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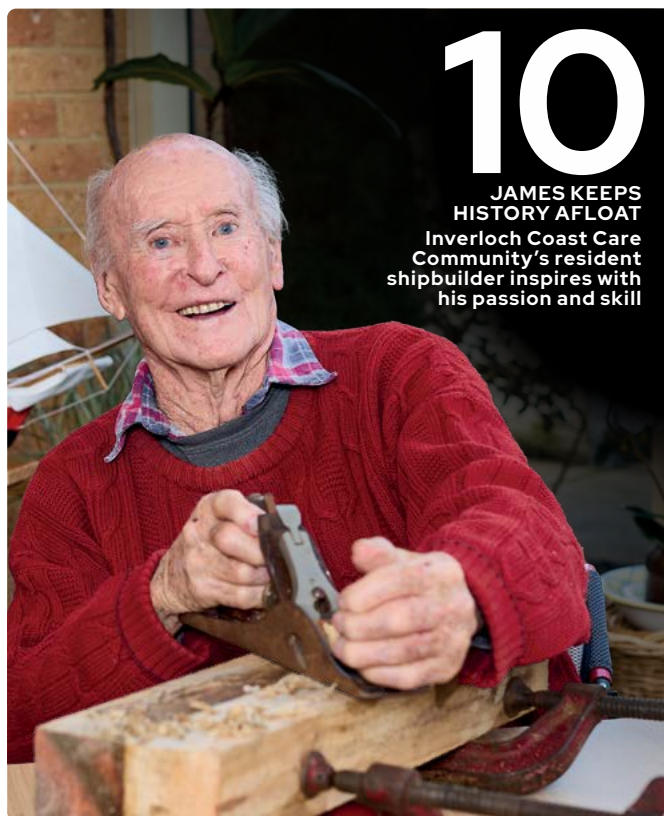
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Opal HealthCare acknowledges the traditional owners of the land on which we live and work. We pay our respects to Elders past, present, and emerging.



Front Cover

When Norman wanted to pay a creative tribute to his late wife, Jennifer, good friend and Broadwater Grove Care Community team member Karly was there to support him all the way. Read Norman and Karly's heartwarming story on page 24.



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**JAMES KEEPS
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his passion and skill

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THE CAFE BRINGING A COMMUNITY TOGETHER

A special place for connection at Northcote Mews Care Community



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Wellbeing means something different to everyone. In this issue we share stories of how we help support physical, spiritual, mental, cultural and social wellbeing for our residents.

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A message from our CEO



When we think about “wellbeing” at our Care Communities, it’s often the everyday things that matter most.

It might mean continuing a lifelong tradition or attending a cultural celebration. Spending time with friends. Enjoying a favourite hobby. Joining an outing. Or it may simply be having opportunities to contribute and feel part of community life. These moments help our residents maintain their sense of identity and continue living in ways that are meaningful to them.

We recognise that wellbeing is deeply personal. That’s why we think about it in all its forms: physical, mental, social, spiritual and cultural. Our team strive to understand what matters to each person and create opportunities to continue the relationships, beliefs, interests and routines that bring purpose and enjoyment to their lives.

Our role is not to decide what matters most to a person. It’s to listen, understand, and support residents to continue doing the things that matter most.

In this edition of *Opal Moments*, you’ll see many examples of wellbeing in action, and the thoughtful ways our team help residents stay connected to the people and experiences that enrich their lives.

You’ll meet James, whose remarkable model shipbuilding keeps his mind active and his passion for history alive. You’ll meet residents who are sharing culture, language and traditions. And others who are finding friendship through a cup of coffee, a game of cards, a knitting group or a shared meal.

What I love most about these stories is that they’re all unique.

There’s no single recipe for wellbeing. Each resident comes to us with their own life experiences, interests, relationships and aspirations. Some people thrive in a busy group setting. Others prefer quiet conversations with a close friend. Some find fulfilment in helping others. Others in learning, creating, reminiscing, worshipping, gardening, cooking, singing or simply being surrounded by the people they love.

When we take the time to listen, we can create opportunities that feel genuine. We can support residents to maintain their identity, continue valued relationships and enjoy the things that make life meaningful to them.

