

# Opal moments

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Ageing is living



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



Opal moments

**Front Cover**

Supported by her Meaningful Mate Leigh, Jean has achieved a number of 'firsts' while living at Ashmore Gardens Care Community on Queensland's Gold Coast. This hug with a cuddly koala was an ideal way to celebrate her 103rd birthday!

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# A message from our CEO

## Putting the new Aged Care Standards into practice

Recent changes to Australia’s aged care standards represent an important step forward in ensuring quality, safety and rights-based care for all older Australians. At Opal HealthCare, we welcome these reforms as an opportunity to further strengthen the care, connection and wellbeing of our residents and families.

The new framework closely aligns with our purpose – *to bring joy to those we care for* – and reinforces the values we live every day: Compassion, Accountability, Respect, and Excellence. These are the principles that guide every interaction, every care moment and every decision at our Care Communities.

What matters most is that these reforms are meaningful for our residents – ensuring you continue to experience care that is personal, respectful and built around your choices and wellbeing.

As these new standards take effect, you may notice small improvements in the way we communicate, plan and deliver care. Each change is designed to enhance your experience and ensure your voice and preferences remain at the heart of everything we do.

Our team remain focused on continuously improving and creating environments where every resident can live their best life in care, surrounded by people who understand, respect and value them.

We’ve included a short summary of the Strengthened Standards and Statement of Rights on pages 28-30.



## Caring with kindness

Something we talk about often at Opal HealthCare is caring with kindness. The way we show up every day, support one another and take the time to understand the little and the big things that make a difference for each resident.

Across our Care Communities we see kindness showing up in meaningful ways every day – and we share some of those stories in this issue of Opal Moments. An ever-expanding group of Italian residents and team connecting and nurturing one another; a ‘reminiscence’ group started by a resident to encourage others to connect over stories shared; a resident who thrives on practicing reiki and our team who encourage and learn from her.

Through kindness we learn to understand one another better, recognise what brings comfort and how we can make life better together. This continues to shape who we are as a team and a community, and how we care.

## Warm regards

*Rachel Argaman*

Rachel

Across our Care Communities, team members like Rana are making a difference in the lives of older Australians.







### **Varsity Views Care Community, QLD**

The spirit of the 1950s was in full swing at Varsity Views Care Community for *Varsity Rocks On!*, where residents, family members, team and members of the local community partied to classic tunes and admired classic cars. For resident Gwenda and son Steven, checking out this blast from the past was just one highlight in a day of many.



### **Orange Grove Care Community, NSW**

Resident Georgina's amazing handmade scrunchies are both very cool and made with love – and thanks to her generous spirit, they've found grateful recipients at schools in the Philippines, India and Fiji. "I've always loved sewing," says Georgina. "It gives me purpose and I'm happy to be able to give to others."

# Life at our Care Communities

### **Mordialloc Grove Care Community, VIC**

We were proud to showcase Mervyn's creative passions with a special exhibition in his honour. Mervyn has painted many landscapes in the region of Morwell and Traralgon where he lived for most of his life, and every artwork, like this impressive spitfire, has a story.



### **Alfred Cove Care Community, WA**

Residents were thrilled to launch our Ladies Circle, a space for female residents to connect and make new friendships. To celebrate, our ladies sported their colourful "Ladies Circle" t-shirts and performed as the Ladies Circle Choir, filling the room with music, laughter and dance.



### **Reynella Hillside Care Community, SA**

Overlooking beautiful Winefly Park, our balcony is the ideal place for good friends to listen to birdsong and catch up for a laugh, a chat and a glass of bubbly. This has become a regular and highly anticipated part of life at Reynella Hillside.





**NAMBOUR GARDENS  
CARE COMMUNITY, QLD**

Who doesn't love receiving a handwritten letter? Students at Nambour Christian College and our residents, including Bobby, Pat and Lyn, share their interests, advice and get to know each other through the power of the pen. Residents and students alike look forward to receiving letters from their pen friends.

**CAULFIELD HORIZONS  
CARE COMMUNITY, VIC**

Keeping indoor plants green and healthy demands loving attention. At Caulfield Horizons, our plants are thriving under the care of Maureen, who leads our Care Community's plant wellness committee. Her expertise brings joy to fellow residents and everyone who visits.



**TWEED RIVER CARE COMMUNITY, NSW**

Residents, family and friends from Tweed River Care Community were joined by Kirra Beach, Varsity Views and Tweed Valley Care Communities for the World Walks Against Dementia. A fun day of exercise, fresh air and swapping stories to raise awareness of a cause that impacts so many Australian families.



**MANDURAH COAST  
CARE COMMUNITY, WA**

Who's for pizza? Check out what husband and wife Barry and Nola cooked up in our pizza oven with chef James. We can almost smell the goodness...



**NORTH LAKES TERRACE  
CARE COMMUNITY, QLD**

Our residents love meditating with team member Vivienne, with many commenting how relaxed and calm they feel afterwards. It's a much-anticipated activity at North Lakes Terrace and brings residents together over a shared interest in wellness.



**PRESTON HILLTOP  
CARE COMMUNITY, VIC**

Proud former truck driver Peter loves keeping cars sparkling and sharing his expansive knowledge of vehicles. Peter's a four-wheel fanatic - when he's not making our team members' cars look their best, you'll find him enjoying an episode of Top Gear.





