

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.



Front Cover
With supportive husband Alex by her side, Janet is rediscovering her sense of self at Somerville Gardens Care Community in Victoria.
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A message from our CEO

Purpose, connection and dementia care

At our Consumer Advisory Body meetings across our Care Communities in June (more on that in the next issue of Opal Moments), we asked residents and families what they believe are the biggest challenges facing the aged care sector.

A resounding theme was the increasing number of older Australians living with dementia, and how we equip our teams with the knowledge, skills and confidence to provide high-quality dementia care.

In this issue we feature dementia care in action and how we support residents experiencing dementia to live with purpose and maintain important relationships.

The best dementia care goes beyond clinical support to understanding the person behind the diagnosis and focusing on preserving their identity, purpose and connection to others.

That's why our Dementia Champions Network is so important. It's one of several initiatives helping us continually build dementia care capability and embed best-practice approaches across our Care Communities.

Our Champions are supported by ongoing education, our evidence-based Six Pillars of Best Practice for dementia care, and guidance from our Opal HealthCare dementia experts. This enables Champions to help build knowledge, confidence and embed best-practice approaches within our teams.

By sharing insights with team members and families, and helping residents remain engaged in purposeful activities, Champions play an important role in creating environments where people living with dementia can experience belonging, dignity and fulfilment every day.

Dementia care in action

Building capability in dementia care requires more than training alone, a thoughtfully designed environment is essential.

Manly Hillside Care Community is a unique Community dedicated to women living with dementia. On page 10 we share what makes this Care Community so special, and how we support each resident's sense of security and belonging, and importantly – enable an enjoyable life in care.

Meaningful mates

This heartwarming photo of meaningful mates Barry, who lives at Narrabeen Glades Care Community, and team member, Sanjita, reuniting after a long absence reminds us that meaningful relationships are not defined by age, role or circumstance, they're built through shared experiences, mutual respect and genuine care.

In a world that can sometimes feel busy and disconnected, moments like this show how deeply human connection enriches our lives and brings joy to everyday moments.

I hope you enjoy this issue of Opal moments.

Warm regards

Rachel

Resident Barry and team member Sanjita struck up a wonderful friendship at Narrabeen Glades Care Community. When Sanjita moved to Lansdowne Gardens Care Community, she and Barry maintained their connection with weekly phone calls – and on a sunny day, our teams at both Care Communities were delighted to arrange a special lunch for the meaningful mates to catch up at Lansdowne Gardens. Ever the gentleman, Barry brought a special bouquet for Sanjita as a gesture of friendship.





EPPING MEADOWS CARE COMMUNITY, VIC

Former music teacher and musician Noel is a keen member of our musical groups, singing and playing ukulele. When he expressed a desire to play guitar again, our team sprung into action. Through our wishing well, we were delighted to present Noel with a new guitar to rediscover his favourite tunes and share more of his talents with us.



STANMORE PLACE CARE COMMUNITY, NSW

You never know who you'll meet on an outing to Auburn Botanic Gardens. It's one of our residents' favourite places to enjoy nature. On a recent visit, resident Madeline and daughter Loretta thoroughly enjoyed spotting a majestic peacock who's taken up residence in the Gardens.

Life at our Care Communities

MELVILLE PARKSIDE CARE COMMUNITY, WA

Resident Judy loved her games of Rummikub with close friend and fellow resident Pam. When Pam sadly passed away, Judy's meaningful mate Tarryn learned to play so that Judy could continue to enjoy the game she loves.



ASHMORE GARDENS CARE COMMUNITY, QLD

Our residents have helped build the world we enjoy today. And in the case of husband and wife Gordon and Anita, it's literally true. Through their family business, the couple built distinguished careers in construction, earning numerous honours and Gordon serving as Chairman of the Gold Coast Division of Master Builders Queensland. Recently, Gordon was thrilled to receive his certificate for 55 years of service to construction in Queensland – one more honour in a lifetime of achievement.



ALDINGA BEACH CARE COMMUNITY, SA

There was barely a dry eye at our Care Community when, after 40 years apart, we assisted resident Joe to connect via Facetime with his sisters in the USA for an emotional, joyful reunion. Now, weekly video calls have become a much-anticipated tradition in Joe's family.



WESTERN PORT BAY CARE COMMUNITY, VIC

Friendly competition and banter abounds at Western Port Bay when residents Phil and Ray take on team members and meaningful mates Shem and Terance. Games like pool engage our muscles, our minds, encourage socialisation – and give us bragging rights when we win!

FOREST LAKE CARE COMMUNITY, QLD

Animals are much-loved visitors at our Care Communities, prompting delighted smiles everywhere they go. For resident Gordon and his daughter Lynda, the visit of a miniature pony aptly named Mini Cooper recalled wonderful memories of childhood.



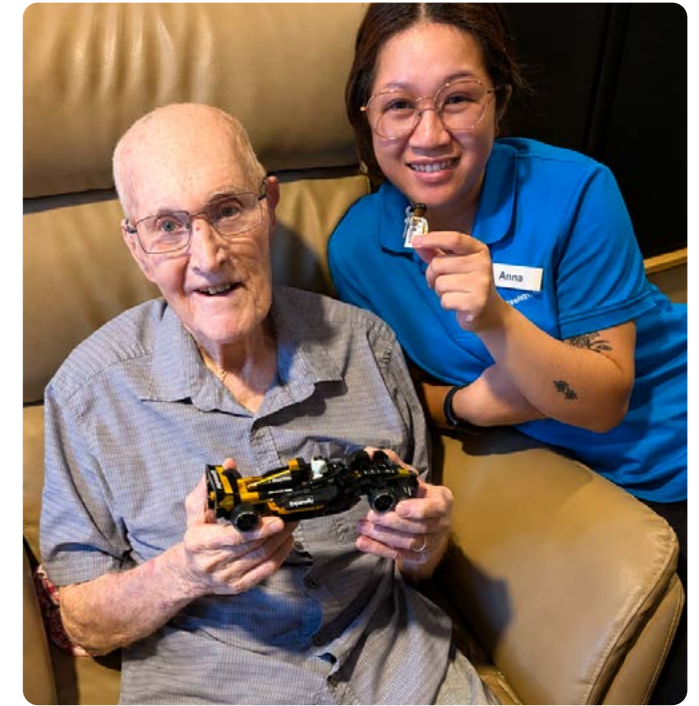
TREEBY PARKLANDS CARE COMMUNITY, WA

Eirwen has extraordinary knitting skills and a big heart to match. In just two days, she knitted four gorgeous sensory blankets for residents living with dementia at our Care Community. Driven by her passion for helping people, Eirwen has engaged her friends at her local Country Women’s Association branch to work together to create more sensory blankets for residents to enjoy.



