and the staff treated her with dignity and respect."

So comfortable is the family with Mary's care, Jenny and her sister were both recently able to enjoy family holidays for the first time in years.

"The home is not only beautiful and homely, but staff feel like family. You can tell it's not just a job to them."

VMCH Dementia Services Specialist Elizabeth Baxter says Lady Lourdes staff are specially trained, with the built environment also geared towards positive outcomes, designed under Dementia Enabling Environmental Principles.

"Our multidisciplinary approach to care reflects the future of dementia support; an end to an outdated 'one-size-fits-all' approach," Elizabeth says.



Mary at Lady Lourdes

“The program recognises the needs of people with advanced dementia who cannot be appropriately supported in a mainstream memory support setting. We provide intensive clinical support and review, aimed to stabilise symptoms causing distress or challenges for the person or their family.

“Excitingly, we have just been selected to replicate this service in Clayton so we can offer important services to many more people.”

Mary will soon become the fourth Lady Lourdes resident to transition to a mainstream setting since it opened in November 2020.

“If people we able to get into places like this at an earlier stage, I honestly think they could delay the (dementia) progression,” Jenny says.

“It’s been a fabulous experience, and I don’t understand why there aren’t more units like this.”



Mary at Lady Lourdes surrounded by her family. Jenny is far right.

If you would like to learn more about VMCH dementia support, call 1300 698 624.

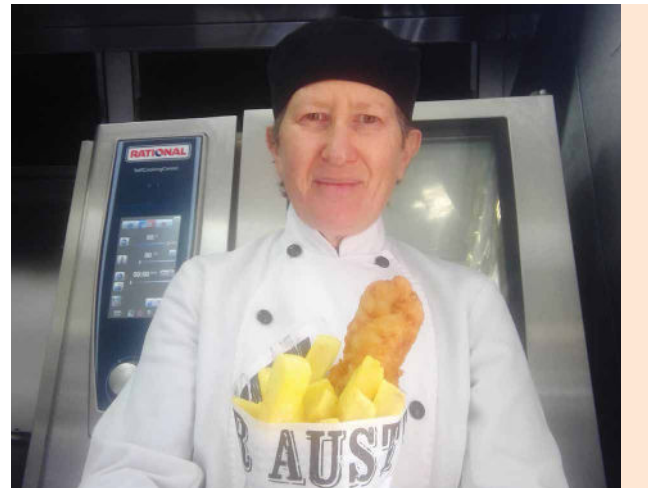
Food for the soul

Passionate and talented chefs are thinking outside the box to elevate the dining experience of aged care residents. Thursday October 20 was International Chefs Day, celebrating the profession and creating awareness about the importance of healthy eating.

Let's meet some of our VMCH chefs and learn what motivates them...



Sanath Wanniarachchi, Head Chef
Residential Aged Care



Karen Stansfield, Chef Manager,
Berwick

Sanath joined VMCH in 2015, following a career in coveted positions in some of the world's most luxurious hotels and casinos, including the 7-star Burj-Al-Arab Hotel in Dubai.

Now, in his new role as Head Chef Residential Aged Care, Sanath oversees menus across all 13 VMCH residences, inspiring chef managers to think outside the square and concentrate on presentation, along with nutrition, to maximise residents' dining experience.

"It is a very rewarding job. Food is a very important part of aged care and residents should of course have access to the best quality food available.

"Seasonal, dietitian-approved menus include various cuisines and cooking techniques. First impressions are everything, so we also focus on the presentation side of things, bringing in coloured crockery and matching table set-ups."

"I love how food connects people; how creating a menu that makes people happy plays such a central role in nurturing dignity, respect and compassion.

"I always keep in mind how important the dining experience should be, and I try to provide the kind of meals that enhance people's quality of life. I came from a big family, and this was one of the first things I learned and still carry with me today. Now, I am part of the big family at Berwick."