**CHISWICK MANOR  
CARE COMMUNITY, NSW**

Mattia is on the case! Police officers from Burwood and Auburn stations (including Mattia’s daughter) visited us to meet our residents and share information about the vital role they play in serving our community. Our residents shared heartfelt stories about their own lives of service in Australia’s defence force and local police force.



**MURDOCH GARDENS  
CARE COMMUNITY, WA**

With the weather warming up, our residents took the opportunity to get into the spirit with an island-themed celebration. Fabulous Robin has nailed the look!

**SPRINGWOOD TERRACE  
CARE COMMUNITY, QLD**

We were thrilled to welcome the Model A Ford Club of Queensland to Springwood Terrace. Proud resident Rod was presented with a certificate of appreciation for all the valuable work he’s put into the Club over the years. Member Lindsay told us when cars would break down, Rod would be the man everyone asked for as he’d always find and fix the problem. A great day for all of us, and especially Rod.



**GAWLER HILLSIDE  
CARE COMMUNITY, SA**

Beautiful bushland is only a few moments from Gawler Hillside and, thanks to Wilbur’s Wildlife, we were thrilled to get up close and personal with some of our animal neighbours and learn fascinating facts about their lives.



**BETHANIA PARKLANDS  
CARE COMMUNITY, QLD**

Fun in the sun with friends – our residents have a ball in the glorious Queensland weather mastering the intricacies of croquet with Logan City Council’s Active & Healthy program. It helps keep residents mobile and brings out a bit of friendly competition.



# THE 'JOY' OF MOVEMENT

For free spirit Joy, recovering her mobility after a fall has proven to be one of her greatest challenges. Armed with determination and the right support, it's a challenge she's met head-on.



Freedom of movement has always been central to Joy's life, from her days as an elite dancer.

*"I didn't quite reach prima ballerina status," says Joy, who lives at **Kawana Waters Care Community** on Queensland's Sunshine Coast. "But I came close!"*

A lifelong exerciser, Joy's athletic endeavours set a strong base for a life of travel – her photograph album is full of adventures with husband Clive and their children, including visiting Macchu Picchu, travels around Europe and the UK, exploring Vietnam and Cambodia and time spent on the road enjoying life in a caravan. She fondly recalls earning her driver's license at 18 and her beloved white Mazda.

*"I've always had my independence," says Joy.*

*"Then I tried to walk to my wardrobe and fell over. It was as simple as that."*

Joy's fall resulted in a spinal fracture, with a lengthy recovery that required significant bed rest.

*"On top of the pain, I was so bored!" says Joy.*

*"I love to read but I'd lost some of my strength so even holding a book was difficult."*

***"Sometimes I surprise myself with the things that I can do."***

## Taking steps towards recovery

At our Care Communities, our partnerships with allied health providers play an important role in enabling our residents to live well. For Joy, the goal was recovering her range of movement.

Joy began intensive physiotherapy three times a week, working with Jay-r, physiotherapist at HCA's Wellness Centre at Kawana Waters Care Community.

Joy's reablement program aims to improve her strength, balance and endurance, with exercises such as walking the balance bar, lifting weights, box-steps, sit-to-stand and reaching.

*"Joy's determination and resilience inspires me," says Jay-r. "Her ultimate goal is moving independently with the aid of a walker, and she's well on her way to achieving that."*

For Joy, Jay-r's understanding of her motivations has spurred her on.

*"Jay-r's encouragement and belief in me has been motivating," she says.*

*"When I taught at TAFE, I loved helping the students who took evening classes because they wanted to learn so badly. I pushed them and they pushed me, so I've always responded well to being challenged."*

Meeting the challenge has opened up Joy's world again. Recovering her range of movement has enabled her to enjoy bus outings, get to our Wellness Centre and hair salon under her own steam, and catch up with friends Kevin, John, Betty and Maree for lunch. After a program of hand reablement, she's also regained her ability to enjoy her love of knitting.

*"Sometimes I surprise myself with the things that I can do," she says. "I'm happy with my progress and I'm looking forward to walking a bit better, and getting around with my scooter. My kids worry about me and it'd be nice to put their minds at ease."*

With the support of Jay-r and our team at Kawana Waters, Joy is well on her way to achieving her goal.





# A special Sicilian connection

## at Glenroy Grove

If you drop in to **Glenroy Grove Care Community** in Melbourne’s northern suburbs on a Monday morning, you could be forgiven for thinking you’d landed in Europe. Amidst the laughter and the espresso, Glenroy Grove’s Italian group holds touching stories of compassion and care.

The friendship of residents Santina and Grace is a tale that proves the power of social connection. Both were born on the island of Sicily and grew up within its rich culture and strong traditions of family. While different paths brought them to Australia, their bonds are in the familiar – and being valued for who they are.

### Getting to know Santina

When Santina moved into Glenroy Grove, her family’s wish was for Santina to be heard. It’s a simple ask that carries extra care and compassion for people living with cognitive impairment, particularly where communication may be impacted.

Before moving in, our team spent time with Santina and her children Lina and John, to get to know her. Understanding her life story, the things that light her up, her challenges, getting a clear picture of what matters most to her, and how her preferences shaped her day.

This meant that when Santina came to live at Glenroy Grove, our team was able to provide the right support for her from day one – and fellow Glenroy Grove resident, Grace, is a special member of that group.

