

# Opal moments

WINTER 2021



Ageing is living

## Acknowledgements

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Opal HealthCare Care Communities

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Opal Magazine acknowledges the traditional owners of the land on which we live and work. We pay our respects to their elders past, present, and emerging.

### COVER IMAGE

Marie (93) and Ron (100) prove that you're never too old to fall in love. The happy couple recently celebrated their love in a moving commitment ceremony shared with family, friends and their community. Read their story on page 44.

Cover image © Newcastle Herald







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*Berkeley Vale Care Community resident Ray Holley, 91,  
proves you're never too old for an adventure.*

# Message from our CEO



## Opal Moments Winter 2021

At Opal HealthCare it's people who matter most. We believe care should be centred within a warm, loving environment that builds and nourishes connections with family, friends and the local community.

### The importance of staying connected

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Technology can help us nourish those important human connections. We're investing in programs large and small to help deliver the best possible experience in our care. One of the most impactful systems we introduced in 2020 is a direct mail channel for families through our website. Conveniently available, via smart phone or computer, families can send letters and photos direct to a resident and our team will print and deliver to the resident on the same day.

So far 9,500 webmail letters have been received by our residents across Australia. As well as keeping in touch through COVID, we're seeing families living far away, or unable to visit for other reasons, choosing to stay connected in this way. It is a joy to see the delight on our residents' faces when they receive a letter with a photo of the people who matter most to them.

Early in the pandemic we moved fast to roll out an additional 340 iPads in our Care Communities to help residents keep in touch with friends and family. We trained 558 team members to use Zoom to assist residents with their calls, opening up a whole new world of connectivity for residents who may never otherwise have used this technology.

To date, we've delivered over 835,413 Zoom minutes with 27,660 participants. Residents have witnessed family weddings, been introduced to great grandchildren, attended church services, enjoyed family reunions, had virtual music lessons and spoken their native language with volunteers over Zoom calls. Now a regular and much valued part of life for our residents and families, this technology is here to stay.

### Staying safe in the pandemic

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As I write, NSW and Victoria are in lockdown and visitor restricted at our Care Communities. I am continually inspired by our residents, who remain brave and adaptable in the face of the ongoing pandemic, and our team, who stay focused on helping residents nurture the relationships that are important to their wellbeing, while keeping everyone safe.

The most important thing each of us can do to protect our residents, team, family, friends and the wider community is to be vaccinated against COVID. We've been working hard to enable vaccine access for all residents and team. I assure you we'll continue to do our best to keep our residents safe and to help bring joy to each day.

Warm regards

Rachel

## Stories from our Care Communities



### Carseldine Greens

Our entertainer Darrel has struck up a friendship with resident Frank, a fellow musician. Following a stroke, Frank no longer plays the guitar but has retained expert skills in lyric and music theory. During regular jam sessions, Frank helped Darrel write an original song titled "Too many years between beers." The pair recorded their song and performed a wonderful duet at Darrel's show. Frank is delighted to have reignited his passion for music.



### Bankstown Terrace

Nurturing friendships between our team and residents is part of the heart of our Care Communities. Following the birth of her beautiful daughter, team member Indu was overjoyed to have a surprise visit from her meaningful mate Joe, who lives at Bankstown Terrace. Indu's friend and colleague Nabil organised the visit, bringing with them a handwritten card and a sweet gift of teddy bears.





## Denhams Beach

Resident Lizzie proudly took part in the Leukaemia Foundation's World's Greatest Shave this year. She spent the month fundraising and our Care Community hairdresser Anne, shaved Lizzie's head in front of fellow residents. Two years ago, Lizzie raised \$500 for the charity. This year she aimed to double that amount and came in well ahead with \$1700! Continuing to contribute to the community is important to Lizzie and she was thrilled to receive so much support for her efforts.



## Alfred Cove

We combined our knitting group and painting group to form our "Creative Corner." Each week our creatives get stuck into knitting, doing cross stitch, crocheting, painting and colouring together. For many, these are past times they've enjoyed for years, and they derive great satisfaction from sharing techniques, advising on colour palettes, giving tips on how to improve, teaching new stitches, and admiring one another's work.



## Wallarah Point

With a gold coin raffle and plenty of home-made baked goods at hand, we hosted Australia's Biggest Morning Tea in support of the Cancer Council, raising \$700 along the way. Our residents and team thrive on participating in causes that are important to the local community, particularly those who have been personally impacted by cancer.

## Stories from our Care Communities



### Rutherford Park

The children at Lochinvar Public School are very special to our residents at Rutherford Park. For three years they have been visiting our Care Community, building firm friendships with our residents. Throughout COVID, visits necessarily moved to Zoom calls, ensuring those enduring friendships continue to flourish. So it was with great excitement, when COVID visitor restrictions were removed, that we were able to welcome our young friends back into our lounge room in person. The smiles, giggles and happy tears from residents were a testament to the importance of intergenerational relationships and the success of the partnership with Lochinvar Public School.



### Inverloch Coast

Earlier this year we launched "Blind Date with a Book!" A book club with a difference, where residents read a book and bring it to our book club meeting to share with fellow residents. The idea has been a hit with residents, who've brought all kinds of interesting reads to the group. Family members have also joined in, so the diversity of topics discussed and favourite books shared is growing every day.



## Broadwater Grove

The passing of Norma's beloved husband of 75 years left a deep void in her life. When a resident loses a loved one it's often our team who are by their side, sharing their sorrow and providing comfort. Our team member, Juanita, knew that losing Ray was difficult for Norma, so she made her a very special gift. Juanita collected Ray's flannelette shirts and carefully crafted them into a patchwork blanket. When Norma is missing Ray, she finds comfort in snuggling into the blanket and remembering their wonderful years together.



