

# Cornerstone

VMCH

Unveiling our new  
Values

Intergenerational  
relationships

Celebrating our  
long-serving employees

Edition  
**TEN**

Love · Joy · Courage · Hospitality

“ Have the courage to  
be truly happy! ”  
– Pope Francis

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Contact the editorial team at [marketing@vmch.com.au](mailto:marketing@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 2023.

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**VMCH**

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

## A note from our Chairman

### Welcome to this special edition of Cornerstone.

It seems fitting that a milestone edition celebrating our 10th publication also celebrates something very important to our organisation: our Mission, Vision and Values, which guide us in all that we do.

Earlier this year we embarked upon a journey to reinvigorate our Mission, Vision and Values. Our objective? To bring them to life for each member of our VMCH community; ensuring they are inclusive and relatable to all, while staying true to our core purpose and honouring our Catholicity.

I am proud to say this collaboration between the Board, Executive and Leadership teams has achieved this, resulting in what I believe is a true reflection of our purpose here at VMCH, what we hope to achieve in the future, and the way in which we deliver our vital services to some of our community's vulnerable people.

#### Mission

Fulfilling the caring ministry of Jesus, we are committed to creating genuine places of belonging, through service and compassion for all aged, disadvantaged and people with disability.

#### Vision

To be recognised as a transformative leader in the provision of exceptional care, services and accommodation.

#### Values

*Bringing Love*

*Creating Joy*

*Showing Courage*

*Embracing Hospitality*



In this edition of Cornerstone, each story reflects one of our four new values.

Beautiful coverage of intergenerational friendships formed across our social enterprises and aged care homes show us Love, while Joy can be found on page 18, where our newest Supported Independent Living resident Teagan settles into her new home.

On page 21 we meet carer Leonie, whose Courage to seek respite support has boosted her wellbeing, and helped forged new connections for beloved husband, Kevin.

Hospitality is on show through pages 25 to 30, as we learn more about growing employment pathways for people with disability, and milestones in our biggest retirement development yet, St. Clare.

I do hope you enjoy reading this edition of Cornerstone, and perhaps find some familiarity in the way Love, Joy, Courage and Hospitality relate to your life's meaning.

Wishing you every blessing for a happy and holy Christmas, filled with much time spent with loved ones and a break to rest and recharge, ready for the year ahead.

I take this opportunity to also acknowledge the contribution of our Board, our CEO, Sonya Smart, her Executive, coupled with all employees and volunteers.

Kindest regards

**Julien O'Connell AO**  
VMCH Board Chairman





Balwyn op shop volunteer Carole

# *bringing* Love

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We foster connections  
and show compassion for  
one another with kindness  
and respect.



# Fun for all ages

If you've ever watched ABC's 'Old People's Home for 4 Year Olds', you'd be familiar with the joy and heartfelt connections intergenerational relationships bring.

VMCH is no stranger to these programs, with visits from secondary student volunteers a long-running tradition at many of our aged care residences. However, relationships between even younger community members, and social enterprise café trainees, have been absolutely thriving in recent months.

Our newest program, 'Intergen @ Bunurong', is a collaboration between our John R Hannah residence and nearby St John Vianney's primary school. Named after the Indigenous land on which the program takes place, Intergen @ Bunurong began earlier this year and sees our aged care residents participating in activities with the primary school students.

From robotics demonstrations to learning Auslan, our residents have thoroughly enjoyed their weekly visits to the school and have created some special bonds with the students.



Resident June and trainee Kim share a laugh

Meanwhile in Torquay, Star Café is continuing to foster beautiful connections between aged care residents, young café trainees, and visiting children.

Earlier this year, the Star of the Sea lifestyle program joined forces with the café team to run a school holiday program focused on inclusion of all ages. Participants enjoyed a fun morning of bingo, balloon exercise, some delicious party food and face painting.



Resident Beryl and visitor Mia became fast friends

**“It was joyful and loud!” said Star of the Sea Aged Care Lifestyle Coordinator Jen Cotsopolous. “Residents reminisced about their childhoods and bonded with the children, who really lifted their spirits. The emotional, physical, recreational and mental benefits of the intergenerational activities were plain to see.”**

Resident Beryl Allen said, “the exercises were more fun with the children there. It was nice to be able to connect with members of the community. I especially loved playing Bingo with Mia! She is so polite and has a beautiful soul.”