Many of the moments featured in these pages may seem simple on the surface: sharing a coffee, attending a community event, reading scripture with a friend, teaching someone a new skill, or pursuing a lifelong hobby. Yet these moments often have a profound impact on wellbeing because they help people feel connected, valued and understood.

It’s a privilege to support older Australians to live with quality care and, importantly, with purpose, belonging and enjoyment each day.

I hope you enjoy this edition of *Opal Moments*.

Rachel Argaman

Rachel

Resident, Robert and his great mate Sunny went back decades - from playing on the same footy team as teenagers to long careers as truck drivers. Robert and Sunny hadn't seen much of each other recently, until wellbeing manager, Valli, struck up a conversation with Sunny at the Hawkesbury Show. She discovered their connection and on a beautiful morning at Marsden Park Care Community, Sunny took Robert for a ride down memory lane in his shiny Mack truck.





BETHANIA PARKLANDS CARE COMMUNITY, QLD

Our men's group, affectionately known as '*Bethania Blokes*', love catching up to swap stories side-by-side and work together on projects like restoring this captain's chair. Their camaraderie means they always have friends to talk to, something purposeful to do, and fulfilling work to enjoy.

Life at our Care Communities

CHISWICK MANOR CARE COMMUNITY, NSW

Our fairy garden, lovingly tended by our residents and team, is a magical place for Liliana and her great-granddaughter Allegra to connect and make special family memories.





JOSLIN MANOR CARE COMMUNITY, SA

Luisa and Franca's friendship is a beautiful story of connecting through creativity. Both ladies are keen knitters and crafters who love to share their 'purls' of wisdom with others, so Franca was only too happy to help Luisa with a knitting project. Franca gifted Luisa one of her diamond art creations, solidifying their bond.

CARINE PARKSIDE CARE COMMUNITY, WA

There's never a dull moment when performers, Janie and Matt, arrive for our residents' favourite Thursday singalongs. With beloved classics and feel-good favourites filling the room, our residents thrive on reliving treasured memories though the magic of music.



MEADOW HEIGHTS CARE COMMUNITY, VIC

Resident Amanda grew up on a farm surrounded by animals and nature. Visits from Banjo the pony recall those fond memories and help keep Amanda connected to rural life and her love of animals.

MORAYFIELD GROVE CARE COMMUNITY, QLD

A gentle sea breeze in your hair and the feel of sand in your toes – bliss! Residents Charles, Joanne, Jackie and Ken shared a wonderful day enjoying Mother Nature's gifts at Woorim Beach on Bribie Island. This is living!



DENHAMS BEACH CARE COMMUNITY, NSW

Gorgeous Ella brings cav-'oodles' of energy and fun to our Care Community whenever she visits. The smiles on Gerhard and Margaret's faces say it all. Ella's visits are always highly-anticipated and cherished by residents.



OXLEY GROVE CARE COMMUNITY, QLD

Accomplished author, resident Audrey was thrilled to visit the State Library of Queensland to see her book, *Shopping for excitement*, featured in the exhibition, *Boundless possibilities*. The show celebrates creations that prompt discussion about the nature of books and is just one of several books in the library's collection authored by our talented Audrey.





ORANGE GROVE CARE COMMUNITY, NSW

Resident, Trevor and team member, Ephraim connected through their faith, and now have a routine of meeting daily to read and discuss passages from the Bible. A former priest, Trevor continues to serve his community by hosting Bible study with fellow residents, visitors and our team.

MOOROOLBARK MANOR CARE COMMUNITY, VIC

A visit from the Aussie Wildlife Show was the ideal opportunity for residents and team to get up close and personal with some of our wonderful native species – like this black-headed python which was only too happy to meet resident, Terry!



EPPIING GRAND CARE COMMUNITY, NSW

Our residents love coming to Tuesday art classes with mentor, Katy. Even those who describe themselves as “non-artistic” join in, embrace new techniques and discover hidden talents. Week after week, they continue to surprise themselves with their creativity – proving there’s an artist in all of us.



NORTH LAKES TERRACE CARE COMMUNITY, QLD

What a whopper! Resident, Janice and maintenance team member, Jordan have lovingly nurtured this tomato plant in the Queensland sun. *"I love connecting with nature and working with Jordan to grow fresh produce for everyone to enjoy,"* says Janice. The pair can often be seen swapping ideas on plants to grow – just like this one they've dubbed 'Tomato Giant.'