## Murwillumbah Greens

Born in Milan, Tarquinio has been painting since he was eight years old. His painting and drawing skills formed a strong foundation for his career as an architect. Throughout his many years of travelling Tarq continued to paint and now has a collection of 66 paintings of Australia. He enjoys assisting our Lifestyle team and his beautifully painted backgrounds have given our cultural displays a magic touch! Tarq's meaningful mate, Jess, was touched when he gifted her an original masterpiece.



## Chiswick Manor

Our team have been pairing up with their meaningful mates to create Memory Albums to record special events that are celebrated in our Care Community. Helen and Colin recently celebrated their 64th wedding anniversary. To mark this significant milestone, our team took photos on their special day and together collated them in an album, beautifully decorating each page. Helen and Colin were overwhelmed when presented with the final product, finding joy not just in the images but also in the process of working together with their meaningful mates to capture a special memory for years to come. Families also appreciate Memory Albums that capture happy memories of their loved one's life at Chiswick Manor. Looking through the albums evoke fond memories and often become treasured family keepsakes.





A woman with short white hair and glasses, wearing a blue and white floral patterned shirt, is smiling and working behind a counter. In the foreground, there is a white shopping basket. The background is a bright yellow wall with the words "Narraweena Grove" and "General Store" in a stylized, raised font. To the left of the woman is a wooden cabinet with a small potted plant on top.

Narraweena Grove

General Store

## Personalised Care

We share the story of Carl who has found fulfillment as he continues to share his expertise gained over a lifelong involvement in hardware and maintenance. We also profile residents in two Care Communities who have established successful on-site retail stores which provide a wonderful sense of independence and achievement for everyone involved.

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# FINDING PURPOSE

Carl and Bronwen moved into Meadowbank Grove Care Community at the end of 2020. They've lived most of their adult lives in the area and wanted to stay within the local community where they've built strong ties over the years.

**Bronwen shared, "We felt like it was time to move into care and wanted to make the move in our own time before there was a crisis that forced the decision. Our children are also in the area so Meadowbank Grove was a great choice."**

Previously keen golfers, Carl and Bronwen have always enjoyed the social aspects of their club as much as playing the game. Now that declining mobility means that playing a round is off the cards, they've found a group of likeminded friends at Meadowbank Grove who enjoy catching up for a chat over a cappuccino in the home's Grove Café each morning.

In the 30 years before he retired, Carl worked in hardware stores, at one time operating his own business. This experience has given him a wealth of knowledge and expertise when it comes to building and maintenance. An impromptu chat with Meadowbank Grove's maintenance officer, David, led to a partnership that has not only initiated a friendship between the pair, but also a meaningful way for Carl to share his expertise and purposefully fill his days.

There has been significant research on the connection between meaningful work and wellbeing.

For many people, particularly men, their sense of self-worth is closely tied to the work they do. For older men, with so many years over a working life dedicated to the role of family bread-winner, many find a sense of loss as they head into retirement and beyond.

One of the keys to finding meaningful work is productivity, not just busyness. It's important that the activity is not just for the sake of something to do, but that it has real purpose. Carl says, "It's been great being able to get involved in different maintenance projects with David. While I'm enjoying retirement, it feels good to still be able to make a contribution and share my expertise."

Carl has found this in his new life at Meadowbank Grove. He gets involved with many of the maintenance projects around the home, from repairing trollies to tending the garden, and even just spending time tinkering in the workshop and sharing a yarn with David. Carl is enjoying his pursuits so much that he's keen for other men to experience the same sense of fulfillment. David and Carl have plans to make this happen by building a new workbench area with room for other keen tradesmen who'd like to get involved.



# RETAIL THERAPY

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Many of us like nothing better than indulging in a spot of retail therapy, but the ability to browse local stores for a quick dose of dopamine is easy to take for granted. During 2020, when visiting the local shops became a challenge due to the pandemic, residents at both Alfred Cove Care Community and Narraweena Grove Care Community decided to do something about it and create their own onsite convenience stores. Before long, resident committees were formed, full of volunteers eager to make the idea a reality. Creating a space where fellow residents could indulge in some retail therapy was the initial purpose of the project for each Care Community, but the positive impact on everyone involved turned out to be far beyond everyone's expectations.

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The theory around volunteering as a tool to promote active ageing was recently tested in a paper published in the journal *Gerontologist*<sup>1</sup>. The study aimed to test whether volunteering would increase wellbeing in older people who were inactive and had become socially disengaged. As it turned out, 82% of participants in the study reported feeling greater levels of confidence in performing tasks independently; in their ability to deal with challenges and in engaging more readily with their communities as a result of volunteering.

Janet and Frank, who live at Alfred Cove didn't need a study to convince them of the benefits of volunteering in their care community. Together with a committee of other residents, they were instrumental in bringing the idea of the OGA (Opal Grocers for Australia) to life. Each taking on specific roles, residents planned the retail space and decided on items they would stock, seeking feedback from other residents to determine the optimum product mix. The shop is now well established and runs four days a week.

Janet, who expertly operates the till as cashier, says "people love to pop in and buy a snack or a magazine and it's lovely to have a chat at the same time." Frank, who has taken on the role of shop manager shares, "It's great to feel really useful again, contributing to running the store."

Lifestyle coordinator, Lois has noticed that residents who are involved in volunteering in the store have developed a new zest for life. She says, "It's helped to make them more socially connected and that helps to ensure any feelings of loneliness are kept at bay. Getting involved in the store lifts everyone's mood and the positive feeling is contagious."