Lindy-Joy, one of nine trainees currently working at the café, said the day was “lots of fun” and she loved winning bingo!

The residents and children look forward to sharing more special moments in 2024.



John R Hannah residents celebrating book week with St John Vianney students



Intergen @ Bunurong



# The benefits of volunteering

Here at VMCH, we have more than 400 volunteers across our service areas. Our volunteers are an integral part of our organisation, who often tell us that the experience of volunteering is as rewarding to them personally as it is to our residents, clients and students.

Let's meet a couple of them now!

## Shanya



Shanya Irushi Abeyasinghe says volunteering in aged care has "filled a gap" in her life.

The 17-year-old VCE student began volunteering with VMCH in 2019, dedicating her time to the residents of John R Hannah aged care residence.

"When I was little, most of my grandparents had already passed away," she says. "There was just a gap in my life. Being here has helped fill that gap."

During her visits, Shanya has found one-on-one conversations with residents to be mutually beneficial.

"Often we'll talk about their past experiences, things like that. They lived through a different era, but I find myself relating to them in a lot of ways and learning from their experiences."

"After our conversations I'll see them smiling ... watching them light up like that makes me feel like I'm helping to make a difference."

Shanya is hopeful more young people will take the leap into volunteering.

"I would definitely encourage people my age to take these opportunities and volunteer in aged care, or wherever you want to volunteer. Get involved in the community because those connections really matter."

## Carole



After visiting Melbourne in September of last year, Carole fell in love with the leafy suburb of Balwyn. One place stood out to her in particular – VMCH's Balwyn op shop.

"I saw the display in the window and I loved it," she says. "I thought it was amazing!"

Carole was interested in volunteering at the shop, but felt concerned her English wasn't strong enough. Store Manager Gretchen Fitzgerald, along with the other volunteers, encouraged Carole to give it a go.

She began volunteering at the shop in January. Alongside improving her English skills, she has since discovered the many benefits volunteering has to offer.

"Being a volunteer is a special chance to know more about Balwyn and to get in touch with local people," she says. "I have enjoyed every single minute of working with my VMCH Op Shop Balwyn workmates. Australian life has filled my heart."

After a wonderful six months of volunteering with us, Carole headed back to Hong Kong in June. She plans to revisit Melbourne in December, where we will welcome her back to our team with open arms.

Interested in volunteering with us? Visit: [vmch.com.au/get-involved](https://vmch.com.au/get-involved)



Our residential aged care chefs are a happy bunch

## Fantastic festive food

**Talented chefs from across our aged care residences are in full festive mode!**

Sanath Wanniarachchi, VMCH Head Chef Residential Aged Care, says his team has spent the past few months preparing their Christmas menus for residents to make the December 25 dining experience one to remember!

Christmas lunch includes a blend of traditional festive dishes, with a fresh twist, while dinner is designed to be exciting and novel, with a foundation of "classic and gastronomic-based cuisines".

**"The highlight for me is the traditional preparation of roast pork with crispy honey crackling, a personal favourite that adds a delightful touch to the Christmas festivities," Sanath says.**



"I couldn't let Christmas evening pass without a special surprise on the menu. This year we're preparing a prawn cocktail with brandy-infused sauce, perfectly complementing the freshness of summer catch prawns and other accompaniments."

"For dessert, we have a delectable chocolate orange pie made with Belgian chocolate and an orange liqueur base, infused with fresh orange pulp and paired with fresh cream."

"I am confident that these culinary creations will provide our residents with a memorable and satisfying Christmas in 2023."

We have no doubt they will, Sanath! Merry Christmas all!





# Mission in action



## Our lighthouse: A brief theological reflection on our new Mission, Vision and Values

Dr Zachariah Duke, Formation and Ethics Advisor, VMCH

As featured in this edition of Cornerstone, VMCH has recently released its refreshed Mission, Vision, and Values. Of course, it is not uncommon for a Catholic organisation to have a Mission, Vision and Values as they truly embody the person and ministry of Jesus Christ.

From its earliest days, the Christian community has been called to spread the good news of Jesus Christ to the world. Christians have embraced this call for over two thousand years. VMCH has played its part in this legacy. Drawing witness from its two predecessor organisations in Villa Maria and Catholic Homes, VMCH has provided a strong and diverse range of services to meet the needs of older people, children and adults with disability, and their families and carers. This is Jesus' work.