SPRINGWOOD TERRACE CARE COMMUNITY, QLD

Rodney is a big fan of Formula 1 racing and has a soft spot for the Mercedes and Red Bull teams. When team member Anna learned about Rodney’s interest, she brought in a speedy LEGO model for the pair to build together. The smile on Rodney’s face says it all.



HAMLIN TERRACE CARE COMMUNITY, NSW

Residents Dorothy and John celebrated an impressive 70 years of marriage with a special day packed with all their favourite things: dancing a waltz they’ve enjoyed since their courtship days, a four-generation family celebration full of laughter and happy tears, and a bagpipe tribute – playing the same tune to which Dorothy and John shared their first dance as newlyweds. Congratulations Dorothy and John on your special platinum milestone, and a lifetime of love!



GERALDTON SHORE CARE COMMUNITY, WA

Crochet club is the place to be every Thursday, where residents, team, and volunteer and local GP Dr Yolande gather to pursue their creative passions – sharing ideas, inspiration, and a ‘yarn’ or two over a cuppa.



CAMBERWELL MEWS CARE COMMUNITY, VIC

Through our ENJOY program, residents were thrilled to join in the roar of the crowd at an AFL game day to remember. Devoted Essendon Bombers fan, Helen, proudly donned her scarf, while Valerie fondly recalled going to games at the Melbourne Cricket Ground with her husband.



KANWAL GARDENS CARE COMMUNITY, NSW

Mates reunited! When former butcher Sam came to live at Kanwal Gardens he was overjoyed to spot his old friend and neighbourhood postman Jim at the euchre table. *“Jim used to deliver the good and bad news to Sam while Sam delivered the choicest cuts to Jim,”* says wellbeing manager Leonnie. *“It took no time for the old stories to flow! You never know where life will lead you.”*

CALAMVALE PARKLANDS CARE COMMUNITY, QLD

For people who come to Australia for a new life, it helps to have a friend by their side to help them settle in. Former English teacher and resident Lesley has been an ideal guide for volunteer Hermione, helping her develop and practice her English skills, introducing her to Australian culture, and recommending books and music.



APPLECROSS SHORE CARE COMMUNITY, WA

Residents enjoyed a unique view on the wonders of our universe with a visit to the Perth Observatory. *“The briefing was informative and detailed and included explanation of some of their scientific instruments, historic maps and an ancient almanac, circa 1st century,”* said resident John. *“An unexpected surprise was a sky map of the Milky Way drawn by an Indigenous artist explaining the ‘Dark Emu’ feature.”*



QUAKERS HILLSIDE CARE COMMUNITY, NSW

The amazing Lillian has made over 100 (and counting!) beautiful beanies for newborn babies at Norwest Private Hospital in the past two years. Lillian says knitting helps keeps her joints moving, and she loves working with daughter Donna to create warming gifts that mean so much for new parents. The team at Norwest Private Hospital is truly grateful for Lillian’s contributions and were proud to present her with a special bear and certificate of appreciation.



A CARING COMMUNITY SHAPED AROUND WOMEN'S LIVES

Manly Hillside Care Community brings warmth, connection and a sense of safety and security for women living with dementia.



The mood is bright and sunny at Manly Hillside Care Community with exercise class in full swing, despite grey clouds and gentle rain outside.

On Sydney's Northern Beaches, good friends and residents Barbara and Jennifer happily chat while enjoying seated cycling, stretching their muscles in simple motions that exercise their limbs and promote energy-boosting endorphins.

Wednesdays are highly anticipated at Manly Hillside: morning exercise is followed by trivia with questions that encourage recall such as "Who makes hats?", and "Who connects the electricity to the building?"

Before lunch, local musician Harry pops in to play a mix of beloved tunes on his flute, such as *Hey Jude* and *Danny Boy*. In the afternoon, residents enjoy yoga, meditation and drumming. Whenever the weather allows, this all takes place on Manly Hillside's lawn, where passing members of the public (often accompanied by inquisitive dogs!) regularly stop to chat with residents.

A dedicated place for women living with dementia to call home

Manly Hillside holds a special place in residential aged care: a small household model that cares exclusively for women living with dementia.

"Our residents come from all backgrounds and have had a variety of experiences," says general manager, Anuja.

"A sense of security is important and our residents and families tell us they feel safe here. People experience dementia in different ways. For some women living with dementia, it can be distressing if an unknown male walks down the hallway towards them, or into their personal space. An all-female residence reduces that risk."

Home to just 36 residents, Manly Hillside is a warm and intimate environment where residents and families naturally connect through conversation and shared experiences.

"Understanding each resident's cognitive age, which can be fluid, and their circumstances at that stage of their life is important," says wellbeing manager, Jo-Anne.

"This helps us understand what's important to each individual right now, and how we can support their wellbeing accordingly."

Barbara was a respected real estate agent and sold property to generations of families, and earning her trust was essential for our team.