### The warmest of welcomes

*“Grace is such a beautiful soul,” says wellbeing manager, Jade. “For our Italian-speaking residents, she brings great comfort and helps them feel at home straight away. Whether it’s gently guiding people on tours or simply offering a listening ear, Grace is there for them.”*

For Santina, Grace’s influence was important in helping her settle into Care Community life. Before coming to Glenroy Grove, Santina found the hours from 6pm challenging. She was struggling to communicate her needs, which caused her frustration and left her feeling isolated.

***“We’re very happy with these interactions that have helped Mum settle into Glenroy Grove.”***

With the insights from Santina and her family, our team understood these were the hours when Santina craved companionship. With the heart of a true friend, each night Grace shares time with Santina, enjoying a coffee, a chat, and swapping stories about Sicily.

Their relationship has also expanded Santina’s social circle, through her participation in our Italian group. What began with two members has blossomed into 13 friends. Run by much-loved volunteer Rosemary, Grace plays an important role in encouraging residents to attend and share their stories.

For Santina, the impact has been remarkable. She happily engages with fellow residents, enjoys meals together, spends more time in the fresh air, and connects with new friends. And for her family, it’s given peace of mind that their mother feels at home.

*“We’re very happy with these interactions that have helped Mum settle into Glenroy Grove,” says John.*





# Creativity is the key(ring) to Margaret’s wellbeing

Following a diagnosis of Parkinson’s disease, Margaret found new purpose crafting unique clay keyrings that exercise her hands and her mind – and help ensure their owners never lose their keys!



Margaret, who lives at **Reynella Hillside Care Community**, south of Adelaide, is a true entrepreneurial spirit. A former beauty consultant who also helped her husband with their whitegoods business, she understands how to make and sell visually compelling objects people love.

## Having a go

*“I’m limited with the things I can do, so I do what I can,” says Margaret. “My hands don’t allow me to write so well but I can roll balls of clay and I can mix colours. I feel better in the morning knowing I’m doing something creative. It’s given me purpose.”*

Working with wellbeing manager Alexandra, Margaret has created hundreds of colourful keyrings she sells at Reynella Hillside’s café, with proceeds paying for more materials.

Her favourite combination is *“Hot pink, with pale pink and a dash of maroon!”*

## From little things, big things grow

*“We started out just rolling balls of polymer clay,” says Alexandra. “It was good for Margaret’s coordination and gave her the opportunity to use her*

*knowledge of colour combinations. Then we hit on the idea of turning them into keyrings. Each one is a true original, just like Margaret. And people love them.”*

*“Alexandra and I make a good team,” says Margaret. “We’re doing something productive, and it feels wonderful.”*

The impact on Margaret’s mental and physical wellbeing has been profound. With a renewed sense of purpose, she enjoys attending concerts with visiting musician Kelly, and coffee catchups with Alexandra and team members Mel and Jodie.

And the lucky owners of one of Margaret’s keyrings have the privilege of holding a powerful symbol of her personality and persistence.

## A lesson to laugh over

While they’re running like a well-oiled machine now, both laugh at the memory of an early lesson.

*“Margaret spent hours making beads and handed them to me for drying,” says Alexandra. “I got the dryer setting wrong and burned the lot. I was mortified!”*

# An adventurous spirit finds new strength in care

From East Anglia in the UK to the hills of Lesotho in Africa, former nurse and missionary Dianne has left an indelible mark on our world. Accustomed to living independently, a strong support network has helped Dianne adjust to life at **Inverloch Coast Care Community** following a series of strokes.



Dianne, who never saw herself needing help, has great friend Shirley, Shirley’s husband Chas, our Inverloch Coast team (and Matie, our companion green budgie) by her side.

*“It’s a change and it’s hard, but I’m getting used to it,” says Dianne. “Good care means being patient and listening to people and the team here does that. Having an open door and being able to have conversations matters.”*

## Adapting to change

Having left school at 14 to care for older people, Dianne qualified as a nurse and became night superintendent of intensive and coronary care at Norwich and Norfolk Hospital in the UK at 21.

Later, after graduating from Newbold College in Berkshire as a minister, Dianne’s Seventh Day Adventist missionary adventures began in Papua New Guinea which she describes as *“a real culture shock!”*

Missionary life taught Dianne to move fast and embedded her ‘do-it-yourself’ spirit, helping her to serve communities in the Solomon Islands, Cambodia, Thailand, Kenya and Lesotho, where she fondly remembers riding into the mountains on horseback to provide vaccinations for children.

With frequent trips to Australia to continue her education and work with remote communities, Dianne’s passport worked nearly as hard as she did.

## A new chapter in a life of serving others

Dianne’s lifelong love of community and giving back gives her purpose. And that’s critical for her wellbeing as she navigates her new circumstances.

Her passion for people continues to shine through the friendships and support she offers residents, assisting with events and aiming to playing piano at our church services.

Continuing to pursue her wide range of interests in care, Dianne walks with fellow residents most mornings, enjoys art, bowling and exercise classes – and she’s writing the story of her amazing, adventurous life.

***“As a nurse, I learned you can’t save everyone but you do your best,” says Dianne. “And I always have faith in the good Lord.”***





# FINDING JOY IN HELPING OTHERS

## How Stephen's life of service continues in care

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Being actively involved in Care Community life is, for many residents, a natural continuation of lives serving others. And when these activities are directly linked to their care, people thrive.