MANDURAH COAST CARE COMMUNITY, WA

Proudly planted, tended and picked by our residents, our marigolds bring a gorgeous splash of colour to sunny mornings filled with conversation and connection.





MUDGE GROVE CARE COMMUNITY, NSW

Harvesting your own fresh produce is so satisfying. We have it on good authority from our residents that these gorgeous baby carrots, picked by resident, Gabby and team members, Samuna and Amanda, are positively bursting with flavour.

WESTERN PORT BAY CARE COMMUNITY, VIC

Our creative, caring residents from our knitting group had a 'cool' time at Phillip Island, paying a visit to drop off 65 jumpers they knitted for penguins undergoing rehabilitation from oil spill incidents. Everyone enjoyed time on the boardwalk observing the penguins they've worked so lovingly to help, before sharing a delicious lunch. It was a fun and rewarding day out for everyone.



NARRAWEENA GROVE CARE COMMUNITY, NSW

Zumba gets our muscles moving, releases endorphins and lifts our spirits. And for resident, Helen and team member, Cheryl, it's a wonderful opportunity to get the endorphins pumping and have a laugh together!

JAMES KEEPS HISTORY AFLOAT

For more than 20 years, resident James has combined craftsmanship, history and a love of learning to create remarkable model ships. Today, at Inverloch Coast Care Community, his passion continues to inspire.



A qualified carpenter by trade, James has always enjoyed working with his hands. Now living in residential aged care, his creativity and independence continue at a rate of knots.

Known for his quiet nature and warm friendships at Inverloch Coast, James spends hours researching, designing and building intricate model ships, based on historic vessels connected to Victoria's Bass Coast.

Bringing history to life

Working from photographs, historical records and artistic impressions, James masterfully recreates each vessel to scale. He considers every detail, from the hull and decking to the sails, rigging and fittings.

James' impressive collection includes The Artisan, wrecked at nearby Harmers Haven in 1901. This model is currently on display at the Wonthaggi Museum.

He also recreated The Amazon, which was forced ashore at Inverloch in 1863, and The Border Maid, a vessel with special significance to James, whose great-grandfather served as its captain.

Another favourite is The Ripple, a ketch built in 1872 that regularly carried freight and passengers between Williamstown and Inverloch. James generously gifted this completed model to a fellow resident and her family.

For James, the research is just as rewarding as the building.

"I enjoy learning the history behind each ship," he says. "The mathematics and the challenge of getting everything right keeps me interested."

His current project is HMS Sappho, a British Royal Navy sloop that disappeared in Bass Strait in 1858 with approximately 147 crew members on board. Its final resting place remains one of Victoria's great maritime mysteries.

A talent that brings people together

James works on his remarkable projects both in his bedroom and at a dedicated carpentry workbench at Inverloch Coast Care Community. A familiar sight carrying tools and supplies from the local hardware store, he's completely self-sufficient, creating every component himself.



While shipbuilding is often a solitary pursuit for James, his work has become a source of connection at Inverloch Coast. Fellow residents, like Rachel (pictured at left with James), regularly stop to admire his latest work, ask questions and hear the stories behind the vessels.

Shipbuilding helps James maintain a strong sense of identity and purpose. The research, planning and intricate construction are intellectually stimulating, while the satisfaction of completing each model gives him a lasting sense of achievement.

James' passion also supports his wellbeing goals. In his physiotherapy sessions, he focuses on maintaining his independence and safe mobility which enables him to continue spending time at his workbench and pursuing the craft he loves.

"It's wonderful to see how James' projects bring people together," says wellbeing manager, Katrina. "They spark conversations, create new friendships and are a way for him to continue sharing his incredible skills with others."

By supporting James to continue pursuing what he loves, our team helps ensure his skills, independence and sense of purpose remain at the heart of everyday life.

And with HMS Sappho starting to take shape on his workbench, James's next voyage has only just begun.



Knitting for charity: A labour of love and compassion

Residents at Murdoch Gardens Care Community play a vital role in a whole-of-community approach to helping children living with disabilities.