Since his election to the papacy in March 2013, Pope Francis has devoted a great deal of attention to the church's lived expression of the gospel. He uses many striking turns of phrase to describe the life of the church. In *Evangelii gaudium*, an apostolic exhortation (understood in layperson's terms as a pastoral letter), Pope Francis calls the church to be "permanently in a state of mission" (n. 25). He says that the biggest obstacle to putting everything in a missionary key is the temptation of priests and people alike to get caught up with secondary aspects of the gospel: "the message has to concentrate on the essentials, on what is most beautiful, most grand, most appealing and at the same time most necessary" (n. 35). VMCH's new Mission, Vision, and Values lives up to Pope Francis's vision for a missionary church.

## Catholic Matters:

### Laudete Deum – a further call for ecological action

On the Feast Day of St Francis of Assisi (4 October 2023), Pope Francis published *Laudete Deum* (English = "Praise God"), an apostolic exhortation, which builds upon his second apostolic encyclical (a pastoral letter, but has more authority than an apostolic exhortation), *Laudato Si'*. Pope Francis calls Catholics and people of goodwill from around the world to do our part in responding to the challenges of climate change.



# The true meaning of Christmas

If you would like to join our incredible community and help us share the true meaning of Christmas, please donate today.

Visit: [vmch.com.au/donate-now/2023-christmas-hampers/](https://vmch.com.au/donate-now/2023-christmas-hampers/) or call 1300 698 624.



Sometimes the most valued gifts don't come with a price tag.

It's hard not to get caught up in the consumer-driven culture of Christmas – but the true meaning of Christmas is all around us, especially across the VMCH community

Each year, VMCH relies on donations from our generous supporters to help us ensure hundreds of vulnerable people receive a little joy at Christmas through our hamper appeal.

It's been an especially tough year for many. The cost of living has pushed people to the brink, with nothing left to spend on luxuries. For some, even the necessities are out of reach.

This year will be our biggest hamper drive yet, with 800 people in need across our affordable homes, home care, and disability services.

Our VMCH community has heard the call, and our people are contributing in any way they can. Let's meet them...



### Hamper contribution Pauline, aged care resident

"I have always loved craft and I enjoy trying to create something different. It makes me happy to think I am doing something to help others."

### Hamper delivery Sarah, VMCH employee

"I can't begin to express how much joy it gave us to see the expressions on residents' faces when we handed over the hampers of goodies. Every single person was just so grateful for this gesture and said how much of a difference something like this makes to their lives at this time of year."



### Hamper recipient Michael, affordable homes resident

"We all (residents) really appreciate the hampers and are 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."





Star Café trainee Lindy-Joy

## *creating* **Joy**

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We create a culture of happiness and positivity, celebrating life and the uniqueness of all.



# To our aged care heroes: Thanks for Caring!

Earlier this year we celebrated Aged Care Employee Day, a national event that recognises the 370,000 workers and volunteers who devote their time across residential, home and community aged care.

Around 1.5 million older Australians rely on the kindness, expertise and commitment of others to deliver their aged care support.

We are so grateful for our wonderful staff and volunteers who dedicate their time to improving the lives of those in our ageing community. Let's meet a few of them now!



## Simon Le Maistre

Simon volunteers three days a week in the memory support unit at our Wantirna aged care residence.

Described as someone who “brightens the lives of those in his presence”, Simon provides our residents with conversation and companionship, an invaluable asset.

2023 sees Simon celebrate 10 years of volunteering with VMCH – a fantastic achievement!



## Connie Viera

Connie knows the way to our residents' hearts – through coffee!

The Food Services Assistant goes above and beyond for Ashwood Aged Care residents, always providing a warm smile, a generous heart and compassionate care.

Connie is particularly loved by our Italian residents, not only for her coffee making skills, but her ability to make them feel like they are back in an Italian café.



## Kimi Power

Kimi is a valued team member at John R Hannah.

The Chef Manager feels “blessed” to have the skills to deliver delicious and hearty home-cooked meals to residents.

She says: “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.”



## Lauren Harker

Lauren is an invaluable part of our Corpus Christi team.

The Physiotherapist is described by colleagues as a “vibrant and professional worker”, who is an excellent team leader and brings a wealth of knowledge to Corpus Christi.

Lauren's warm and smiley face is a big hit with residents and she always has the time, energy and patience for all those around her.



## Jill Pool

Jill is a friendly face around Justin Villa.

The Personal Care Assistant is described by colleagues as having a “beautiful nature” and is always looking to make life more meaningful for the Fathers who reside there.