Stephen came to Australia from Essex at age 11 and it didn't take him long to become an invaluable part of his local community. Now living at **Morayfield Grove Care Community** near Queensland's Moreton Bay, Stephen began his working life as a telegraph delivery boy with Australia Post at just 16.

It was the start of a career that saw him complete a Bachelor of Arts and Master's degrees in Education, Social Work and Human Services and go on to work in numerous Queensland government departments.

His keen interest in helping people saw Stephen take on a number of social worker roles, backed by further qualifications in alcohol and drug studies. And hitting the road as a taxi driver consolidated his knowledge of human nature!

### A helping hand

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When Stephen found he needed a little help managing his own complex care needs, he moved to Morayfield Grove. His aim was to live as independently as possible, stay connected to his community – and use his research and leadership skills to help others at Morayfield Grove.

Stephen and our team worked together to put a number of initiatives in place, centred around matching Stephen's care needs with his passion for enabling others to live their best lives.

*"I feel it's my duty and purpose to help others for as long as I can," says Stephen.*

In a 'full circle' moment, Stephen has returned to his mail delivery days, collecting the mail each day and delivering it to our nurses' station. This can involve walking up to 500 metres a day, keeping him mobile and active.

As part of our Helping Hands program, where residents use their skills to contribute to Care Community life, Stephen plays a central role alongside our team setting up and running group activities.

And through his research skills, each month he contributes an article to Morayfield Grove's newsletter, often unearthing fascinating facts about significant dates in that month.

### Helping others to find their voice

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Stephen is an important voice for fellow residents as a member of each resident-led committee at Morayfield Grove, and Chair of our social committee.

*"Stephen is such a wonderful member of our Care Community," says general manager Robbie.*

*"He's a powerful advocate for our residents and he gives so much. On top of what he does for our residents, he's often involved in award events for our team members, where he'll present the awards with speeches that show the respect and consideration he has for everyone at our Care Community."*

Passionate about the power of storytelling, Stephen has started a 'Share and Grow' group where residents gather to reminisce about their lives. Each session has a different focus to get the discussion started, and it's proving to be an important point of connection – especially for those who may have previously struggled to engage.

*"He's one of those people who's always happy to be involved and lend a hand," says resident Cecily.*

*"Stephen enjoys feeling part of things and knowing he's still contributing to the community in his own way. You can always rely on him to speak up if something needs to be said or to stand up for someone who can't do it themselves. He's got a big heart and a real sense of purpose."*

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For a man who's lived a life of serving others, it makes sense that Stephen's good deeds also support his wellbeing.

*"I appreciate that everything I'm doing is giving me purpose, and it's keeping my mind and body active," says Stephen.*



# HORSING AROUND

is good for the body and soul



Making new friends can become harder as we age. One thing many residents have in common at **Marsden Park Care Community** is a lifelong love of horses. It's a powerful part of their identity and an interest they've bonded over.

Tom recalls his first experiences with horses growing up on a farm, before teaching young people horsemanship at pony club and helping them prepare for dressage events. Betty was an award-winning showjumper. John G trained pacers. Frank trained trotters. John Y was an endurance rider who rode a 100 kilometres across Tasmania.

Staying connected to the active, outdoor life in ways that matter to them is essential to our residents' wellbeing. At Marsden Park, in Sydney's north-west, the physical, mental and emotional benefits for our horse-lovers are clear.

*"Some of my happiest memories involve horses,"* says resident Pauline, who proudly displays photos of her favourites in her bedroom.

*"People ask about them and I enjoy reminiscing about these beautiful creatures."*

Our residents love feeding horses and ponies at nearby farms. It keeps them connected to the countryside and animals they once spent so much time with. Residents with mobility challenges thoroughly enjoy participating through bus trips to nearby farms, something they thoroughly enjoy.

*"For people who have been ill or struggle to engage, our bus trips are so meaningful,"* says wellbeing manager, Valli.

*"In the days leading up to a trip, you can feel the sense of anticipation, and our residents talk about it for days afterwards."*

For some, time spent with horses has instilled values that span generations.

*"Being with horses teaches us respect,"* says Tom.

*"They're big, strong animals and when we treat them with respect, we get the same back. It's such an important value, especially for children to learn."*

For our residents, maintaining their connection with animals they have loved for a lifetime is essential to living well.

# WHEN CRAFTING IS CARING



For people living with dementia, creative pursuits stimulate the mind and can help maintain their dexterity for longer. Often we see the benefits extend beyond the individual.

Being actively involved in the local community is a way of life at **Narraweena Grove Care Community**, on Sydney's Northern Beaches. When our creative residents were searching for a project to combine their talents with a deeper purpose, wellbeing manager Kathrin found a perfect match in the Northern Beaches Women's Shelter.

Residents knitted 40 exquisite scarves, which they were proud to donate to women and children in need of essentials.

*"It's been a wonderful experience for our residents,"* says Kathrin. *"As well as exercising their fine motor skills, knitting brings people together and keeps their community connections strong, so it's great for social wellbeing."*

## Meet our knitters

Growing up in post-war Austria, Christa has always had empathy for people who need some extra help, so she jumped at the opportunity to put her skills to use for a greater good.

*"I love to knit and it's nice to know I'm contributing,"* she says. *"I know the work I do will be passed on to somebody who needs it."*

Over many years, fellow resident Patricia knitted squares for local schools for students to stitch together as blankets, so her work for the Northern Beaches Women's Shelter is a natural extension of her caring nature.