Perth-based charity, Wheelchairs for Kids Australia is a heartwarming example of what can be achieved when people from all ages and abilities unite behind a common purpose.

The organisation donates wheelchairs to children living with disability in developing countries.

Wheelchairs are designed for use in difficult terrains and are adjustable – giving children the mobility they need to fully take part in life. It's a cause that resonates deeply with residents at Murdoch Gardens, who bring their own special touch through our relationship with the Rotary Club of Wangara.

Caring through creativity

The wheelchairs are refurbished and built at Rotary's Wangara workshop before finding their new home overseas complete with woolly blankets lovingly knitted by our residents and team.

Each Saturday, a group of residents from our knitting group gathers to knit blankets and have a 'yarn' over a cuppa. Led by resident, Janet, it's an inclusive group where all are welcome. Lifelong knitters happily join in to knit or share tips and join in the stories.

For many, using their skills and passions to support young people is uplifting and boosts their wellbeing. Resident, Susan, says the work brings her a sense of calm and peace. And for our team, it's a great opportunity to learn new skills, with several surprising themselves with their newfound skills.

"I've learned without realising I'm learning," says wellbeing manager, Refi.

Our group looks forward to regular trips to craft shops to pick and purchase wool, and families, friends, and visitors generously play their part by donating knitting needles and wool.

As well as knitting blankets, Janet creates unique dolls she sells at our Care Community or donates to children receiving wheelchairs. Every dollar raised goes directly to Wheelchairs for Kids.

"I feel so strongly connected to this," says Janet. *"It really keeps me going."*



Strengthening bonds in our local community and beyond

Residents recently visited the Wangara workshop for a tour, and to meet the team they're such an important part of. As well as seeing the production of wheelchairs, residents learned about the stories of some of the children they've helped, with recent donations supporting children in Zambia and Bali.

The Rotary Club also visits Murdoch Gardens regularly to collect donations and share updates from Wheelchairs for Kids Australia.

"These visits are so meaningful," says Refi. *"The team from Rotary spend time with us letting our residents know exactly how their work is directly changing the lives of underprivileged kids for the better."*

"It inspires us to do even more."

Wheelchairs For Kids Australia CEO, Greg Hebble said community groups like Murdoch Gardens make an important contribution to bringing an extra smile to the children when they receive their wheelchair.

"Every wheelchair we send goes out with two toys and a knee rug. One toy is always handmade and all our rugs are new and handmade with love. We sent out over 5,500 rugs and knitted toys in the last 12 months."

"Every wheelchair is individually fitted to the child so a session can take two to three hours to make sure the child is safe and comfortable. Having the toys makes a big difference to keeping the child amused and distracted."

"We're very grateful to the residents at Murdoch Gardens Care Community for their continued support."

Honouring Ted: a remarkable Australian

Founder of The Gold Coast Chinatown Association. Executive President of the Gold Coast Chinese Club. Pioneer of the sport of dragon boat racing in Australia. These are just some of the achievements of Tat Yin Fong OAM, fondly known as Ted.

Ted, who lives at **Ashmore Gardens Care Community** on the Gold Coast, has called Australia home for 70 years; and his remarkable contributions over that time were recently recognised with an Order of Australia honour.

By establishing The Gold Coast Chinese Club, Ted played a significant role in driving the economic development of the region. He facilitated trade links between Australia and China and cross-cultural exchange that built the understanding, respect and trust so critical to the economic success of local communities.

As a sportsman, Ted's achievements in dragon boat racing speak to his energy and passion. As well as organising regattas in conjunction with the Gold Coast's annual Tropicarnival Festival. Ted led Australian teams to compete at more than 30 festivals across Asia - bringing an ancient sport founded on precision teamwork into the spotlight.

Enabling Ted's life of service

Ted moved into Ashmore Gardens to live alongside his wife Annie, as her health declined. When Annie sadly passed away in 2025, our team was proud to support Ted to continue his active life of service.

Having founded and established The Gold Coast Chinese Club, Ted has handed the baton to the next generation of leaders but remains closely connected, along with other groups he's contributed to, such as Rotary, his church, and Southport Chinatown.

"Dad misses getting around in his own car, and he's grateful for the arrangements team make to ensure he can safely attend the meetings and events that matter to him," says son, Eddie.