"Barbara struggled to settle in at first," says Jo-Anne. *"She preferred to stay in her room, was experiencing unplanned weight loss, and was generally unsettled."*

"Our care team worked with her GP to understand her underlying circumstances, and we nurtured her wellbeing by enabling her to enjoy the things that matter to her, like fresh air and activity. While she doesn't have many social connections, the ones she does have are close. Her friend Mark visits regularly and she's found new friends here, like Jennifer."

Jennifer's passion is supporting animal welfare – it's central to her enjoyment of life and sense of purpose. That's why she makes and sells beautiful necklaces to raise funds for wildlife rescue organisation, WIRES.

"Knowing your residents and your team well is essential to helping people settle," says Anuja. *"These connections take time and they need to be nurtured."*

An example is team member Hine, whose meaningful mate is resident Lynette. Having noticed Lynette struggling to move with a walker while holding her companion doll, Hine attached a pet bed with raised sides to the walker, creating a bassinet for her doll and enabling Lynette to walk comfortably and safely with her favourite companion.

A community where all are welcome

While all residents are women, men play an important role in life at Manly Hillside. Whether they're team members, family or visitors, men help residents find a sense of balance.

"Male visitors provide helpful context for residents, making it easier to recognise relationships – such as who is someone's husband or son – and connect with others."

As the clouds lift outside, residents join Harry in singing *I am Australian* – a simple moment that reflects the strong sense of belonging at Manly Hillside.



Passion and purpose: enabling our residents to thrive in care

When people move into our Care Communities, they bring a lifetime of passions, skills and experience. Community life helps our residents continue doing the things that give their lives meaning.

Mario's masterful mosaics

Meet Mario, a master mosaic and terrazzo craftsman, who lives at **Joslin Manor Care Community** in Adelaide. Mario came to Australia from Italy at just 21 years of age. After getting his start as a labourer, Mario found his creative purpose designing beautiful, intricate patterns from marble, quartz and glass. If you live in Adelaide, there's a good chance you've seen Mario's work in shopping centres and in the children's zoo mosaics at the Adelaide Zoo.

Today, Mario continues to craft special, character-filled mosaics at Joslin Manor for residents, their families and our team to enjoy.

"He loves making pieces for others," says daughter, Gianna. *"Not only is this a showcase of his craftsmanship - it's a way to stay connected and feel deeply useful in a stage of life where purpose is more valuable than ever."*



Barbara's beautiful tunes

Wherever you meet resident, Barbara at Melbourne's **Ivanhoe Grand Care Community**, you know song and laughter won't be far away. When she came to live at Ivanhoe Grand two years ago, Barbara brought her piano and vocal skills to our choir group.

Wellbeing manager, Karamjeet says Barbara's performances are a highlight for many residents.

"Her love of music is a beautiful gift she shares with others," says Karamjeet.

"Barbara also regularly contributes to our monthly Care Community newsletter, where her wit and personality shine through. Her words bring smiles and laughter to all who read them. Through her music, humour and care for others, she brings warmth, connection and a wonderful sense of community to Ivanhoe Grand."



Arthur's theme

Can you hear a soft beating of drums? That might just be Arthur, who lives at **Chiswick Manor Care Community** in Sydney. By understanding Arthur's life as a musician, wellbeing manager, Loretta helped Arthur find his rhythm.

"When Arthur came to Chiswick Manor, life was difficult for him," explains Loretta. *"Arthur lives with dementia and was missing his wife, who is living with a challenging diagnosis of her own."*

"Helping Arthur find things to lift his spirits was a priority, and we discovered his passion was Cuban music. Arthur's daughters told me he used to play the drums every night with his band in nightclubs - and that he still had his drums."

Loretta worked with Arthur's daughters to bring his beloved instruments to Chiswick Manor, much to his delight.

"Arthur is much happier now, and is highly engaged with life," says Loretta.

"He joins in with the musicians who visit us and participates in our weekly choir. He still has his challenges but seeing and hearing him embrace the joy of music again has been beautiful."



Sing out Choir hits all the right notes

*“Somewhere over the rainbow,
way up high. There’s a land that
I heard of, once in a lullaby...”*

Betsy sings the opening lines of her favourite tune, and 200 voices join in to carry it to its uplifting conclusion. The Sing Out Choir is a show of compassion, community and pure love.

Created by Anne Gemmell, the choir meets every Tuesday at Generocity Church, in the NSW Central West town of Dubbo. It’s a place for people living with dementia, their loved ones and their carers, to come together to meet new and old friends, share their passions and tap into memory through the power of music. It’s a supportive environment where people of all ages and abilities are welcomed and encouraged.

For residents at **Dubbo Homestead Care Community**, their weekly outing to Generocity Church is an integral part of life.

For resident, Betsy, singing her beloved solo from The Wizard of Oz is a highlight of her week. Rod’s a keen ballroom dancer who relishes the chance to get up and show his fancy footwork. For our First Nations residents, the choir helps them stay connected to community.

John is a bass guitarist who’s always played in a band. Now he plays with the Sing Out Choir, with former bandmate and Sing Out Choir volunteer, Sharon beside him on the piano. John’s never short of practice – at Dubbo Homestead he loves playing tunes with fellow residents to singing along.

Dubbo Homestead’s wellbeing manager, Jillian was a volunteer with the Sing Out Choir when it began in 2021. She’s a true believer in the power of music to help people experiencing cognitive impairment to live well.

“It’s so rewarding to bring our residents here every week and see the impact it has,” she says. “Some residents otherwise struggle to communicate but then they start singing or dancing, and the smiles on their faces are so beautiful. Seeing that still makes me cry.”

Proof enough that sometimes the dreams that you dare to dream, really do come true.



Here if you need!

The squeak of sneakers. Cries of ‘contact!’ The swish of ball through hoop. Sounds you’ll hear at netball courts across Australia – and at Gawler Hillside Care Community, where resident Sharon holds court.

Sharon has given plenty to netball, as a premiership winning player, coach, umpire and in her various administrative roles at her beloved Moonta Netball Club. Now, our **Gawler Hillside Care Community** team in South Australia is helping Sharon settle into life in care by enabling her to enjoy the sport that has been central to her active, fulfilling life.