<sup>1</sup> *Gerontologist* (2020), Vol. 60, No. 3, 571–582



# Health & Wellbeing

In Health & Wellbeing, we tackle the important issue of ageism in our society and unpack the recent WHO *International Report on Ageism*. Our focus on dementia care looks at new research around some unexpected factors contributing to the onset of dementia which makes for thought-provoking reading.





# LIVING WITH DEMENTIA

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Dementia is not a single disease, but a term used to describe the symptoms of a range of illnesses which cause a progressive decline in the ability to think and perform everyday tasks. It can also lead to changes in personality and behaviour. Some of the more common illnesses associated with dementia are Alzheimer's disease, vascular dementia, frontotemporal dementia, Lewy body disease and Parkinson's disease.

Although it can be devastating for individuals and their families, the impact of dementia has wider implications for our society, with an estimated cost of \$18.7 billion to the Australian economy by 2025<sup>1</sup>. Despite the prevalence of dementia, many other diseases have far greater community awareness.

For this reason, you may be surprised to learn that dementia is the second leading cause of death of Australians. In Australia today, there are an estimated 472,000 people living with dementia.<sup>2</sup>

While it is more commonly experienced in older people, dementia can sometimes occur in those under 65 years of age. This is known as younger onset dementia. One in ten people over the age of 65 experiences dementia, while three in ten are affected once they reach 85 years of age<sup>2</sup>. Despite the increased risk as we age, it is important to remember that dementia is not a normal part of ageing.

So armed with that knowledge, the next logical question is: can dementia be prevented? The answer to that question is yes... and no.



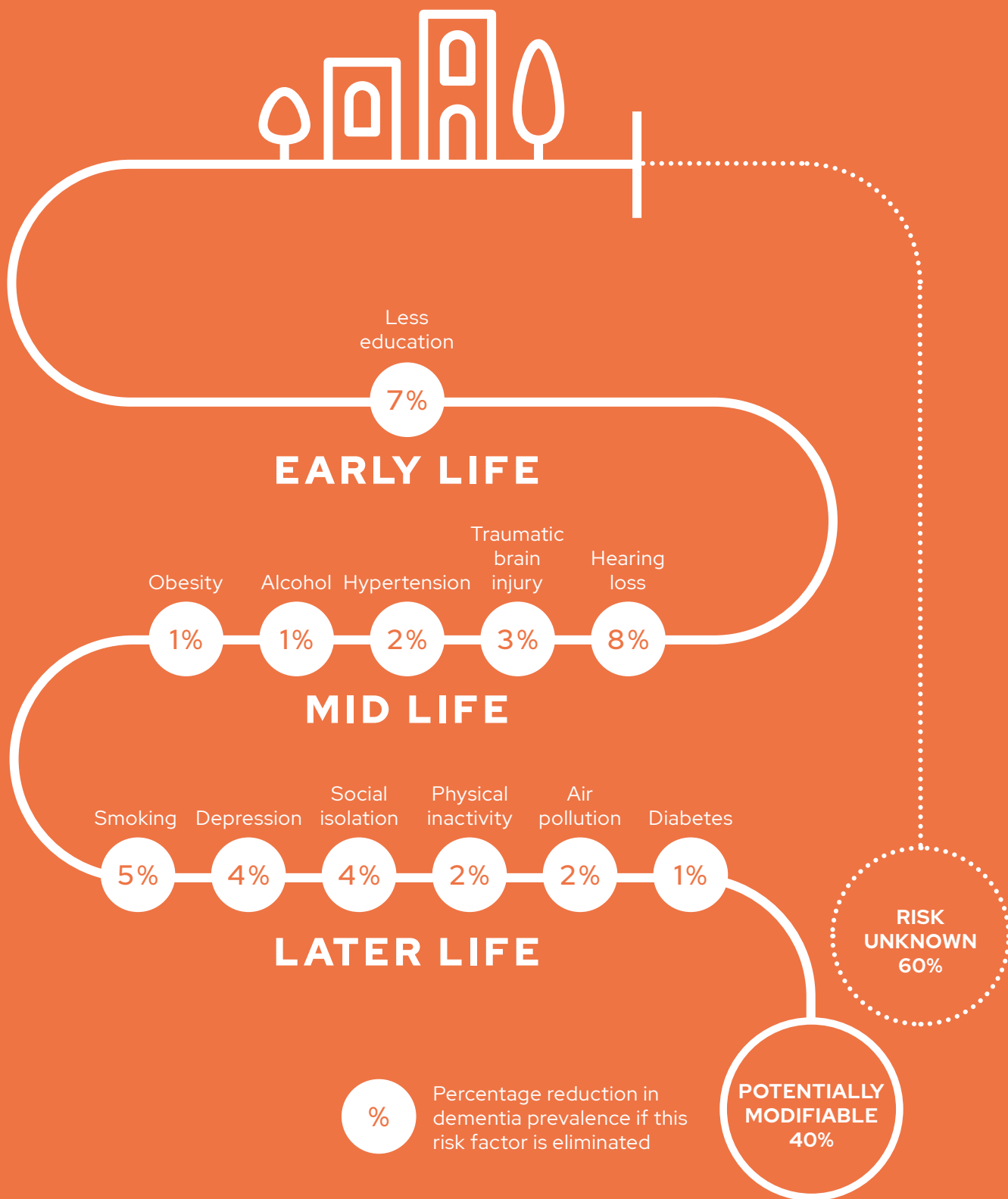


Let's consider what we know about dementia. There's been a significant amount of research into prevention and treatment, and while there is currently no cure, there are many things that we can do to help protect against dementia related diseases. Medical journal *The Lancet*, recently published a paper<sup>3</sup> which reviews the known modifiable risk factors and identifies some new risk factors, which may surprise you.