"Dad loves Australia and is proud of his Chinese heritage, and staying connected with his community groups helps him to maintain his sense of identity and motivation."

Congratulations Ted, and thank you for your life of service.





Lenore's legacy of faith with The Salvation Army

For more than 160 years, The Salvation Army has brought comfort, compassion, and hope to people around the world. For resident, Lenore, her service to God is a life's calling.

Lenore, who lives at **Quakers Hillside Care Community** in Sydney's northwest, is the second in four generations of her family to serve with the Salvation Army.

Lenore joined at age 16 in her home suburb of Glenhaven to assist with the famous Red Shield Appeal, inspired by her mother and encouraged by her father. This began a lifetime of commitment to her church and her faith, serving in western Sydney, the town of Emerald in Queensland, and five years in Papua New Guinea, with her husband and three young children.

"It matured me and gave me grit," Lenore says.

"God gave me the gift of a strong Welsh voice"

At 79 years of age, Lenore has a remarkably powerful singing voice – *"you should have heard me before!"* she quips. An operatic soprano with a four-octave range, singing is a true passion.

When we meet Lenore, she treats us to a moving opening stanza of Jesus Loves Me, a tune she learned at five years of age in Sunday School. Another favourite is Great is thy Faithfulness, a title that could describe Lenore herself.

Lenore retired from full-time service at 70 but she's still actively involved with the church, and sharing God's word. She continues to pursue her life of purpose by supporting with The Red Shield Appeal, sharing prayers for people, and attending church every Sunday. And it runs in the family – Lenore's children, Melanie, Ben and Juanita, all hold roles with The Salvation Army in Queensland and NSW and most of her seven grandchildren have followed suit.

"I've got the most amazing family," says Lenore, of her remarkable legacy.

"I've had three great loves. My family, my singing, and being a Salvation Army officer. And God gave me all three."

Speaking with hands, connecting with heart

Social connection is a fundamental part of wellbeing; and connection comes from being understood. At Adelaide's Everard Park Care Community, Jeanette and Janet have formed a friendship through mutual understanding.



For volunteer, Janet, enabling inclusion has been a way of life from her youngest days. Her sister, Diane, was born with Down syndrome which gave Janet a powerful sense of purpose.

"I promised Mum I'd give Diane the best life," says Janet, and she was true to her word as Diane's guardian and travel companion for 33 years. The sisters enjoyed many cruises over the years, with interstate travel and trips to Hawaii, Singapore, and Disneyland providing lifelong memories.

When Diane came to live at Everard Park, Janet formed strong friendships with other residents during her visits. When Diane sadly passed away, Janet was inspired to maintain her connections with our Care Community and became a much-loved volunteer.

Each Monday, you'll find Janet assisting with musical activities while Fridays bring companionship.

"I'll help with games, puzzles, or just a chat," says Janet. "Anything people want to do, I'll help them with it."

Compassionate conversations

When Janet met resident, Jeanette, new worlds opened for both. Jeanette was born profoundly deaf, raising her four sons with perseverance and adaptability. As the only speaker of Australia's sign language, Auslan, at Everard Park, Jeanette needed assistance communicating her needs in her new environment.

Our team enabled Jeanette to be heard through a whiteboard and with pictures of common Auslan expressions – reducing some of the language barrier while enabling our team to learn along the way.

Janet was only too happy to help by immersing herself in learning sign language.

Janet went back to school, literally – enrolling in Auslan classes at Brighton Primary School & Centre of Deaf Education, learning side-by-side with parents and carers of children with deafness.

"It's been challenging and fascinating," says Janet. "Practicing with Jeanette, learning from her and helping her communicate with more ease makes me happy."

For Jeanette, her friendship with Janet brings fulfilling connection and a sense of reward in passing on her language skills.

"I'm so proud of Janet for what's she's done," she says. "I enjoy my chats with her, and I love it when she shares what she's learned with me. Being able to help teach her Auslan is special."

"I love watching Jeanette and Janet connecting through sign language," says wellbeing manager, Anne. "It's so rewarding to see people who may have previously felt isolated feel understood and included."



"I enjoy my chats with her, and I love it when she shares what she's learned with me. Being able to help teach her Auslan is special."