Recently Jill helped Father Brian set up a vegetable garden, which is just one example of her genuine care for others.



## Margaret West

Margaret is described by colleagues as “the face of Providence”.

The Administration Officer has exceptional customer service skills and always makes sure whoever walks through the doors of Providence feels right at home.

Margaret's warm energy is infectious, particularly with our residents, who will often seek her out for a daily chat.



## Dipendra Kharka

Dipen is known for prioritising the needs of residents above anything else.

Having only joined VMCH less than a year ago, the Personal Care Assistant at St Catherine's Aged Care Residence is already being described by colleagues as “one of the most compassionate and kindest team members we have”.

Dipen has built a wonderful rapport among residents, with one resident quoting “We depend on Dipen.” He is a wonderful addition to the VMCH family.



# Celebrating our long-serving employees

Earlier this year we were thrilled to celebrate our longest serving employees at a special **VMCH Service Awards Celebration at the Park Hyatt Ballroom.**

Almost 250 award recipients, their loved ones, managers, team leaders and members of the VMCH Executive and Board gathered to enjoy a memorable night of delicious food, fun entertainment and award presentations – honouring incredible milestones from 10 to 35 years.

We also celebrated 175 staff who have dedicated five fantastic years to VMCH across our sites.

VMCH Facilities Manager Greg Quinn, who celebrated 35 years with VMCH, says when he began as an Assistant Accountant in 1988, there was just one computer for all staff to share!

Technological advances aside, Greg says the biggest change he's witnessed over more than three decades is how the organisation has grown.

**“I love my job and helping to make a positive difference in people’s lives.”**

VMCH really is a special place to work, thanks in large part to the incredible calibre of people, like Greg, who chose our organisation as the place to share their passion and expertise.



Greg Quinn (centre) celebrates 35 years with VMCH alongside Board member the Hon. Kevin Andrews and his wife Margaret



10-year award recipient Kira Farrugia receives a hug



(L-R) Board Chairman Julien O'Connell AO, CEO Sonya Smart, Chief Mission Officer Bridget O'Shannassy, 20-year award recipient Wendy Elkington and The Gatsby Dancers

## Teagan's new home

Moving out of home and into a share house is a rite of passage for young people. For people with disability, the same opportunities for independence and freedom aren't always readily available.

Enter Kialla House, VMCH's first Supported Independent Living accommodation in regional Victoria. The Shepparton home meets a huge local gap for low-care disability accommodation for young adults.

Teagan, aged 22, moved in earlier this year and is enjoying her new-found independence.

To help with the transition from her family home, Teagan lives at Kialla House Monday to Friday and spends weekends with her family.

“I like doing crafts, lego, and playing my PS5,” Teagan says.

Kialla House Team Leader Drew Burnett says he and Teagan have bonded well over their shared love of cooking (Drew's a qualified chef) and fondness of belting out Taylor Swift tunes on the way to Teagan's day program, Shepparton Access.

**“My employed role is Team Leader of Kialla House, but since Teagan has moved in, I have become so much more. I am her sous chef, expert Lego piece finder, a nervous PS5 spectator and the ‘embarrassment’ that cheers way too loud at bowling nights,” he laughs.**



One of Teagan's delicious creations, baked potato



Teagan and Drew in the kitchen

Teagan has also developed a very special bond with Residential Support Worker, Tanya, which has seen her become more confident and comfortable within herself.

Drew says it's been fantastic to see Teagan work towards her goals since moving in, including being able to better manage her diabetes, and figure out who she is as a person.

Teagan says a recent highlight was hosting her parents for dinner, and making silverside, roast vegies and sticky date pudding from scratch.

Drew believes what sets Kialla House apart from other disability accommodation is individuality and fun.

“Kialla House will always be a safe space for those young adults who need some help in figuring out who they want to be. We allow our residents – without pressure – to define their own routines and give them choice and control over every decision relating to their care. We don't want it to be about just getting them to their next step and ticking off jobs, we want them to have fun along the way.”



Teagan loves to cook

**If you'd like to learn more about our group homes, call 1300 698 624.**





Anne Purcell celebrates 100 years with Bishop Greg Bennet and family

*showing*

# Courage

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We do what is right,  
regardless of our fears,  
the challenges or  
consequences.





## Respite offers carers a well-deserved break

Leonie and Kevin in the Wantirna aged care gardens

**Leonie and Kevin Douglass are a lively and buoyant couple.**

The pair live together in a retirement village in Victoria, their two children not too far away.