*"It feels good to help people,"* she says. *"When people compliment my work, I feel proud and I know that what I'm doing is valuable."*

*"For the women we support, these donations help bring dignity and they're a tangible sign that people in our local community care about them,"* says Kim, volunteer coordinator at Northern Beaches Women's Shelter.

*"That Narraweena Grove's residents took the time to make these beautiful items shows their care and compassion. And for some of the ladies we support, it reminds them of a skill they may have enjoyed pursuing when they felt safe, so it reignites that interest."*





# IT TAKES A VILLAGE

With a supportive team by your side, it's possible to live well with dementia. People and communities thrive on human connection. We're at our best when we're working together and looking out for one another. At our Care Communities, nobody goes it alone.

Eileen lives at **Everard Park Care Community** in Adelaide. For Eileen (pictured top right), having a loving support team of carers, family and a special fellow resident, has enabled her to live well with dementia.

## Understanding Eileen's preferences

Having agency in our own lives is central to our sense of identity. As care manager Kripa explains, supporting Elaine's choices has helped her to maintain her autonomy and independence.

*"Eileen does what she can by herself and we assist where she needs help. Routine gives her peace of mind, and all team members understand her preferences for how we help her, and when."*

Eileen is keen to stay active. Weekly physiotherapy at our HCA Wellness Centre is helping maintain her range of movement and muscular strength. And special friendships with resident Valmai and team member Charley give Eileen the all-important social connection that helps her to live with purpose.

## The best of friends

Valmai was a familiar face at our Care Community long before she moved in. Now she's become a vital part of Eileen's life.

As a volunteer through the Church of Christ, Valmai and husband Dean brought companionship and spiritual support to our residents. After Dean sadly passed away, Valmai moved into Everard Park, where she continues to give back.

*"Valmai is a breath of fresh air," says general manager Sonya. "She takes people under her wing and is a special comfort for residents who need a little help. She brings people together with her beautiful, positive attitude."*

A creative soul, Valmai encourages residents to join Everard Park's knitting and card-making groups and assists with our Sunday church services. For Eileen, Valmai's impact has been profound.

*"When she came to live with us, Eileen preferred to stay in her bedroom," says wellbeing manager, Anne.*

*"It took her a little while to adjust but through Valmai's gentle encouragement, the support of her daughter Jackie, and our team who give her the time and space she needs to express herself, Eileen now has the confidence to socialise and enjoy activities she loves, like knitting beautiful dolls."*

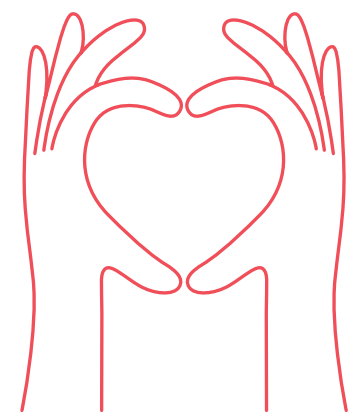
Another powerful presence in Eileen's life is team member Charley. They enjoy invigorating walks together, coffee chats and puzzle-solving, all of which exercise Eileen's body and mind. This plays a fundamental role in supporting her physical and mental wellbeing.

*"Eileen's friendships have been good for her wellbeing in so many ways," says Kripa. "When people are socially active, they're more likely to sleep well, eat well and enjoy better health. It's lovely to see her thrive."*





# Enabling Olive's spirit of community



Spirituality is central to a sense of meaning and identity for many people. At **Bunbury Gardens Care Community** in Western Australia, resident Olive's continuing reiki practice enables her to live her best life in care.



When we meet Olive, we're struck by her infectious smile, curiosity, and care for people. Born in London, Olive enjoyed years of travel for pleasure and work and it was in Bunbury where she was first exposed to alternative health.

Olive studied alternative therapy at university, before working in a health studio, performing massage, colonic irrigation and reiki – the no-touch Japanese practice of healing through energy.

When she moved to Bunbury Gardens, Olive was keen to continue her reiki practice with team and residents who were interested.

*"This means so much to Olive and we're happy to support her interest in reiki, in line with Olive's care preferences,"* says care manager Freny.

*"Olive is a delight,"* says general manager, George.

*"In her own unique and special way, she gives back to her fellow residents and our fabulous team. Many of our residents are open to her alternative methods and she's so keen to help others."*

It's a feeling shared by wellbeing manager, Sam.

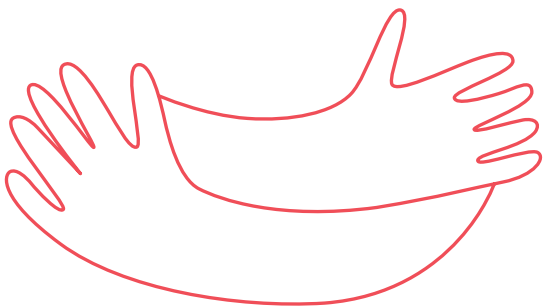
*"Olive brings so much to our Care Community in her connection, support and interaction with others, including providing a valuable voice for fellow residents through our resident-led committees."*

For Olive, living well is a team effort.

*"We're all here to help each other however we can,"* she says. *"People have been so good to me, and I like to help them in return."*

*"I'll be 90 next birthday and I can relax and smile because I've had a good life. I'm so thankful for the team here, I feel as if someone is by my side all the time."*

# Caring for culture



Enabling our residents to stay connected with their heritage.