The café bringing a community together

"Our café is more than a place to have coffee," says Bernard, resident at Northcote Mews Care Community. "It's where we can spend quality time together, connect with other families, and feel part of the Northcote Mews community."

"Every time I visit, the café feels welcoming and familiar."

It's no surprise when we drop in for a cuppa and a chat, that Northcote Mews' café in Melbourne is so lively. It has all the hallmarks of a favourite local spot. Our team knows people's names, remember their usual order, and always have time for a friendly conversation.

Set within Northcote Mews' original Victorian building, our café retains many of the building's historic features, with pretty stained-glass windows that catch the sun and ornate pressed ceilings. It opens onto a courtyard and rose garden that offers a window into the seasons, with spectacular cherry blossoms in the spring.

While the setting draws people in, it's the atmosphere and sense of belonging that keeps them coming back.

Led by general manager, Pearl, and wellbeing manager, John, our team has shaped the café into a special place to gather, where residents, loved ones, team members and the wider community can connect in ways that feel familiar and relaxed.

"Our café plays an important role in supporting residents' wellbeing," says John. "It creates natural opportunities for people to build relationships, stay socially connected, and continue enjoying the things that bring meaning and joy to their day."

"It's my favourite café in Northcote!"
says resident, Helen.



A welcoming space for all to share in the spirit of community

For residents, our café offers opportunities for spontaneous social interaction throughout the day. Some stop by for a coffee, others to read the paper, meet friends or enjoy the dappled sunlight together.

At the heart of it all is café attendant, Brad, whose personal approach helps create the warm environment everyone values so highly. He knows many residents' favourite orders, remembers their preferences and loves a chat.

"The best part of my role is getting to know each resident as an individual," says Brad.

"Taking the time to remember their favourite drink or stop for a chat helps create a space where people feel valued, comfortable, and at home."

Our café experience is tailored to individual tastes and preferences and our team work creatively to ensure everyone can enjoy their favourite drinks and snacks.

Regular gatherings, such as family celebrations, resident-led activities and intergenerational visits with school groups, are designed to foster ongoing relationship with residents and people in the local area.

By embedding our café as a community space rather than simply somewhere to eat, our Northcote Mews team has created an environment that supports wellbeing through everyday interactions - bringing people together in ways both planned and unexpected.





Feeling the **spirit of connection** with the Grainery Church

Rutherford Park Care Community's connection with the Grainery Church lifts our residents' hearts and inspires their sense of purpose.

Every two months, Maitland's Grainery Church in the NSW Hunter region hosts a special morning tea gathering of VIPs: *'Vital Individuals with Purpose'*.

It's an apt term which celebrates the role older people have played in creating the world we enjoy today, and their continuing contributions to our communities.

Each VIP event focuses on a different theme that resonates for older people, such as financial planning, cultural celebrations, and reminiscing over music.

For residents at Rutherford Park, these VIP events and our ongoing relationship with the non-denominational Grainery Church have become a part of the social fabric of Care Community life, and central to their social and spiritual wellbeing.

It's an inclusive relationship, where all abilities are welcome and there are no barriers to participation. Wellbeing manager, Kell, organises a video link through Facebook for residents who prefer not to travel or have limited mobility.



Oriel's story

Resident, Oriel, has been a regular attendee at VIP events for two years. As Kell explains, Oriel's dedication is testimony to the positive impact of the relationship.

"Oriel proudly collects her invitations from each event and pins them up in her room. She proactively reminds our team when the next events are coming so we don't forget, and church volunteers just love her – they even call her on her birthday!"

"She's always thinking of others, and before these events, Oriel actively invites and encourages fellow residents to join in. Her commitment gives her a sense of independence and belonging; of nurturing and engaging the social connections that mean so much to her, and to fellow residents."

Importantly, it's helped Oriel maintain her identity through knowing she's seen and valued.

"Oriel can become overwhelmed with larger gatherings but our visits to the Grainery Church are perfect for her," says Kell.

"Her confidence grew as she got to know people and saw them remembering her name and looking forward to seeing her. She loves that people ask about her family, the life she's led and the things she likes to do. She knows she matters to other people."