Non-modifiable risk factors are the things we have no control over. In the case of dementia, these include age and genetics. Modifiable risk factors can vary according to age: from education in early life; to hearing loss, high blood pressure and obesity in midlife; and smoking, social isolation, depression and diabetes in later life. The new evidence shows that

three additional modifiable risk factors for dementia include excessive alcohol consumption, head injury and air pollution. It is thought that addressing the modifiable risk factors might prevent or delay the onset of dementia by as much as 40%.

So what are the tangible things we can do to prevent dementia? There's actually quite a few things. These include: maintaining healthy blood pressure and cholesterol; addressing hearing loss; limiting alcohol use; avoiding smoking and exposure to air pollution; reducing obesity; avoiding head injury which is particularly prevalent in contact sports; and maintaining physical, social and mental activity. It's never too early, or too late to make changes to help prevent the onset of dementia.



# IT'S THOUGHT THAT ADDRESSING THE MODIFIABLE RISK FACTORS MIGHT PREVENT OR DELAY THE ONSET OF DEMENTIA BY AS MUCH AS 40%

For people who do develop dementia, it's important to keep in mind that it is possible to continue to maintain a good quality of life for many people. Continuing to do the things that are meaningful is the key to living well with dementia. Life may change, but finding ways to focus on physical and mental wellbeing makes dealing with the progression of the disease more manageable. If you or a loved one is living with dementia and would like to know more about the support available through an Opal HealthCare Care Community near you, don't hesitate to get in touch via [communications@opalhealthcare.com.au](mailto:communications@opalhealthcare.com.au). Support may be as simple as connecting with other families who are also experiencing the dementia journey, or extend to respite or permanent residential care.

<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018) Causes of Death, Australia, 2017

<sup>2</sup> Dementia Australia (2018) Dementia Prevalence Data 2018-2058

<sup>3</sup> Livingston (2020) Dementia prevention, intervention and care, The Lancet



# THE ANTIDOTE TO AGEISM

According to the World Health Organization's (WHO), Global Report on Ageism<sup>1</sup> released in March, half of the world's population is believed to hold ageist attitudes towards older people. That's a sobering statistic and makes ageism a significant global challenge.

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Ageism refers to how we think, feel and act towards others based on age. It's a way of categorising people in ways that may lead to disadvantage. Like many deeply held attitudes, it starts early in life and is reinforced over time. Ageism pervades all aspects of society including the workplace, media, healthcare, social support and the legal system. While we may think ageism affects only older people, in fact people of all ages can be impacted.

The WHO report recommends three strategies for combating ageism. They include: policy and law; education; and intergenerational interventions.

Intergenerational interventions are among the most powerful ways to address the negative effects of ageism and the benefits are twofold. Not only do intergenerational interventions help reduce ageism against older people, but they have the ability to reduce ageism against younger people as well by resetting long held perceptions.

Every day in our Care Communities across Australia, both formal and informal connections take place between the generations. Each interaction chips away little by little at the foundations of ageism, providing the groundwork for connection and understanding.

Springwood Greens Care Community regularly welcomes a parents and babies group. Despite the generational gap, members of the group find they have a great deal in common. Often new parents find themselves in uncharted territory, navigating life with a small child, isolated from their familiar



*Yvonne catches up with her Brazilian university friend via Zoom.*

social networks. Similarly, those who have recently commenced a new phase of life in residential care can find themselves with feelings of anxiety at the prospect of building connections in a new environment. Bringing together the generations in this way can help to break down intergenerational barriers by focusing on similarities and shared experience rather than differences.

Now in its third year, the Seniors and Teens Empathy Program (STEP) at Annandale Grove Care Community has had wonderful success bringing older and younger members of our community together through facilitated engagement sessions. The program encourages story sharing which builds empathy and understanding across the generations. One teacher involved in the program remarked, "The children are so keen to visit their new friends every week and I've seen such maturity in their interactions and genuine connections being formed."

At Alfred Cove Care Community, intergenerational connections are combating ageism while at the same time bridging the cultural divide. Portuguese speaking residents spend time chatting with Brazilian university students via Zoom, helping to improve the students' English conversational skills while at the same time getting to know and understand one another. Yvonne, says "I look forward to speaking with my new friend. I've even researched where she lives so we can chat about it."

As the saying goes, "to walk a mile in my shoes, you must first take off your own". We all have a role to play in combating ageism by contributing to a changing narrative and challenging negative perceptions of ageing.

A black poodle is sitting on a balcony, looking out towards a garden. In the foreground, a pink orchid is in bloom. The background shows a green garden with a black metal fence. The poodle is wearing a purple collar with a silver ring.

## Enjoyment

Everyone loves a country show, and when our residents at Sale Gardens Care Community decided to hold their own in the face of cancellations due to the pandemic, it was the epitome of what Enjoyment of life is all about. We also meet Maria, whose floristry workshops bring residents from two Care Communities together over a shared interest. This is the embodiment of what lifelong teaching and learning is all about.

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# WHEN THE COUNTRY COMES TO TOWN

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Local agricultural shows are the highlight of the annual social calendar for many regional areas around Australia. Sale, in Victoria's beautiful Gippsland region is no exception. Agricultural shows provide the opportunity for country people to come together and celebrate strong community connections forged through good times and bad.