Teaming up to help Sharon find her way

Following a diagnosis of dementia, Sharon found the transition to aged care challenging. She preferred to stay in her room and struggled to engage with team and fellow residents.

For people living with dementia, changed behaviours often stem from unmet needs. Our team met with Sharon and her family, and worked with Dementia Support Australia, who had been supporting Sharon while she lived at home. These conversations revealed the vital thread of netball throughout her life. Our team installed a hoop in one of our courtyards, after undertaking risk assessments to ensure the environment was safe for all, and gently encouraged Sharon to play.

“The change for Sharon has been wonderful to see,” says general manager, Sheralee. “As well as providing an important outlet for physical fitness and fresh air, playing netball has helped Sharon build rapport with our team and residents. While she still has difficult days, she’s much happier now.”

“She loves to play with team member Tari, who isn’t a netballer but is learning about the game through Sharon,” says wellbeing manager, Rebecca.

“Sharon was a school teacher, so coaching is in her blood. She loves sharing her tips and correcting us when our techniques aren’t up to scratch! We love seeing how content Sharon is now.”



Championing dementia care

Dementia is now part of daily life for hundreds of thousands of Australians – shaping not just how people live, but how we care, connect and support one another.

In 2026, Dementia Australia estimates 446,500 people live with dementia, and approximately 1.7 million people care for a loved one with the condition. That’s why educating our team through initiatives like Opal HealthCare’s **Dementia Champions Network** is so important.

Our Network is comprised of team members with a particular interest in dementia care, and leading positive outcomes for residents who are living with dementia. Supported by Opal HealthCare’s dementia care experts, Simon and Colleen, our Champions receive ongoing education and help to embed evidence-based practices for dementia care at our Care Communities.

Champions play an influential role in implementing our **Six Pillars of Best Practice** for dementia care, including:

- Encouraging discovery of a resident’s cognitive age
- Supporting noise reduction principles
- Stimulating meaningful conversations about brain health with residents and family
- Engaging with team members to support wellbeing habits, including improving residents’ sleep and hydration, and reducing sugar intake

“Champions play a pivotal role in shifting dementia care from a task-focused approach to one that is truly person-centred,” says Simon. “This means keeping the individual at the heart of care, with a focus on what matters most to them at their current cognitive age.”

Dementia care in action

Scan to read more about our Six Pillars of Best Practice for dementia care.



At **Mornington Bay Care Community** in Victoria, this approach comes to life in simple but powerful ways, creating moments of purpose, connection and belonging for residents and their families.

Sandy offers a helping hand

Wellbeing manager, Sinead, is a dementia care champion at Mornington Bay. For Sinead, helping people live well by rediscovering their purpose is priceless.

Resident, Sandy is an energetic entrepreneur with an eye for the unusual – from running cattle farms, to organising grand prix races, to managing ‘beach box’ real estate – she spent her working life in a state of perpetual motion. When Sandy came to live at Mornington Bay, she was unsettled and continually

seeking ways to leave. Sinead recognised this came from Sandy’s drive to stay busy and independent. Sinead suggested Sandy get involved in our Helping Hands program – where residents can contribute to Care Community life through taking on jobs they would have naturally done at home. Sandy now enjoys helping our laundry team to collect and return laundry to fellow residents.

“Different things light people up,” says Sinead. “Sitting down for coffee doesn’t work for Sandy but working with our team to help others does.”

“Now, Sandy’s exit-seeking behaviours are less prevalent and she joins our walking group every day. She’s the first to tell us if a resident who normally joins the group isn’t there and it’s lovely seeing the care she has for others.”

Dementia café experience for residents and families

For people living with dementia, a cuppa and a chat can be an opportunity to feel like themselves – in a setting that encourages meaningful connection with family and friends.

At Mornington Bay’s café, Thursdays offer a dementia café experience. Residents living with dementia are invited to enjoy café treats, served by fellow residents and team who take their orders and serve coffee and cake. Families are always welcome, and many find the relaxed environment creates space for conversation that may be difficult elsewhere.

For resident, Carin, serving fellow residents gives her a special sense of purpose. Carin is living with dementia and struggled to engage with life after her husband passed away. Now, helping at our café has reignited her passion for helping people.

“Assisting in the café has given Mum a sense of purpose – she enjoys helping others in the community wherever she can,” says Carin’s daughter, Julie. “It’s comforting knowing she’s supported, which helps her feel valued and appreciated.”

Sinead says chatting with families at our dementia café experience helps her to understand where they see their loved ones flourishing and where they may need support. And by sharing information she’s learned from our Dementia Champions Network, Sinead is helping to upskill our team, and enabling families to better support their loved ones.



A new stanza for Kim

Wellbeing manager, Kio took the opportunity to introduce Kim to Alfred Cove's poetry readings: regular events where residents gather to read and discuss their favourite works and enjoy surprising finds.

When she first joined our group, Kim struggled to communicate more than a few words but over time, with line-by-line persistence and encouragement from our team and residents, Kim now reads complete poems with clarity and participates eagerly in group discussion.

For Kim, her newfound confidence has helped her to open up about her life, sharing her wartime experiences, stories of her youth, and her feelings on ageing.

"In life, we must never give up," she says. "You can always change and develop."

"Reading poems is a way to show I'm present," says Kim. "I can say 'I'm here!'"

Her words resonate deeply with those around her. Kim's friend, Wu Mei visits daily, and has been so inspired by Kim's progress she brings her ukulele to our poetry group, playing songs that add another eagerly-anticipated layer of artistic interest and conversation for residents.

For Kio, supporting Kim to communicate with her family over video calls was a heartwarming milestone in Kim's progress.

"Kim's daughter was amazed that her mother was able to communicate so clearly and with such expression," he says. "Her family is so proud of how far she's come, and so are we."