"Walking into The Grainery feels like entering a sanctuary of pure joy," says Oriel. "Sandy, Lesley, and the incredible team don't just host a morning tea – they create a family. To everyone who makes it possible for me to attend: thank you for bringing me to the place where I feel most alive, connected and truly lucky."

Opening our hearts to the local community

Through our relationship with Grainery Church, Rutherford Park takes part in a community outreach program, raising money to help local primary school children access uniforms. Our team, family and residents, including Oriel, collect their coins and kindly give what they can.

It's a powerful expression of purpose in action; one where empathy and compassion supports and enables lives of meaning.

"It's always a joy to welcome the wonderful residents of Rutherford Park Care Community to our VIP Morning Teas," says Lesley, Grainery Church's Maitland VIP coordinator.

"They're a special part of our VIP family, and their contribution and faithful support warms my heart."

Ali's still living the dream with **HER RED SPORTS CAR**

For resident, Ali, who lives at Melbourne's Mordialloc Grove Care Community, her bright red 2002 Hyundai Tiburon V6 is a special source of pride.

"I've always had a special place in my heart for cars, so when the opportunity came to buy my dream car, I couldn't let it pass me by," she says.

Ali bought the Tiburon 15 years ago. Given the choice between a navy model with a sunroof, or a red one without a sunroof, her decision was immediate.

"There was something about the red one that caught my eye. I've never regretted that decision."

More than 20 years later, she still drives the sports car and enjoys the freedom it gives her. Maintaining the ability to get behind the wheel helps Ali stay connected to the wider community, make her own plans and continue doing something she loves.

It's a symbol of her independence and a lifelong passion.

The Tiburon is also remarkably rare. Ali understands there are only three 2002 models of its type in Australia, and hers is the only one registered in Victoria.

"Quite a few people have asked if I would consider selling it but I've never seriously considered letting it go."

Ali's love of cars runs in the family. Her father was an amateur racing driver and she grew up hearing stories about his adventures on the track.

Later, she discovered her father-in-law had also been a racing driver and, remarkably, had once competed against her father.

Today, every drive is a reminder of those connections.

"When I look at my red Tiburon, I see my childhood, my father, his racing days, and one of my own lifelong loves."

As the Tiburon approaches its 25th birthday, its value may be increasing but Ali has no plans to sell.

"How do you put a price on a dream?" she says.





Many cultures make a community

Perth is one of Australia's most multicultural cities, with its unique geography attracting people from around the world. More than 35% of its citizens were born overseas, from over 200 countries. Like all our Care Communities across Australia, Applecross Shore Care Community is a mirror of its local community.

Formed in partnership with nearby **Melville Parkside** and **Alfred Cove Care Communities**, Applecross Shore's multicultural club brings residents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds together to share stories, traditions such as music, and teach each other words from their mother tongue.

About 35 residents attend each meeting, hailing from Italy, Portugal, Greece, Croatia and Japan. Food is an integral part of the experience with our team cooking treats like tiramisu to accompany discussions.

Sharing culture through fun and competition

Resident, Connie, is proud to share her Portuguese heritage at these meetings. For Connie, who lives at Applecross Shore with husband Mato, cultural diversity has been a constant thread throughout her life.

Born in Madeira, Connie met Croatian-born Mato, in South Africa where the couple owned a butcher shop before moving to Australia with their three children.

Connie loves teaching residents, visitors and team members how to play Canasta and the uniquely Portuguese game, Bisca. Often, you'll find granddaughters Alexandra and Grace enjoying lessons, with Connie and Mato's friends Anna Maria and Jose joining in.

"Connie has so much energy and community spirit," says wellbeing manager, Thays.

"She helps lead our Catholic community, our knitting group, and drives our donations of toys for Ronald McDonald House."

"Our multicultural club is a reminder of why feeling included, welcomed and valued is such an important part of living well for older people."

"A vida é para ser vivida," as the Portuguese say: life is to be lived.

Norman's ink-redible wish comes true

Norman has a lifetime of love for his late wife Jennifer stored in his heart. Now, through a beautiful friendship with team member, Karly, he has a permanent tribute to the woman he loves and misses every day.





When Norman came to live at **Broadwater Grove Care Community** on Queensland's Gold Coast, he bonded with Karly over an unusual shared interest.