Many residents at Sale Gardens Care Community have enjoyed a lifetime of involvement with the Sale Agricultural Show. Formed in 1859, the show society remains the oldest community organisation in the region and has a rich history of celebrating all aspects of life on the land, from farm animals and machinery to baking and hand crafts.

When the difficult decision was taken by the Sale and District Agricultural Society to cancel the annual show due to COVID-19 restrictions, residents at Sale Gardens Care Community knew they had to do something to keep the long-standing tradition alive. Residents and team members joined forces to create a committee with residents arranging all aspects of the show.

There's obviously something in a name. Affectionately known as 'the two Joans', residents Joan Nix and Joan Kewish together proved to be a formidable force in the organisation of the event. Driven by a passion for keeping their local community spirit alive and backed by an extensive background in event management and administration, they took on the planning of the show ably supported by other residents.



# Enjoyment

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As a life member of the Country Women's Association with 50 years' experience with the iconic organisation, which is a staunch supporter of country women and families, Joan Kewish was well placed to guide the organisational efforts. Similarly, Joan Nix drew upon skills gained during a long clerical career to ensure everything ran smoothly. She shared, "I enjoyed organising the show because I got to see the surprise on the residents' and families' faces when they saw all the things we do and create here."

An impressive 224 entries were received for the show from residents, family and team members. Categories ranged from baking, sewing, knitting, artwork, to homegrown fruit and vegetables and plants. One family managed to contribute entries from an astounding five generations of keen show exhibitors. Residents performed all the key roles on show day including judging, stewarding and displaying entries. Like any good agricultural show, competition was fierce with many of the baked goods classes hotly contested with long-held reputations on the line.

Those attending were even able to partake of that unique show favourite, the dagwood dog. For the uninitiated, a dagwood dog consists of a battered hot dog on a stick, generously dipped in tomato sauce. It's an unusual delicacy loved by show-goers, both young and old. Plenty of other festive food options were also on offer, created by Sale Garden Care Community's in-house food service team.

The inaugural Sale Gardens Care Community show was such a success that the organising committee decided that the show could not be their last. The committee re-formed and again hosted another very successful show at Easter time. The two Joans are hopeful that the Sale and District Agricultural Show will go ahead again this year, but either way they're thrilled to be able to continue to contribute to the community they love.









# BLOOMING FRIENDSHIPS

**If you'd asked her a few years ago, Maria would have said aged care wasn't for her. She'd always led an active and independent life, in a home where she regularly welcomed a constant stream of family and friends who enjoyed her warm hospitality. Considering a time when she may need some assistance herself just wasn't on her agenda.**

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Born in Portugal, Maria moved to Australia at the tender age of 22. She was young, in love and ready for the adventure of a lifetime, building a new life at the other side of the world with her new husband. Maria says life was tough back then and they didn't have a lot, "but for me, it was like paradise".

More than 60 years on, Maria now finds herself happily at home at Alfred Cove Care Community. She's the first to admit that the transition wasn't completely smooth sailing but finding a common thread of connection with other residents was key to easing the transition into her Care Community.

For Maria, that common connection is the love of flowers. Right from her first home with her husband, a humble little farm "in the middle of the bush", Maria displayed flowers and foliage everywhere, arranging them in repurposed jars and tins. For many years Maria created the floral arrangements that adorned her local church for important community occasions.

It was a tradition she was keen to continue when she moved to Alfred Cove and it turned out to be the perfect way to connect with other like-minded people.

General manager, Natalia Dyer was keen to support Maria's passion for floristry and along with her team, helped create a special space where arrangements could be created and displayed. From this, Maria's Flower Workshop was born.

Along with creating floral arrangements for celebrations and special occasions, Maria holds floristry workshops where residents from both Alfred Cove and nearby Melville Parkside Care Community meet over a cuppa and cake while expressing their creativity through flowers. Natalia says, "Maria is always the life of the party. She loves to share her talent with others and her workshop is filled not only with flowers but with conversation and laughter which brightens everyone's day."

Maria's warm personality shines well beyond her flower workshop. Whenever a new resident moves to the Care Community, she takes the time to personally welcome them and make introductions to other residents. Those with a shared passion for flowers are welcomed to her workshop to learn and share. When asked what makes her such a good teacher, in typical humble fashion Maria says, "Life teaches, the best teacher is life."

# Safety & Security

In our focus on Safety and Security we share the special bond born out of cultural connection between Aunty Cindy and general manager, Lorenzo. Also featured are stories of two ladies who live in our Memory Care Neighbourhoods where some of the challenges of living with dementia have been alleviated with innovative approaches to care.

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# A CULTURE OF RESPECT

## CULTURAL SAFETY IS MORE THAN JUST AN AWARENESS OF OTHER CULTURES

**True cultural safety stems from an understanding of the person's unique perspective, and acknowledgement and mindful respect of their differences. Aspects of cultural safety include clear and respectful communication, respectful treatment, the inclusion of community and empowerment in decision making.**

Annandale Grove Care Community is home to people from many different cultural backgrounds and walks of life including Indigenous Australian, Aunty Cindy. For First Nations peoples, an important aspect of cultural safety is an appreciation of the historical context of their experience and its impact on wellbeing. General manager, Lorenzo acknowledges this and says, "I always try to see things from Aunty Cindy's perspective. It's important that she is treated with understanding, respect and empathy and her culture acknowledged. In order for us to provide her with truly personalised care, she has to be part of that discussion."

Research indicates that cultural differences can act as a barrier to effective health outcomes for Indigenous people. Cultural safety aims to directly address this by going further than simply increasing cultural awareness, and placing the onus on those providing care to understand culture-specific values and identity from an Indigenous person's perspective.