Now Kim is fully engaged in Alfred Cove life, regularly attending Catholic church services at our Care Community and taking part in activities including bingo and social hours.

Kim's story is a powerful reminder that the qualities of passion and perseverance are human at heart. As Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote:

"We have not wings, we cannot soar, But we have feet to scale and climb, By slow degrees, by more and more, The cloudy summits of our time." – Excerpt from 'Success (from the Ladder of St Augustine)'

POETRY IN MOTION

How Kim rediscovered her words and her confidence through verse.

From Icelandic sagas to Shakespearean comedies, song lyrics to humble scrawling on walls, and everything in between, people across the centuries have turned to poetry to express their feelings. To be heard, feel seen and understood is a human need that helps us live our fullest lives.

And from poetry, we draw stories of inspiration. At Alfred Cove Care Community in Perth, reading verse has helped resident Kim find her voice and connect with others.

Kim came to Australia from Malaysia in her early 40s, growing a circle of friends and building her English skills through travel, family and her love of cooking. As she aged, cognitive decline impacted some of those skills. While still fluent in Malay, when she came to live at Alfred Cove, Kim struggled to communicate her needs beyond 'yes' and 'no' responses, and hand and facial gestures.

While Kim's meaningful mate, team member Rain, helped her communicate in Malay, Kim was keen to redevelop her English to help her engage directly with residents and team.





Small changes
**MAKE A
BIG IMPACT**

“Why?” is one of the first questions we ask as a toddler. This smallest of questions is often the catalyst for profound insights that change the way we live, for the better.

For our team at **Bossley Parkside Care Community**, in Sydney’s southwest, the “Why?” came from a desire to create a more peaceful living environment where everyone feels comfortable and secure.

Listening and learning

Feedback from residents and family members told us noise levels at Bossley Parkside were uncomfortable at times and may cause residents to feel uneasy. At the same time, we saw a small emerging increase in resident falls and team injuries. For general manager, Amrita, change came from taking an all-of-team approach to identifying causes and finding solutions.

“When we focused on what was happening, three questions clearly emerged,” says Amrita. “Do we truly understand our residents’ life stories? Is our environment set up to support our residents’ preferences? Are we supporting every resident’s preferred daily routine?”

Understanding our resident’s lives

To start, our team focused on residents who were frequently displaying frustration. Carefully aligning the resident’s known life story with their care plan gave our team a deeper view of each resident’s history and an understanding of the things that brought them meaning – as well as the things that may also cause discomfort.

Our team then looked at cultural heritage and connection. Bossley Parkside is a mirror of the local community. Our residents and team are a blend of the many cultures that call western Sydney home. To help our residents feel heard and understood, we paired residents and team members who speak the same language as meaningful mates. As well as giving residents more of a voice, our team were able to better identify the activities and daily preferences that contributed to each resident’s wellbeing.

Creating the right environment

The spaces we inhabit have a deep impact on how we feel and live. Focusing on how people engage day-to-day drove change in communal living areas.

“We had one large space where people gathered, and this was the source of a lot of noise,” says Amrita. “Changing this to smaller, more intimate spaces created an environment where people could have quiet conversation and wouldn’t need to raise their voice.”

“We also focused on a welcoming dining experience, encouraging residents to come to our dining area for meals by matching residents with similar languages and life stories so they can connect over common ground. Unplanned weight loss is often a sign that something isn’t quite right with a person and since we improved the dining experience we’ve seen a reduction in this across our Care Community.”

Understanding how each resident prefers to spend their day

Whatever our age, a change to familiar routines can be disorienting us and disrupt our peace of mind. For people living with dementia, the effects can be particularly acute.

Our team revisited each resident’s care plan to ensure their preferences were known and supported – such as showering and dining at a preferred time, and engaging in activities that suit each resident, at a time and a place that works for them.

Building on strong foundations

Small changes and going back to basics is making a difference for everyone at Bossley Parkside. Resident wellbeing has improved with a reduction in falls and unplanned weight loss, and feedback from families indicates we’re on the right track.

“This feels more comfortable,” said one family member. “It’s calmer.”

“We’re pleased with our progress,” says Amrita. “If at times we don’t get it exactly right, we learn and we adapt. And we keep asking ‘why?’”

Connecting through home and heart



For many people who came to Australia after World War II, the pull of home will always remain. Retaining links to cultures that inform our values, shape our personalities and nurture our souls is essentially human; and speaks to our need to feel understood.

Gina came to Brisbane's **Newstead Grand Care Community** via the Sicilian town of Taormina, stopping to raise daughters Vera and Josephine with husband Giuseppe on a sugar cane farm in Proserpine in Queensland's Whitsundays.

Vera fondly recalls growing up in a bilingual family. With a drive familiar to so many migrants, Gina taught herself English using radio, television, novels and Vera's schoolbooks.

When she moved to Newstead Grand, Gina was keen to share stories of home but with no residents or team who could converse fluently in her native Sicilian, she felt isolated.

"To start to make new connections, Gina has been teaching our team words in her language and we're slowly learning," says wellbeing manager, Cindy, who is also Gina's meaningful mate. "I learned and sang her a christening song, which delighted her."

"Gina has such strong ties to her culture – she loves celebrating her feast days, staying up to date with Italian news and reading her Rintocchi magazine. She needed somebody to share that with in her own language."

Cindy contacted Brisbane's ANFE Italian Club, formed to support migrant families, and volunteer, Mitch happily agreed to visit Gina.

"We're proud to help enrich the lives of older Italian Australians through connection, culture, friendship, and community," says Mitch.

"For many elderly people, isolation is a real challenge, and cultural hubs like ANFE Italian Club bring comfort, companionship, and a sense of belonging."

For Gina, the visit was everything she'd hoped for and more.

"Mitch felt like family," she said. "I told him about my happy upbringing and how I loved to watch the boats with their beautiful colours. We spoke about family and I told him about my wonderful parents, and life on the sugar farm."