Rachna (Kimi) Power, Chef Manager,
John R Hannah



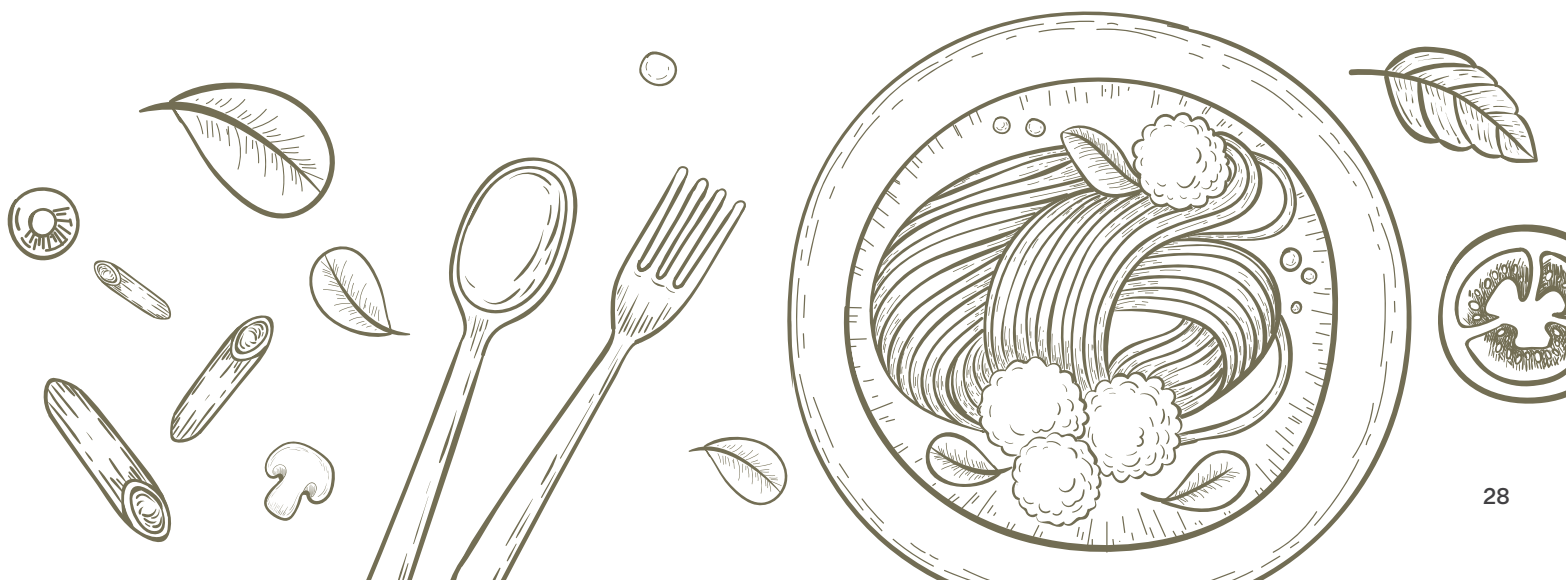
Edward Njore, Chef Manager,
Bundoora

"Working in aged care requires not only good knowledge of policies and procedures, but having a heart full of giving, love and care. I feel blessed to have the skill and ability to deliver high quality, well balanced and hearty home-cooked meals for our residents, many of whom have had years of cooking experience themselves.

"Even just a simple roast meal can remind residents of those Sunday lunches around their dining tables, but now with a new family surrounding them. Seeing their empty plates is not only an achievement for me as a chef, but it also gives the same joy as feeding my own family."

"I have a passion for cooking and making people happy through food. I prepare delicious and nutritious meals from the heart and am grateful to have the opportunity to cook for the elderly and people from different backgrounds.

"I am humbled to say that residents always give feedback when they finish their meals and will often say that was the best dish they have eaten and will remember a certain meal and look forward to having it next time. Some dishes give residents a pleasant memory of a past dish that was prepared by a special person in their life, which is nice."





Speechies improve lives

VMCH Speech Pathologist Amber Clark

Speech pathologists play a vital role in the lives of many Australians. When it comes to communication, like expressing thoughts, ideas and feelings, it's the job of the speech pathologist to help. The impact of their work can be life changing and reduce the likelihood of further communication problems down the track.

In honour of the profession, we recently celebrated Speech Pathology Week. The annual event seeks to promote the profession and recognise the work done by speech pathologists with the 1.2 million Australians who have a communication disability.

This year's theme is 'Good Communication, Better Communities', a strategy our speech pathologists (or 'speechies', as they're known in the business) employ each day.

One of our speechies is Amber Clark, who works for our Early Learning and Therapy service. Amber, who has been with VMCH for two years now, recalls how she began her career almost 20 years ago.

"I had a family friend who was watching me play with her child when I was young and she commented that I was really good with kids," she said. "I've always had an affinity for language, so combining language and paediatrics is how I fell into speech pathology."

Amber treats around five children a day, ranging from toddlers to school aged children. Her methods differ depending on the age of the child.

She notes that working with pre-schoolers and toddlers is very much play based, recognising that playing is how a child learns. Working with school aged children is very dependent on their needs and their goals, but a lot of social skill development, literacy development and oral language.

Amber emphasises the importance of engaging the child's family as much as possible.

"It's a very family centred practice. We want to support our families so that they can transfer the strategies we're trying to support the child with into the home environment."

VMCH has speech pathologists across At-Home Aged Care, Early Learning and Therapy and St Paul's College. We want to thank our incredible team for doing such an amazing job, and continuously providing the highest level of care.

If you would like to know more about our speech therapy offering, call 1300 698 624.

Let's give it a Real Shot!

Earlier this year we launched our Real Shot appeal, with an end goal of raising enough money to purchase a brand new coffee van! Designed to give people with disability a real shot at developing their job skills and independence, our coffee program will serve as both a mobile cafe and a training site.

We are so pleased to report that our dream is getting closer! With help from the community we have raised an incredible \$88,967 to date, bringing us one step closer to creating a new pathway to work for people with disability.

Eagerly awaiting the program commencement are our Community Connection clients, who are ready to jump in and begin their training. Having already learnt some new skills through a coffee cart pilot program, our team is keen to keep that momentum going and begin serving the VMCH community.

The Real Shot appeal not only supports people with disability to pursue their future goals and dreams, but encourages positive community engagement and the forming of new and meaningful relationships.

Our job skills programs have seen some wonderful success this year. Back on page 14, we announced that our social enterprise cafe Where Is My Coffee placed first in the 2022 Victorian Disability Awards for 'Excellence in Employment Outcomes'. We are so proud of everything they have achieved so far, and can't help but anticipate similar success from Real Shot in the future.



If you want to be part of giving people with disability a real shot at a bright future, please donate today vmch.com.au/realshot or call 1300 698 624.



It's the relationships that count.

Jobs in Aged Care
and Disability Services.

Recruiting now!

 careers.vmch.com.au

VMCH