Knowing we're understood and that our cultural needs and preferences are respected helps us feel safe and heard. For Pat, who lives at **Waverley Valley Care Community** in Melbourne, her friendship with team member Cherry helps her stay connected to her culture.



Pat hails from Colombo, the bustling administrative capital city of Sri Lanka, while Cherry was born a short distance north, in the coastal city of Negombo. While Pat has lived in Australia for many years and raised her children in Melbourne, sharing her stories and communicating her needs with Cherry in her native Sinhalese has been a real comfort that supports her wellbeing.

*"Pat's faith is an important part of her life,"* says Cherry. *"While I'm not a practising Buddhist, I understand how to support Pat's needs."*

That includes helping Pat find her favourite programs on YouTube – Dharma programs spoken by monks in Sinhalese.

There are many different options and it's not a case of one-size-fits-all.

*"These programs have specific detail including prayers that make them meaningful to people for different reasons,"* explains Cherry. *"Speaking Pat's language means I've been able to help her to find the programs that matter to her."*

## The enduring joy of food

Food is a hero ingredient in some of Pat's fondest memories, and Cherry was proud to work with Waverley Valley chef Sunatha, to organise tasty treats for her.

*"One day we were chatting and Pat told me how much she missed hoppers and sambal – which is like a crepe that tastes like sourdough bread, paired with a spicy coconut relish. So we arranged a special meal for Pat to enjoy."*

*"I'm so grateful for Cherry, and I'm glad we can speak together in Sinhalese,"* says Pat. *"The hoppers and sambal was delicious and I was touched by her thoughtfulness."*



For people who have lived life on their own terms, recovering their independence after an injury can be daunting. To make the reablement journey a little smoother, it helps to have a good friend by your side.

# An act of kindness sets Ian on the path to improved mobility

Ian lives at **Tweed Valley Care Community**, in Northern NSW. After a number of compounding physical setbacks, he's taking important steps to recovery through regular individualised physiotherapy sessions at our onsite Wellness Centre. And he's doing it with the support of his good mate and team member, Leo.

Throughout his life, Ian has charted his own course. After 25 years in Victoria's public service, with two years of national service, he travelled throughout Europe and England before moving to the Gold Coast. There, he set up a handyman business, carving out a niche in installing clotheslines.

Work had always given him meaning and purpose, so when Ian was forced to retire in his seventies following a broken hip, he faced a new challenge.

## A new reality

Accepting assistance from others has been an important step in helping Ian regain his mobility.

*"Over the last 12 months, I've started to accept where I am physically," he says.*

*"My body isn't listening to my brain like it once did, and that's frustrating. I've started to embrace the great care that is offered here, rather than fighting against it."*

Walking independently has been a goal for Ian, with physiotherapist Jim at our HCA Wellness Centre. While initially impatient to make progress quickly, a simple act of kindness from team member Leo gave Ian much-needed motivation.

*"Ian had cataract surgery that limited his vision but I know he enjoys reading," explains Leo. "One day, when I checked on him, he was feeling frustrated, and I thought new reading glasses might help."*

Leo took the initiative to obtain a new pair of glasses for Ian, who was touched by the gesture – and the pair became firm friends.

## A turning point

When Ian asked Leo to accompany him to his physiotherapy sessions with Jim, Leo was happy to help with moral support and encouragement.

Ian started with a sit-to-stand mobility aid with assistance. Through daily practice and consistent effort, Ian transitioned to the sit-to-stand aid, without assistance. Jim then incorporated walking exercises into his routine.

*"To my surprise, Ian walked some distance with ease on his first attempt," says Leo. "That showed the great progress he'd already made."*

Within weeks, Ian progressed from walking with rests to covering the full distance of 300 metres without stopping. And, with Jim's expertise and Leo's support, he's looking forward to reaching more milestones as he keeps working to regain his independence.

*"Leo helps to keep me going," says Ian. "He respects my limitations while encouraging me to explore what I'm capable of. He accepts me for who I am, and that's really important."*

For Leo, the relationship has been just as meaningful.

*"I'm learning from Ian every day," he says. "With all he's gone through, he could have given up but he's chosen not to. That's inspiring to me."*







# RANA’S STORY: LEADING WITH EMPATHY AND CARE

Across our Care Communities, team members like Rana are making a difference in the lives of older Australians.

Rana is wellbeing manager at **Calamvale Parklands Care Community** in Brisbane. Her care journey began when she landed in Adelaide with her family from Egypt.

*“Our elderly neighbour in Adelaide, Marian, was like a mother to me,” says Rana. “She was so lovely to me especially when I was adjusting to a new culture and a new language.”*

When Marian moved into aged care, Rana visited frequently, soon signing up as a volunteer.

*“I was nervous but the team encouraged me and I loved it,” says Rana. “It was a real eye-opener for me as aged care isn’t really a concept in Egypt. I thought of aged care as a hospital environment but aged care in Australia was so different from that.”*

Rana’s experience inspired her to gain diplomas in community services and mental health at TAFE. A move to Brisbane enabled Rana to channel her empathy and care for others through her work. She supported women and children at a local women’s shelter before feeling the pull to aged care at Calamvale Parklands Care Community.