"Mitch has invited me to come and meet the chef at the ANFE Italian Club and I'm excited about that as I loved to cook when I was younger. It's hard to explain how it feels to be able to tell my stories in my language with somebody who understands the places, music and food I grew up with. I'm exhausted from all the joy!"



H₂O'S THE GO

The powerful role of hydration in brain health

Did you know the human brain is composed of approximately 75% water? And that a 2% reduction in body water can lead to measurable changes in our brain health?

These changes directly affect a person's attention, mood, behaviour and cognitive processing capacity. For people living with dementia, proper hydration is one of the simplest ways to support wellbeing.

Dehydration magnifies the impacts of brain atrophy, such as brain fatigue, delirium, avoidable changed behaviours, significant events such as falls, compromised skin integrity, and dry mouth, which can lead to swallowing difficulties.

Fluid intake doesn't equal hydration

Hydration and fluid intake are often assumed to be the same thing, but there are critical differences between the two.

- Fluid intake is the total volume of liquids consumed in a 24-hour period. This includes tea, coffee, cordial, juice and other beverages.
- Hydration refers to the biological outcome – meaning adequate circulatory volume, effective kidney filtration, stable electrolyte balance, and optimal brain and cellular function.

Water's essential for optimum brain health and it keeps us at our best. Unlike other fluids, water:

- Maintains cerebral blood flow, which enables adequate oxygen to the brain
- Staves off delirium and poor decision-making which can result from brain fatigue
- Helps us maintain oral health
- Can improve how we engage with others, through healthy frontal lobe function

So how much water is enough?

Generally, we need 30mL of water per kilogram of body weight per day. However, for older adults who may be less physically active and perspire less, approximately 1.5–1.7 litres of water per day can be enough, assuming the person has no fluid restriction. People who are more mobile may need to drink up to two litres of water per day.

While we don't understand every aspect of how our brains work, hydration is something we can control. It's one of the most powerful tools we have to uphold dignity, promote brain health, and enable wellbeing.

Our top tips for hydration

- Drink a glass of water when you wake up
- Drink a glass of water before, during and after exercise
- Add a slice of lemon or lime, or cucumber or raspberry for natural flavour
- If you're a coffee lover, have a small glass of water with every cuppa

FINDING HER FEET

Janet's journey back to herself

Before illness and physical setbacks began to reshape her world, Janet was known for her warmth, energy and deep love of family. A devoted wife, mother, foster parent and kindergarten teacher, she built a life centred on caring for others. Now, with the support of her husband Alex and our team at Somerville Gardens Care Community, Janet is reclaiming her sense of self.



An active life

Born in Collingwood, Janet left school early due to chronic asthma and soon found herself working in administrative roles. She met Alex at a local dance - the teenage sweethearts shared a love of music, parties and ballroom dancing - and they went on to build a family, including more than a decade of fostering children in need.

Now, 64 years into their marriage, Alex remains by Janet's side, spending every day at Somerville Gardens and cheering her on through one of the biggest challenges of her life.

When Janet arrived at Somerville Gardens, initially for respite care, she says, *"I couldn't use my feet, I had poor balance and I had no confidence."*

Osteoarthritis, pulmonary fibrosis and a hip replacement had taken a cumulative toll, leaving her shaken and withdrawn. At Janet's request, her son Michael came to Raheed, physiotherapist at the HCA wellness centre at Somerville Gardens, seeking help.

"He asked if we could help Janet to stand up from her wheelchair," recalls Raheed. *"She had little confidence and motivation was a real challenge."*

But Raheed could see something Janet could not yet see in herself. *"From my initial assessments, I knew she had the strength. It was just the fear and anxiety we needed to work through."*

Building from the ground up

Raheed began with range-of-motion and strengthening exercises, gradually working up to standing practice.

"Even a single step would make her anxious. Five sit-to-stands was a huge deal at the beginning."

Next, Raheed supported Janet to move to functional activities, like brushing her own hair. After two months, Janet could stand using the parallel bars, and a clear goal emerged: to stand independently and walk to the bathroom on her own.

There were setbacks along the way, including arthritic flare-ups and a tendon contracture, but progress continued. When a wheelie walker felt too unpredictable, Janet switched to a gutter frame, a mobility aid that supports a person's weight through their forearms, which reduces pressure on hands or wrists. *"She felt more in control with the gutter frame. Within two weeks she was manoeuvring around Somerville Gardens on her own."*

Alex has been a constant throughout.

"He's a great support," says Raheed. *"He encourages her to do the exercises. He's always there."*

A person-centred journey

Despite having surgery on her hand and not being able to work with Raheed for six weeks, he was pleased to see Janet's motivation remained high.

"The work we'd done together before her surgery had set her up," he says. *"We walked 50 metres from the Wellness Centre to her bedroom and she maintained her balance and manoeuvred confidently the whole way."*

Janet's hard work and determination is paying off.

"I'm proud of how I'm now able to walk slowly with assistance," she says. *"I believe with hard work and encouragement, I'll soon be able to get out of my armchair using a pusher."*

The Janet who used to sweep across the floor in her dancing shoes and light up a room has started to find her way back.



Bon voyage! Residents take flight with armchair travel

You don't need a suitcase to see the world. At **Caulfield Horizons Care Community** in Victoria, the adventure comes to you.

Wellbeing manager, Rosa, and our team have created something special with their regular armchair travel experience. Set up like a real international flight, residents are issued passports, welcomed onboard, and guided through a short "flight" introduction before arriving at a new destination, all from the comfort of their chairs.

Rosa guides the experience as pilot, while team members dressed as flight attendants move through the cabin, serving snacks and ensuring all passengers are comfortable. The destination changes each time.

"Meaningful engagement means something different for everyone, but our armchair travel experiences seem to reach most of our residents," says Rosa.

"Even those who are usually reserved will light up and share a memory or information when we land somewhere they know."