As Kevin's full-time carer, Leonie found herself feeling rundown more and more frequently.

"When you're the carer, it's 24/7," Leonie says. "After a while, you get very tired. I knew it was time for me to have a break."

Together the couple researched their options, eventually deciding to try aged care respite.

Respite is a short-term solution. It's designed to give caregivers a well-deserved break and allow them to recharge physically, emotionally, and mentally.

VMCH Relationship Concierge, Deb Kennedy, explains that it is common for carers to feel worn out.

**"Carers need downtime," Deb says. "You've got to look after yourself before you can look after someone else. The time that your loved one is spending in respite gives you a really good break and can help improve your mental state."**

After visiting a few places across Victoria, Leonie and Kevin agreed on VMCH's Wantirna aged care residence.

"We decided to try VMCH because it's close to our children, which makes it easy for them to come and visit," Leonie says. "Kevin was very happy to come somewhere Catholic. It meant he'd get the chance to go to Mass, he still likes to do that."

Alongside going to Mass, Kevin enjoys the company of his fellow residents, whom he was quick to forge connections with.

"I suppose the first couple of days you wander around a bit just thinking, looking to see if you know anyone," he says. "I've got friendly with a lot of people now. Most of them are very nice people, very friendly."

"Actually, he met people his very first day," Leonie replies. "He wasn't in his room long before three or four people came in to say hello. They said 'Now if there's anything you need, Kevin, don't hesitate to ask'. It was lovely to hear that, knowing I was leaving Kevin somewhere so caring."

Kevin has now had three rounds of residential respite at Wantirna, each stay lasting a fortnight. While the couple didn't necessarily want to spend time apart from one another, they both understood it was a decision made from necessity.

"I'm 84 and Kevin is nearly 88 – we're both getting old," Leonie explains.

"If you want to keep caring for your partner, you've got to be in good shape yourself. And if you let yourself get rundown, you'll find that things will be much more difficult."

Alongside providing carers with some downtime, there are other reasons respite might be considered. It could be a situation where the family wants to go on holiday and can't leave their loved one at home alone.

Alternatively, many people use respite to prepare their loved ones for moving into aged care. The short term stay in respite allows them to feel prepared for permanent care.

If and when the time comes for Kevin to move into permanent care, he knows he has a home at VMCH.

"It's a lovely place. It's very nice. I loved my room; I was wrapped with that room! I've got nothing negative to say about it at all."

For now, Leonie and Kevin plan to continue their respite journey with VMCH with approximately three visits a year. Leonie has noticed an overall improvement in her mental health and recommends other carers in a similar spot give respite a go.

"Do it sooner rather than later," she says. "Don't let your own health go down to a level that you feel your partner has to go in permanently. Just take advantage of getting a break."

**Like to learn more about respite with VMCH? Call us on 1300 698 624.**



Kevin enjoys a cuppa





Daphne Wright pictured with Papal Blessings

## Shanagolden celebrates milestones and blessings

**In a significant event hosted by Shanagolden aged care residence, two residents recently celebrated their 100th birthdays, and a third resident made their first Communion and Confirmation.**

Anne Purcell and Daphne Wright are our latest centenarians, with both ladies presented with Papal Blessings from Pope Francis.

Family, friends, fellow residents and VMCH team members joined to witness this momentous occasion, with Mass celebrated by Bishop Greg Bennet and concelebrated by Fr. Peter Kooloos, Chaplain of Shanagolden.

Anna's daughter Kathleen says she felt "very fortunate" to celebrate this special birthday with her mum.

"On the leadup mum was saying 'it's just another birthday', and I have no doubt there's going to be a few more. I am very proud of her."



Anne Purcell celebrates a century

Daphne's daughter Patricia reminisced on the most important lesson she learnt from her mum over the years.

**"Don't let anything bother you! Life is too short to let things bother you. I've never really known anything to stress mum."**

The heart of the ceremony was witnessing the Sacrament of First Communion and Confirmation conferred upon resident, Brian Kennon.



Brian Kennon during his First Communion and Confirmation

Brian couldn't stop smiling throughout the day, and later mentioned he felt "very special" when looking through photographs from the ceremony.

Congratulations Anne, Daphne and Brian – we hope you will remember this milestone day for years to come.