## Becoming part of our team

*“Caring for older people is a privilege,” says Rana. “Our residents are strong people who have achieved so much in their lives. Moving into care isn’t easy for many people – it’s a big change for them and being able to help them with their transition is such an important part of what we do.”*

*“Listening to our residents, hearing their stories and understanding what matters to them is a joy for me, and it helps me make sure they have what they need to adjust to Care Community life.”*

For resident Trevor, Rana’s impact is significant. Trevor has low vision and took a little while to settle in but with Rana’s gentle encouragement, he made new friends and enjoys happy hours and outings.

*“I call her my blue heeler,” jokes Trevor. “Since I came to live here, she’s been a wonderful guide. She’s great company, and always leaves me with the strong feeling someone is always here for me.”*

As she enables residents like Trevor to pursue their passions and live with purpose, Rana continues to expand her knowledge and leadership skills and has enrolled in a postgraduate diploma in aged care management through our Opal HealthCare Academy.



# HATS OFF TO A SPECIAL GERALDTON SHORE FAMILY

If you’re lucky enough to visit **Geraldton Shore Care Community** in Western Australia’s Mid West region, you’ll easily spot mother-and-son duo Peta and Edge. Just follow the laughter of our residents as they delight in Peta’s masterful millinery.

For Peta and Edge, both general services officers, connection is caring. Peta and Edge have served our residents and the Geraldton community for 11 and five years respectively, continuing a thread that began with Peta’s beloved mother, Betty, who cared for our residents for 20 years before illness forced her into early retirement.

Growing up, Peta loved spending time with Betty, our residents and team, so following in her mother’s footsteps at Geraldton Shore came naturally. And with her crafty skills and limitless imagination, Peta brings a special part of her personality to delight residents.

## The not-so-mad hatter

Every day, Peta wears a unique hat to Geraldton Shore; each one she’s handmade with love, fine detail and a unique back story our residents love to discover.

Her hat wardrobe is a marvel – she’s made everything from a hamburger hat to undersea creations featuring octopuses and sharks.

*“Wearing a different hat every day gives people something new to talk about, and everyone feels included,” says Peta. “Residents who’re not able to move so well love it and for people who struggle to see, they can feel the shape and texture of the hat and be involved in the stories.”*

With a passion for history and respect for the tales of those who went before him, Edge joined the Geraldton Shore team straight from school. So when Peta took some time away from work to care for Betty, he played a very special role – donning a different hat each day to honour his mother and grandmother.

When Betty sadly passed away, Peta and Edge found solace in our loving community at Geraldton Shore.

*“This is my second family,” says Peta. “The week we lost Mum, one of our residents lost her husband. We were able to support each other and that helped all of us.”*



# ABOUT THE Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards

The Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards ('the Strengthened Standards') are part of Australia's broader aged care reform under the new Aged Care Act ('the Act'), which came into effect on 1 November 2025.

The Act intends to improve Australia's aged care system by focusing on empowering older people, increasing protections and offering more choice across care and services.

The Strengthened Standards are a set of requirements that define what good care looks like and reflect the quality of care older Australians should expect to receive.

The Strengthened Standards have been implemented at our Care Communities and are closely aligned with our model of care.

## Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards



## Why are the Strengthened Standards so important?

The changes aim to improve the safety, dignity, and quality of life for older people by making standards more measurable, person-centred, and responsive to diverse needs. The Act and the Strengthened Standards are rights-based, placing the needs, wishes and preferences of each resident at the centre of their own care.

Importantly, the Strengthened Standards are measured and monitored by the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (ACQSC).

## What's new?

The Strengthened Standards have been simplified to seven Standards, with Food and Nutrition included as a new Standard in its own right. The Strengthened Standards encompass all elements of a person's care and consist of:

**Standard 1: The Individual**

**Standard 2: The Organisation**

**Standard 3: The Care and Services**

**Standard 4: The Environment**

**Standard 5: Clinical Care**

**Standard 6: Food and Nutrition**

**Standard 7: The Residential Community**

Each Standard includes a description of what older people should expect from providers, clear outcomes on what each provider is assessed on, and information on how providers can demonstrate they're meeting those expectations and outcomes for their residents.



Opal HealthCare strongly supports the Act and the Strengthened Standards. Our model of care at our Care Communities is based on person-centred and relationship-centred care. Respecting and enabling the preferences of each person, and helping them stay connected with the people who matter to them most.

For more information on the Strengthened Standards, scan the QR code or search for 'Strengthened Standards' on [health.gov.au](https://health.gov.au)





# UNDERSTANDING THE STATEMENT OF RIGHTS

The Statement of Rights was introduced under the new Aged Care Act (2024), which took effect on 1 November 2025. The Statement sets out the rights older people have when accessing aged care services. It replaces the Charter of Rights, and ensures the preferences, dignity and wellbeing of older people are always at the centre of their care.

The Statement of Rights changes align with Opal HealthCare's ongoing commitment to person-centred care. We recognise that our residents' choices, relationships and individuality must always be respected.

What's included in the Statement of Rights?

## 1. Independence and Choice

Older people have the right to make their own decisions about their life and care. This includes choosing the services they receive, who provides them, and how and when those services are delivered. They have the right to be supported to make decisions and to have those decisions respected.

## 2. Fair and Equal Access

Everyone has the right to access aged care in a fair, inclusive and culturally safe way. This includes appropriate support for people living with dementia or cognitive conditions, and access to quality palliative and end-of-life care when required.