A recent trip to France blended video, conversation and fun activities. Residents enjoyed scenes of Paris and regional towns, competed in French trivia, and swapped memories - some recalling past holidays, others learning something new. The format leaves room for family members and friends to contribute stories, adding a personal layer to each destination.

The trip ended with an afternoon tea of French delights created by chef, Ruvin.

For those who may have travelled widely in their younger years, these trips offer a chance to revisit places they once loved and share stories with others. For others, they're a passport to new experiences.

Resident, Patricia says, *"What I really enjoy about our Armchair Travel is discovering different cultures, lifestyle, and cuisines from around the world."*

Resident, Thelma says she enjoys the trips because *"it's a wonderful way to travel all together without leaving the safety of home."*

Enabling residents to stay connected to curiosity, culture, and the world is at the heart of our armchair travel experiences. For many at Caulfield Horizons, they're a reminder that the spirit of adventure continues to flourish as we age.

On a winner at Glenmore Park

We humans are an inventive lot. At **Glenmore Park Care Community** near the Blue Mountains, a bright idea from residents shows some of our most impactful creations come from a place of empathy and care for others.

Playing games unites generations and cultures. For older people, card and board games challenge the mind, encourage socialisation, and deliver a sense of achievement. Most games are inclusive of physical ability, and the competitive banter often can't be beat.

"Can I use Mister? As in, M-R?" asks resident, Julie over a game of Wordspiel.

"No abbreviations!" laughs resident, Susan.

Bringing the game to the players

When Susan and Julie noticed some fellow residents needed a little help reaching cards and game pieces to take part in games, they came up with the idea of a moveable Lazy Susan design. Maintenance officer, Eddie, was pleased to help bring their vision come to life.

The clever trio's design uses a store-bought turntable base, modified with a circular felt surface that enables playing cards and Scrabble tiles to remain stable while gliding smoothly across the table. Rubber edging provides an easy grip for elderly hands.

"Eddie started and finished making it the same day," says Susan. *"What a champion!"*

For safety's sake, our occupational therapist at allied health partner HCA gave the table an ergonomic review, and with his tick of approval the table was ready for action.

Residents can sit comfortably and slide the table from player to player, so everyone's needs or personal preferences are accommodated. Bringing the game closer also helps those with vision impairment. Being light-weight, the table can easily be moved indoors or out, used by residents with mobility challenges, and those who prefer to spend time with visitors in their own room.

Great idea, even greater impact

Seeing how successful the table has been at Glenmore Park, wellbeing manager, Lora, shared the initiative and modification directions with fellow wellbeing managers at our Care Communities across Australia. Now, even more residents can enjoy the fruits of Julie and Susan's big idea.

THYME FLIES

when you're having fun



From flavourful herbs that bring zest to pasta and pizza, to pumpkins that make the soup that warms our tummies, our souls and almost everything in between, our residents are nurturing delicious, nutritious produce.

"I love knowing that what we're eating was grown in our own gardens. You can taste the difference."

Barry, resident Paynesville Gardens Care Community

Across Australia, our residents work with our team, including our chefs and maintenance officers, to plan, plant and produce seasonal vegetables, fruits and herbs that bring nourishment and meaning to dishes for everyone to enjoy.

For many of our residents, getting their hands dirty in our edible kitchen gardens recalls fond memories forged over mealtime experiences – and it's a healthy way to enjoy time in the great outdoors with new and old friends.

Narelle, wellbeing manager at Highton Gardens Care Community, says: *"Our garden stands as a testament to what's possible when residents are empowered to lead. It's about more than growing produce: it's growing confidence, connection and joy."*

Crowning our winners

Our annual Opal HealthCare Harvest Awards go from strength to strength, with 246 entries from across our Care Communities in 2026. Congratulations to our winners!

- Abundance Award: Aldinga Beach Care Community, South Australia
- Food for the Soul Award: Reynella Hillside Care Community, South Australia
- Resident Engagement Award: Orange Grove Care Community, NSW
- Look at our Garden Grow Award: Inverloch Coast Care Community, Victoria

"It's lovely to see the different varieties of vegetables growing, and to watch tomatoes we've planted from seeds grow to plants bursting with fruit – with friendships built on common interests and times gone by."

Rhonda, resident Varsity Views Care Community

OUR TEAM BEHIND THE SCENES



COURTNEY'S TALENT FOR TEAM

"You can tell when people really believe in aged care," says Courtney, Opal HealthCare's talent partner for Queensland. "Some people are just made for it. You can see that passion."

It's the same passion we see in Courtney when we ask what lights her up about aged care.

"It's the people you meet, the stories you hear, and the beautiful relationships we help to nurture," she says.

"Our residents and our team are 'somebody' – they're somebody's loved one, and they're a person in their own right. People need to be respected, heard and understood. When I'm hiring team, I look for people I'd like to care for my own parents."

While Courtney began her working life in real estate, the essential ingredients for a career in aged care recruitment were there from the start.

"I love administration," says Courtney. "I love detail and process, so when I saw an administration role at another provider I took the chance. Then after having my children, I joined Caloundra Place Care Community as an administration officer, before moving to North Lakes Terrace Care Community to help build the team."

"That opened up an opportunity to progress to a customer support manager role. Supporting our residents at North Lakes Terrace and the experience I gained helping to recruit the right people into the right roles gave me the experience and skills I needed when I moved to my talent role."

For Courtney, the friendships she's built at our Care Communities endure.

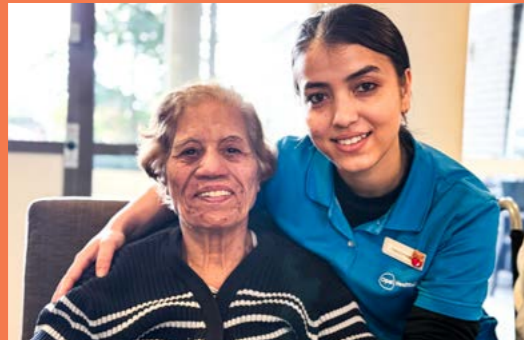
"It's so lovely going to Care Communities and catching up with residents I've known for years."