## Growing up before your time: life as a young carer

**Maddy Oswald knows that being a young carer can be a tough gig.**

The 18-year-old is a full-time carer for her mum, Heidi, who struggles with complex mental health issues.

"Mum can get anxious when she leaves the house. I'm there to explain her condition to people and provide a bit more understanding for those situations. I also make sure she is taking her medication and provide a listening ear."

It's a lot of responsibility for someone as young as Maddy. She began caring for her mum at just 14-years-old and in turn, was unable to see her friends as much as she might have liked.

"Socially, I probably don't go out as much as other teenagers do," she says. "Sometimes it can be hard to make friends, because some people don't understand why I do what I do. I do also feel anxious sometimes."

Finding adequate support can be crucial to managing these challenges. This rings true for Maddy, who found support through VMCH four years ago.

Our Young Carers Program is designed to aid young carers through their struggles, provide them with assistance where needed and offer exciting social events.

The program is also a wonderful way for young carers to meet one another, share their respective journeys and make new friends. For Maddy, this aspect of the program has been lifechanging.

"I've met some of the nicest people in my life there," she says. "They're so supportive and I can relate to them because we're on the same maturity level. I love getting to do all the fun activities that I wouldn't get to do otherwise; we go to the movies, on camps, we've been to a lightshow, even rock climbing."

Being around other young carers has offered Maddy a safe space to share her experience. It soon came to light that there was a common thought amongst the cohort; whilst being a young carer is undoubtedly challenging, it can be incredibly rewarding.



**"Helping other people feels like what I'm meant to do with my life. A lot of people ask me why I do what I do or tell me I'm throwing my life away. I say to them that I wouldn't change it because it's made me who I am. When I make my mum laugh and smile, it touches my heart."**

As someone who has found support and knows how beneficial it can be, Maddy wants other young carers to know they're not alone.

"Find a supportive circle of people, whether that be a teacher, a friend or through a program. Start off with someone you really trust and tell them how you're feeling. Just reach out for help – you don't have to do it alone."

To learn more about our [Young Carers Program](#), call 1300 698 624.



Young carer Maddy with mum Heidi





# *embracing* Hospitality

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We welcome all to our  
community, bringing comfort  
and a sense of belonging.





## Employment journeys with VMCH



If you'd like to learn more about our Employment Pathways Program, visit: [vmch.com.au/disability/for-adults](https://vmch.com.au/disability/for-adults)

Did you know there are 2.1 million Australians of working age with disability? Of these, just under half are employed (47.8%) compared with 80.3% of people without disability.

To provide meaningful opportunities for people with disability, we've launched our Employment Pathways Program, designed to give people the skills they need to move into paid employment.

So, how does it work? Our clients initially step into the Employment Support Mentor Program, where they work with their Employment Mentor on covering job skills and understanding expectations. When they are job ready, we support them to gain meaningful award wage employment.

**So far, a total of 84 people with disability have undertaken traineeships at our social enterprise ventures, with six of these trainees having now secured paid employment.**

One of those individuals is Kara Houston, who gained employment at Puckapunyal, a Defence Base in regional Victoria.

There, she spends two days a week in the Sergeants and Officers mess halls, preparing meals, serving, cleaning and working as part of the team.

"I like doing different jobs each day and meeting different people. The staff are happy to still see me there every day when I come in. They're very polite people."

Employment Pathways Team Leader Simone Kluckow has been supporting Kara, and says she's seen a "massive change" in Kara's confidence levels.

"She's learning to trust the engagement and build rapport," Simone says. "It's been one of the best things for her in terms of how much she's changed."

"She's engaging in conversations with the people there, and she knows her job like the back of her hand."

One of our social enterprise cafés Where Is My Coffee? is a partner in the Employment Pathways Program, supporting people like Kellie (pictured right) through their traineeship.

Kellie has been part of the Where Is My Coffee? team for almost two years now, and is proud of how far her customer service and people skills have progressed.

She recently achieved a personal best on the coffee machine, making 47 coffees in a row – what an effort! Kellie's ultimate goal is to find paid employment, which we will support her through every step of the way.

Kellie on the coffee machine







(L-R) Hacer Group Director Business Development Vin Sammartino, Boroondara Councillor Garry Thompson, VMCH Board Chairman Julien O'Connell AO, CEO Sonya Smart and Boroondara Councillor Cynthia Watson.

## St. Clare sets new standards in retirement living

VMCH is thrilled to announce some exciting milestones in the development of our world class over 55's development, St. Clare, in Studley Park, Kew.