Aunty Cindy has found that through art, she has been able to express her cultural identity. It has proved to be a powerful tool for connection and understanding with others in her Care Community. Her art is a medium for communication and an expression of her connection to Country, identity and spirituality. Many of Aunty Cindy's artworks adorn the halls of Annandale Grove and spark conversation between residents, team and the wider community which helps to deepen cultural respect and understanding. Aunty Cindy says, "Creating art makes me very happy. The paintings help me share a little bit about Aboriginal culture with others. It is important for me to be able to pass this knowledge to the next generation – these are our stories."

# THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Research places moving house among the top five stressful life events. When moving house is combined with a big life change like moving into residential care, it can have a significant impact. Often the move into care comes about as a result of a traumatic event such as a fall rather than a considered decision process, so the circumstances around the move can feel overwhelming and out of the person's control.

Home is not simply somewhere to live, it is a haven from the outside world and symbolic of who we are. Letting go of possessions accumulated over a lifetime which trigger memories of our past can lead to feelings of loss. It's important when someone moves into care that they choose some things to bring with them that provide comfort and help to ease the transition to their new surroundings by providing security and familiarity.

For a person living with dementia, moving away from familiar surroundings can lead to even greater stress and anxiety than others may feel. Irene\*, who is living with dementia recently moved into one of our Care Communities. For people living with dementia, even previously familiar surroundings can present navigation difficulties, so visual cues are an important tool in assisting them to feel safe and secure.

Our care team noticed that Irene sometimes appeared agitated and disoriented and frequently asked to go home. It quickly became clear that she was finding it difficult to locate her room so, working together with Irene and her family, a solution was found. Irene's door was painted a distinctive colour and a sign was created in the same colour and placed on her walker.





The sign said, My name is Irene and I live in No. 5 together with a home symbol which was also placed on Irene's name card next to her door.

Our team assisted Irene whenever she asked to go home, showing her the sign and guiding her to her doorway. Before long, Irene was able to refer to the sign herself whenever she felt anxious. She was able to navigate around her surroundings more independently, providing her with a feeling of security and sense of belonging in her new home.

Shirley experienced similar feelings when she moved into Wallarah Point Care Community. She loved her new room but said it just didn't feel like home. When our team spoke with Shirley, it became apparent that collecting teddy bears had been a big part of her life.

Arrangements were made for her teddies to join Shirley at Wallarah Point and she was able to display them in her room. General manager Arlie says, "The teddies bring Shirley so much joy and they are a wonderful talking point. Shirley loves to show her collection to other residents and having them around has really helped her to feel at home as part of our Wallarah Point family."





## Loving Community

Loving Community celebrates the importance of connection in rural and regional settings. We also share the story of the wonderful couple on our cover, Marie and Ron. These two love birds found each other at 93 and 100 respectively and recently married at Cameron Park Care Community.

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# NURTURING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



# Loving Community

Dubbo Homestead Care Community has strong ties with the local community. In particular, the two nearby primary schools have long-standing relationships which connect students with community elders living in our care home through programs including playtime for younger children and story-sharing for older students.

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Kindergarten students from Dubbo North Public School love to visit and share stories and draw pictures with residents. The children love the chance to make new friends and those who don't have grandparents in their life benefit from the opportunity to interact with elders in their community. Resident border collie, Miley is also a big hit with the kids. Miley delights in welcoming our home's young visitors – especially when there's morning tea on offer.

Commencing in 2019, Dubbo South Public School students in Years 5 and 6 started a program to document the lives of elders in their community. The students regularly visit Dubbo Homestead Care Community and strike up conversations with our residents guided by a list of questions which help them more deeply understand the lives of the people they are interviewing.

The project helps to create a narrative of rural life. Social connection provides the foundation for

cohesion and inclusion across the generations, enabling the regional community to flourish. While rural areas often experience challenges in dealing with a geographically disperse population, it can also mean they are, by necessity, highly proficient in ensuring cultural and social needs are met. This is certainly true of the Dubbo community.

Class teacher Mrs Lunn says of her students, "The children were kind and assisted the elderly and shared a special connection with the people they interviewed. They loved visiting Dubbo Homestead and can't wait to do it again."

Once the interviews were complete, students prepared the life stories of the people they had interviewed. The process fostered a deeper understanding of rural life for older generations. While things have changed considerably over time, one thing that holds true is deep ties with the land and respect for each other regardless of age.

Loving Community

# LOVE OF THE CENTURY

Marie and Ron are living proof that  
it's never too late to find true love.







**At 93 and 100 years of age respectively, the pair met during an exercise class at their home at Cameron Park Care Community and Marie knew right away that Ron was the man for her. Marie didn't expect that she'd fall in love again but once she'd found Ron, she wasn't going to let him get away.**

Not one to stand on tradition, it was Marie that regularly asked Ron when they were going to tie the knot. Knowing he'd met his match, Ron joked, "She pestered me for six months and I had to give in to her". The proposal was sealed with a kiss and the happy couple were thrilled to share their news with their families and fellow residents. Ron remarked that Marie is "a wonderful woman, I really fell in love with her. She's full of fun, always laughing and joking. We're going to have a very happy marriage."

Lifestyle coordinator, Miki Stojcic said the couple's love had energised them. She shares, "It's been amazing to see the transformation." Having moved in six months before Ron, Marie found she took some time to get used to her new environment. Ron also took time to adjust but as they began to get involved in activities like the exercise classes, they began to make new friends and feel more at home.