"They always ask me how my family is, what's happening in my life, and I love hearing about their families, and what they've been up to."

"I don't think I could do anything different for a career now!"

Celebrating our team on INTERNATIONAL NURSES DAY

Each year on 12 May, the anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birth, we celebrate International Nurses Day by recognising our nurses and carers. We also celebrate and thank residents who cared for others through their own nursing careers.



Residents at Bankstown Terrace Care Community with their meaningful mates.



Celebrating with treats at Newstead Grand Care Community.



Thanking our team at Malvern East Horizons Care Community.



Gwen, who lives at Ashfield Terrace Care Community, enjoyed a long, rewarding career as a midwife and nurse. Gwen completed her training at Royal Brisbane Hospital, and recalls treating patients suffering from polio, tetanus and leprosy – and the pressure of undergoing exams straight after night duty.

After qualifying as a midwife, Gwen took up a position at Maleny Soldiers Memorial Hospital where she delivered many babies over 20 years. Gwen's dedicated service is recognised on the honour board at the Maleny Soldiers Memorial Hospital, a testament to her lifelong commitment to nursing, her community, and the many lives she touched.

WINTER WELLNESS

Inspiring our team to stay well, together



RECIPE FOR IMMUNITY SHOT

-  **Oranges**
Rich in vitamin C to support immune function and help fight colds.
 -  **Fresh Ginger**
Natural anti-inflammatory; aids digestion and soothes sore throats.
 -  **Fresh Turmeric**
Powerful antioxidant with anti-inflammatory properties; supports overall immunity.
 -  **Apple (Granny Smith)**
Adds natural sweetness: high in fibre and vitamin C to boost gut and immune health.
 -  **Celery**
Hydrating and packed with antioxidants; supports detoxification.
 -  **Mint**
Refreshing herb that aids digestion and helps relieve congestion.
- Best consumed in the morning for a refreshing immune boost!

When the winter chill bites, we want our team to feel strong, healthy and well so that we can keep our residents safe and well through the cooler months.

That's why this season, our team across Australia are participating in our **Winter Wellness campaign** to support healthy habits, strengthen connection and keep our Care Communities thriving.

Our campaign focuses on simple, fun, localised activities that can make a meaningful difference through simple and impactful practices, including hand hygiene, hydration, and wearing masks on public transport. Our campaign reinforced that looking after ourselves helps us provide the best possible care, comfort and connection for our residents.

We've encouraged our team to take an active role in staying well together in ways that feel genuinely engaging and fun. The response was enthusiastic across our Care Communities!

At Marsden Park Care Community in Sydney, team and residents pumped up the music and put on a Zumba class in the sunshine.

At Bethania Parklands Care Community in Queensland, chef, Arvind made wellness 'shots' of ginger, lemon and turmeric for our team, and they enjoyed taking a break for a shot of wellness.

At Greenwich Horizons Care Community in Sydney, our team led residents on a Winter Wellness Tour through a series of themed destinations, including the Flu-Fighter Lounge, Scrub Stop and Hand Hygiene Headquarters.

Positive, practical and delivered with warmth, our Winter Wellness campaign reflects and celebrates the connected and joyful culture that shapes life at our Care Communities.

Words of thanks

CARINE PARKSIDE CARE COMMUNITY WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Thank you all so much for looking after my mother. When she's happy, I'm happy. Thank you for your care, empathy and compassion.

BURPENGARY GARDENS CARE COMMUNITY QUEENSLAND

I enjoyed the opportunity to spend time with family members who share similar experiences while enjoying a BBQ lunch together. Thanks to your team for your thoughtfulness and for organising such a special gathering.

SHOALHAVEN PLACE CARE COMMUNITY NEW SOUTH WALES

Zarsha is so loving and caring towards my wife. It makes me very emotional to see my wife being attended to with such kindness and respect.

REYNELLA HILLSIDE CARE COMMUNITY SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Thank you for the opportunity to experience the culture at our outing to the Dutch Pantry. It brought back many wonderful memories of my time travelling in my younger days.

MORNINGTON BAY CARE COMMUNITY VICTORIA

Just wanted to say how delighted we are that our father has settled in so well. We value the personalised care approach and that Dad's story and history have helped influence his routine, connections and activities. Team have been warm, helpful and caring and your dementia webinars have been very useful.

ARMADALE PLACE CARE COMMUNITY WESTERN AUSTRALIA

A massive thank you to Guy for helping us make Mum's birthday celebrations today so easy. It's the first time we've celebrated Mum's birthday there and everything was fantastic.

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

CALOUNDRA PLACE CARE COMMUNITY QUEENSLAND

Words cannot express our deep gratitude for the care, kindness and professionalism by your entire team. Your support shown to our family goes beyond "the job". You have no idea how much your kindness has meant to us.

NORTHCOTE MEWS CARE COMMUNITY VICTORIA

Thank you so much for taking such good care of me. I really appreciate it. And thank you especially for finding a table where I can chat with people and everyone's generally happy. I'm so thrilled that it's outside my usual area, and the quiet dining room is just lovely. Once again, you're always looking out for me, and I'm very grateful.

NARRAWEENA GROVE CARE COMMUNITY NEW SOUTH WALES

This Care Community feels like a community. Our family has always been well connected in the suburb, and we know many residents and families. Narraweena Grove feels cosy and the team is caring.

PHILLIP ISLAND GROVE CARE COMMUNITY VICTORIA

Robyn brings fun to what she does. She's vibrant and trustworthy and it's more than that. She makes us all laugh. Robyn has always made me feel safe when most of my life I have not been or felt safe. In Robyn's activities, she's able to bring out the best in everyone and they can contribute. I can finally feel part of a family.

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

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.