The \$250m, 103-apartment development will breathe new life into the long-held 1.4ha site and meet critical demand for retirement housing options for a rapidly aging community.

On 2 November, we celebrated a turning of the sod event on-site, alongside local councillors, newly-appointed builder Hacer Group, and architects Woods Bagot, signaling the beginning of construction.

St. Clare is scheduled to open in early 2026, also meeting a forecasted demand for senior accommodation in the local area of over 1,000 homes.

VMCH Executive General Manager Marketing and Sales Kym Molineux says interest in St. Clare reflects this, with an extremely successful expression of interest process.

"To date, no formal advertising has taken place to reach the construction trigger, a rare feat in retirement living sales," Ms Molineux says.

VMCH uses capital from its retirement living developments to fund its mission-based projects for some of Victoria's most vulnerable people, including affordable housing and specialist disability housing.

To learn more about St. Clare, visit: [stclarekew.com.au](http://stclarekew.com.au)



St. Clare shared dining room and bar



Cre8 shed participant James

Building futures  
Thanks for your support!

We are always incredibly grateful for the generosity shown by our community of supporters and donors.

Two appeals over the past year have really resonated with donors, so we'd love to give you an update on how these appeals are tracking...

### Where Is My Coffee? Van

We are thrilled to announce that thanks to your donations, we've purchased our van! After raising an incredible \$96,107, the van is due to hit the road later this year, bringing us one step closer to creating new pathways for people with disability.

The Where is my Coffee? Van, named after our social enterprise café in Wangaratta, will be based at VMCH's Star of the Sea site for the time being, where we will serve the people of Torquay from selected locations on the coast. You'll also catch us at special events and visiting our other aged care residences.

### Build a Shed

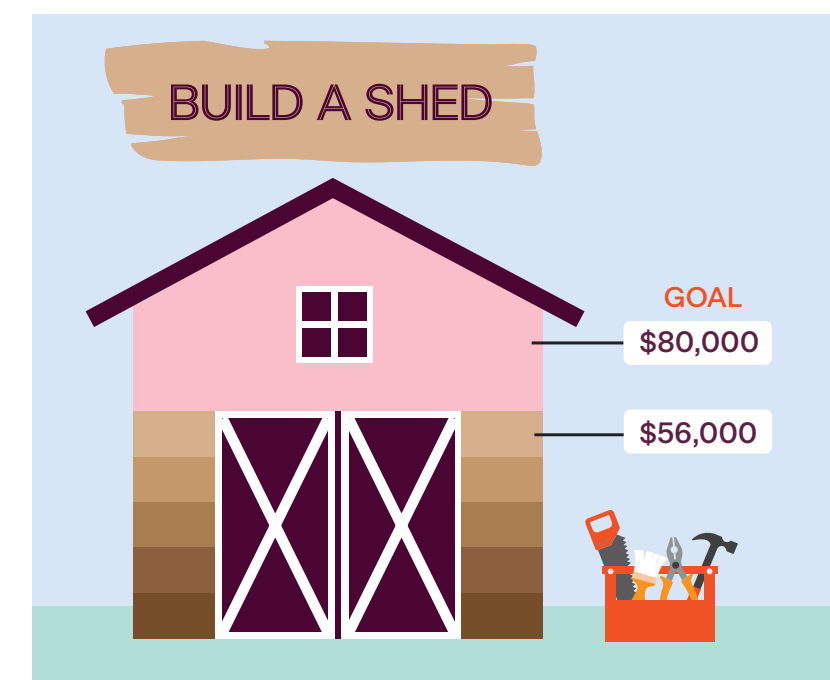
Build a Shed follows the success of the Cre8 shed in Wangaratta, a place where people with disability learn about woodworking and work safety, tool handling, design and project management, all the while gaining independence and making new friends.

We hope to raise \$80,000 for the purchase of tools, equipment and materials to help us set up two more Cre8 sheds in Shepparton and Melbourne.

So far, we've raised \$56,000 and are pleased to announce our Shepparton shed is up and running! Huge shout out to ASCOT GROUP and Kovstruct, who generously donated \$6,000 worth of tools for our participants.

Our Melbourne shed is in the works, but we still need your help to reach our goal!

To donate, visit: [vmch.com.au/donate-now/build-a-shed/](http://vmch.com.au/donate-now/build-a-shed/)



St. Clare Speakeasy Bar





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