As the happy day approached, Cameron Park was abuzz with excitement. Residents and team got together with Marie and Ron and their families to help arrange every detail of the ceremony from decorations and flowers to the cake and delicious menu. Finally, on a sunny Sunday afternoon in April, Marie and Ron were able to declare their love in front of three generations of their family, fellow residents and team members.

The ceremony was officiated by chaplain, Pat Betts who shared with those present, "In the autumn of their lives, these two beautiful people, Marie and Ron, have found their friendship and care for one another has blossomed into love." Cameron Park Care Community general manager, Janet Collins had witnessed the unfolding love story from the start and was absolutely thrilled to be able to help make their commitment to each other official. "Anyone who spends five minutes in their company, can just see it and feel it. It's beautiful."

When asked if they'd be planning a honeymoon, Ron was keen on the idea but Maria wasn't so sure saying, "I don't know if he can standup to a honeymoon. He is 100!" One thing is clear, this special couple are overjoyed to have found each other and determined to make the most of every single day together.

## behind the scenes

We're more than just a group of homes – we're a community that is committed to providing high quality and deeply personalised care.

How? Through continued investment in our capable and skilled team, advanced technologies, developing purpose-built living environments and partnering with leading organisations who share our values. And with sound organisational governance from an experienced leadership team, and a rigorous feedback loop to ensure we're living our commitment.



### Authentic relationships

Our teams at Blacktown Terrace, Geraldton Shore, Maitland Grange and Carseldine Greens Care Communities recently participated in the End of Life Directions for Aged (ELDAC) *Working Together Program* led by the Queensland University of Technology. The program brought together professionals from across the sector with the aim of improving the quality of end-of-life care for all older Australians in aged care with evidence-based strategies to enhance linkages between aged, primary and specialist palliative care providers.



### Design for the future

Incorporating activated spaces into our new Care Communities is an important focus for our design teams. These include purpose-designed spaces which help support active engagement and reminiscence including gardening plots, sewing rooms, billiard and bar areas and resident-use kitchens.



## Leadership and governance

Our Registered Nurse to Care Manager (RN2CM) program helps RNs make the transition from nurse to clinical leaders of the future. During the program, participants develop their leadership skills and gain exposure to real-life experiences with support from a multidisciplinary leadership team. During 2021, over 100 RNs will go through the program which incorporates both practical experience and classroom learning. Watch Cristine's story to find out more about clinical leadership pathways: [bit.ly/OHC-CM](https://bit.ly/OHC-CM)



## Clinical excellence

We are proud to celebrate the recognition of service to nursing of one of our regional quality advisors, Dr Patricia Canning, who was awarded an Order of Australia Medal in the 2021 Australia Day Honours List. Patricia has been a member of our Western Australia clinical leadership team for six years and has had a notable career in both public health and aged care.



## Strategic partnerships

The first of our *Partners in care* webinar series for GPs was held in March. The event provided our medical practitioner network an opportunity to connect for a discussion on changes to the aged care landscape, the increasing healthcare complexity of those entering care and an overview of our project to improve palliative and end of life care.







Warm up your belly with this  
super delish sweet treat  
that's always a crowd pleaser.

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*Recipe* Nelson Burgos, Hospitality Consultant NSW





# STICKY DATE PUDDING

## INGREDIENTS

250g pitted dates, chopped  
1 teaspoon Bicarbonate Soda  
1 ½ cups boiling water  
125g unsalted butter, softened  
1 cup brown sugar  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
2 eggs  
1 ¾ cups self-raising flour, sifted  
100mls thickened cream

### Caramel Sauce

1 cup brown sugar  
300ml thickened cream  
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract  
60g butter

## METHOD

Preheat oven to 180°C. Grease and line the base of cake pan. Place dates and bicarbonate of soda into a bowl. Pour over boiling water. Allow to stand for 20 minutes. Coarsely mash the dates.

Beat butter, sugar and vanilla until pale and creamy. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Using a large metal spoon, fold in date mixture and the flour.

Spoon mixture into prepared cake pan.

Bake for 25-30mins at 180°C.

Set aside in the pan for 5 minutes to stand before turning onto a wire rack to cool slightly.

### Caramel Sauce

Combine all ingredients in a saucepan over medium heat. Cook, stirring often, until sauce comes to the boil. Reduce heat to medium-low. Simmer for 2 minutes.

Pour warm sauce over warm pudding.

Serve with remaining sauce and thickened cream.

**Serves 4-6 people.**

If you have a favourite  
recipe you'd like to share,  
send it to us at [recipes@  
opalhealthcare.com.au](mailto:recipes@opalhealthcare.com.au)

# Words of thanks

Our Care Communities often receive thank you letters from families and friends expressing their gratitude for our wonderful team. Here is a selection.



## **EPHING MEADOWS CARE COMMUNITY** VICTORIA

I would just like to thank everyone at Epping Meadows Care Community who cared for Dad. The team were absolutely brilliant. The care he received was beyond belief. Management should be very proud of all team members. The love and care for my Dad was absolutely fabulous. They will always be a big part of my life.



## **TWEED RIVER CARE COMMUNITY** NEW SOUTH WALES

I would like to thank all the team for the wonderful care my Mum has had especially during these recent trying times caused by the coronavirus. It's been an extremely worrying time for everyone, so to know that our Mum and her co residents have been kept as safe as possible has been a huge relief. Please know that we appreciate you all, thanks again for everything you do for Mum.