## 3. Safe, High-Quality Care

Older people have the right to safe, high-quality care delivered by trained and qualified team. They should always be treated with dignity and respect, free from abuse, neglect or discrimination. Their culture, spirituality and identity should be valued and supported.

## 4. Privacy and Information

Older people have the right to privacy and to have their personal information protected. They can request information about their care, rights and any associated costs at any time.

## 5. Communication and Feedback

Older people have the right to be informed and heard. They can express their views, make complaints or suggestions, and expect a fair and timely response – without fear of reprisal. They also have the right to communicate in their preferred language or method, with interpreter or communication support if needed.

## 6. Advocacy and Connection

Older people have the right to be supported by an advocate or trusted person of their choice. They also have the right to stay connected with family, friends, pets and their community, and to participate in cultural, spiritual and social activities that are meaningful to them.

Scan the QR code to  
read the Statement  
of Rights.



# DEMENTIA CONNECTIONS CAFES

## SUPPORTING CARERS WITH A CUPPA AND A CHAT

When caring for a loved one living with dementia, it can help to know you're not alone – being part of a supportive community that can empathise with your experiences makes a difference.



We established Dementia Connections Cafes at many Care Communities across Australia this year as an informal way for family members and friends to share and learn from one another's experiences, in a safe, supportive space without judgement.

Facilitated by senior leaders and dementia care champions, Dementia Connections Cafes are regular, interactive sessions, held in a quiet space where open discussions can happen safely and in a friendly environment over a cuppa. As well as enabling people bond with others in a similar situation, our Cafes are a valuable forum for learning more about dementia.

For family members, the opportunity to connect with people they can relate to gives them the courage to share their own stories, feel supported and support others. As Simon Pedzisi, head of dementia care at Opal HealthCare explains, it's also about recognising the feelings of individual carers.

*"People who are new to caring for a person living with dementia often tell me that nobody has asked them how they're feeling," says Simon.*

*"Most of the conversations they've had are about the challenges their loved one is experiencing without acknowledging the carer as a person. Being seen, heard and understood is powerful and important for carers."*

*"Sometimes I feel like the 'forgotten' partner," said a family member at a Care Community in Melbourne.*

*"Meeting people in the same situation in me at the Cafe has been such a relief. It can be easy to forget about caring for yourself and having the support of others who understand is invaluable."*

Almost half of our Care Communities have established Dementia Connections Cafes this year and many more will be introduced in 2026 to provide valuable and much needed support for carers.



# Words of thanks

Our Care Communities receive many thank you letters from residents, families and friends expressing their gratitude for our team. Here are some letters.

## ALFRED COVE CARE COMMUNITY WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Thank you for such a beautiful, warm welcome. Everyone was just wonderful with Dad. I was fighting back tears when I was bringing in his belongings and then I saw his beautiful room with the plant and the handwritten, personalised message and it was overwhelming!

## BROADWATER GROVE CARE COMMUNITY QUEENSLAND

Thank you for the delightful lunch yesterday. I enjoyed the salmon and vegetables very much and a number of other residents I spoke with agreed it was lovely.

## ANNANDALE GROVE CARE COMMUNITY NEW SOUTH WALES

Jaydon is wonderful, and such a gentleman. He often takes the time to sit with me for a chat and that makes me feel heard and valued.

## GLEN OSMOND GROVE CARE COMMUNITY SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Our outing to Urrbrae House was so interesting. It brought back wonderful memories from my younger years of travelling to Urrbrae High School, and the research and information presented made for a stimulating learning experience.

## BOX HILL VIEWS CARE COMMUNITY VICTORIA

Thank you for making Dad’s life happy, comfortable, and peaceful over the past couple of months. We’re so grateful for your care, your company, your good humour and grace, and for giving Dad dignity in his final days. You do an immense, important job caring for people at such an integral time.

## APPLECROSS SHORE CARE COMMUNITY WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Thank you for taking such good care of Mum. I’m grateful for the individualised care and attention you show her. Your knowledge and compassion means a lot to our family.

## BERRINBA GREENS CARE COMMUNITY QUEENSLAND

Compliments to your team for your efforts with the ‘Mini Ekka’ on Friday. You could feel the joy amongst the residents and I know Mum enjoyed it!

## MANLY HILLSIDE CARE COMMUNITY NEW SOUTH WALES

Thank you for all you do to inspire a wonderful culture by encouraging diversity and sharing different cultures with those who have not experienced them before. Today, Mum tried her first ‘Momo’ and she absolutely loved it!

## JOSLIN MANOR CARE COMMUNITY SOUTH AUSTRALIA

I was so happy and grateful for the sugar-free birthday cake and canapé platter specially prepared to suit my dietary needs. I appreciate the effort you made to accommodate my preferences.

## MORDIALLOC GROVE CARE COMMUNITY VICTORIA

Sincere thanks for all your care for our beloved Mum and Nan. And the colouring books, pens, and paints... you acknowledge her passion and encourage it. Thank you.

At Opal HealthCare, we believe *Ageing is living*. We’re here to support you to live your way, each day.



Visit our website to find the right Care Community for you or your loved ones.

[opalhealthcare.com.au](https://opalhealthcare.com.au)



# Ageing is living

When your local Care Community is supported by Opal HealthCare, you can feel confident that we're doing all we can to deliver high quality eldercare.