**CALOUNDRA PLACE  
CARE COMMUNITY**  
QUEENSLAND

Please accept my sincere thanks and appreciation for your assistance in being able to speak to my grandmother on the phone. Nurse Marni assisted me this morning to Facetime with her and I got to see my Grandmother smile when I told her that I loved her. Both Marni and I ended up in tears of joy seeing her little smile come over her lips.

**ARMADALE PLACE  
CARE COMMUNITY**  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The team at Armadale Place Care Community are wonderful! We loved the team and will be confident in taking up respite again in the future.

**BAIRNSDALE PARKLANDS  
CARE COMMUNITY**  
VICTORIA

We would like to thank you for all the comfort and care you gave to Mum in the last weeks of her life. I can't thank you enough, considering you have so many to care for, it amazed us how much care and dedication you give to each individual. You all seemed to grow closer to Mum the longer she was in your care. We appreciate from the bottom of our hearts, the care, empathy and accommodating nature you had for all our family in such a difficult time. It has made a lasting impression on us.



# Our Care Communities

General enquiries 1300 048 519



## NSW — Sydney Metro

Annandale Grove Care Community	02 8585 1900
Ashfield Terrace Care Community	02 8799 7000
Auburn Glen Care Community	02 9643 3200
Bankstown Terrace Care Community	02 9708 9400
Belmore Place Care Community	02 9784 3100
Blacktown Terrace Care Community	02 9852 9600
Bossley Parkside Care Community	02 9426 1500
Canterbury Place Care Community	02 9784 2111
Chiswick Manor Care Community	02 9370 0600
Katoomba Views Care Community	02 4780 0600
Killara Glades Care Community	02 8467 3200
Manly Hillside Care Community	02 8925 6400
Meadowbank Grove Care Community	02 8878 5200
Mona Vale View Care Community	02 9910 7100
Narrabeen Glades Care Community	02 9910 7600
Narraweena Grove Care Community	02 8978 3100
Quakers Hillside Care Community	02 8818 6500
Stanmore Place Care Community	02 8594 6900
Wahroonga Place Care Community	02 9372 3800
Winston Hillside Care Community	02 9865 1800

## NSW — Central Coast, Hunter and North Coast

Berkeley Vale Care Community	02 4337 0000
Cameron Park Care Community	02 4944 1300
Coffs Harbour Grange Care Community	02 6659 4800
Kanwal Gardens Care Community	02 4393 1888
Killarney Vale Care Community	02 4345 2700
Maitland Grange Care Community	02 4015 3000
Murwillumbah Greens Care Community	02 6670 9700
Norah Head Care Community	02 4352 8900
Raymond Terrace Gardens Care Community	02 4980 0000
Rutherford Park Care Community	02 4015 3800
Tingira Hills Care Community	02 4904 0100
Tweed River Care Community	07 5590 2800
Tweed Valley Care Community	07 5599 6900
Wallarah Point Care Community	0408 265 643

## NSW — Blue Mountains, Western Regional and South Coast

Bathurst Riverview Care Community	02 6334 7000
Denhams Beach Care Community	02 4412 3400
Dubbo Homestead Care Community	02 5852 1600
Mudgee Grove Care Community	02 6370 6200
Narrandera Homestead Care Community	02 6959 5300
Orange Grove Care Community	02 6363 4300
Shoalhaven Place Care Community	02 4429 1200
Springwood Greens Care Community	02 4754 6000

<b>Queensland</b>	
Ashmore Gardens Care Community	07 5510 1800
Berrinba Greens Care Community	07 3809 1400
Broadwater Grove Care Community	07 5557 7700
Burpengary Gardens Care Community	07 3481 6100
Calamvale Parklands Care Community	07 3723 0400
Caloundra Place Care Community	07 5390 0200
Carseldine Greens Care Community	07 3500 9300
Kawana Waters Care Community	07 5390 5100
Kirra Beach Care Community	07 5587 5500
Morayfield Grove Care Community	07 5495 9000
Nambour Gardens Care Community	07 5444 9700
North Lakes Terrace Care Community	07 3384 2700
Springwood Terrace Care Community	07 3722 9400
Varsity Views Care Community	07 5554 8100
<b>Western Australia</b>	
Alfred Cove Care Community	08 6330 0400
Armadale Place Care Community	08 9234 3300
Bunbury Gardens Care Community	08 9726 6300
Carine Parkside Care Community	08 9378 5500
Geraldton Shore Care Community	08 9921 5010
Melville Parkside Care Community	08 9424 0500
Murdoch Gardens Care Community	08 6332 6200
Mandurah Coast Care Community	08 9550 2500
Treeby Parklands Care Community	08 6172 2400

<b>Victoria — Melbourne Metro and Surrounding Regions</b>	
Altona Gardens Care Community	03 8325 7600
Epping Meadows Care Community	03 8405 5200
Highton Gardens Care Community	03 5223 0900
Meadow Heights Care Community	03 9303 6800
Mornington Bay Care Community	03 5958 6600
Somerville Gardens Care Community	03 5977 9922
Wantirna Views Care Community	03 9847 2500
Warrandyte Gardens Care Community	03 9844 8000
Warrnambool Place Care Community	03 5563 0600
Warrnambool Riverside Care Community	03 5559 0600
<b>Victoria — Gippsland</b>	
Bairnsdale Parklands Care Community	03 5153 7200
Inverloch Coast Care Community	03 5671 6000
Lakes Entrance Care Community	03 5179 5500
Paynesville Gardens Care Community	03 5153 8400
Sale Gardens Care Community	03 5142 1600



# Ageing is living

When your local Care Community is supported by Opal HealthCare, you can feel confident that we're dedicated to delivering the very best eldercare experience.