"Cows!" says Karly, with a laugh. "I grew up in a travelling farm family and Norman had a dairy farm as a young man in New Zealand."

After learning of Norman's wish to get his first tattoo in honour of Jennifer and their 59-year love story, our Broadwater Grove team set out to make it come true. Through our Wishing Well program, and after discussing the idea with Norman, his doctor and his son Gavin, his wish became a reality.

The experience was truly personal, with Norman and Karly spending time together discussing ideas, designs and tattoo placement to ensure Norman's wish best honoured Jennifer's memory.

"Norman wanted to see her name every day, so his arm was the perfect place," says Karly.

"While we were in the planning stages of his tattoo, he joked that I should join him and get one too. I laughed, but when I said, 'Let's do this together,' his face lit up. I told him he could choose what tattoo I got, and he was so happy to be part of the decision."

A Kiwi connection adds extra shine to a special day

When Norman and Karly arrived at the tattoo parlour, Norman was delighted to discover the tattoo artist was also from New Zealand. The two quickly struck up a connection, spending time sharing stories and memories of home, and reminiscing about their experiences. Their conversation brought an extra layer of comfort and familiarity for Norman.

"We're so pleased to be able to make Norman's wish come true," says wellbeing manager, Taryn.

"He's a special man who gives so much to our Care Community. He's always helping fellow residents and starting initiatives like our Tree of Life, which showcases special moments between residents and our team. He helps us to run activities and when team members achieve milestones, he enjoys presenting them with their certificates.

"The smile on his face says it all – much more than just a tattoo, this is a celebration of love, remembrance, friendship, and the meaningful connections we find in shared experiences."

For Karly, the most special part was getting to bring a little piece of my world into Norman's.

"My tattoos mean so much to me so sharing that and creating a memory together with Norman is something I'll always treasure," says Karly. "It's moments like this that remind me why I love what I do."



Crafting confidence, creativity and wellbeing

The scrapbooking table at Bella Vista Gardens Care Community is a hive of activity. Under teacher Rachel's guidance, resident Marcelle crafts a trio of flowers while resident Fay brings an underwater scene to life.

Scrapbooking has boomed in Australia in recent years, driven by its power to evoke memory and celebrate the creativity within all of us. For older people, it enables wellbeing by supporting fine motor skills and socialisation. It brings beauty into our world and, as Fay says: *"I like doing this because I feel like I'm achieving something worthwhile."*

Nurturing wellbeing, one layout at a time

Rachel is very much part of the family at Bella Vista Gardens, in Sydney's northwest. Her Dad, resident, Graham, is an enthusiastic participant in scrapbooking.

"I come to support Rachel," he says with a father's pride – yet he brings this and much more to the scrapbooking table. We see the skills he's honed over a lifetime of successfully leading businesses in the way he gently

encourages fellow residents and helps find solutions to design challenges. Need a new shape to complement a tropical fish? There's a turtle for that.

For resident, Neil, scrapbooking is an opportunity to spend quality time over a shared purpose with his granddaughter. Former history and geography teacher, Marcelle, revels in the detail of her work.

Scrapbooking at Bella Vista Gardens is a true community affair, with year 10 students from Kellyville High School happily attending to assist residents with cutting shapes, connecting over conversation, and learning from their elders.

For Rachel, seeing people blossom is rewarding.

"I come with a layout to start residents off and they take it to their own creative place, which is so nice to see. I love watching everyone working together and supporting each other. And I love hearing their stories – especially Fay who makes me laugh!"



Master Chef Ron's recipe for living well

Start with a serve of profiteroles fit for a Queen (literally). Add a pinch of Chef's duty at the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games. Finish with a passion for unearthing hidden gems while op-shopping.

"I was one of five Chefs handpicked by Queen Elizabeth II to bake for her coronation in 1953," says resident, Ron, who lives at Melbourne's **Mill Park Manor Care Community**.

"I specialised in the decorative pastry that topped cakes and I was honoured to make her favourite profiteroles."

"When I was invited to be a Chef at the Olympic Games, Queen Elizabeth made sure my wife and I got there in style, in first class on an ocean liner."

Ron's love affair with Melbourne continued after the Games, when he migrated to Australia. He established a cake shop in Kew before starting another in Emerald, south of the city, where customers queued up for a taste of his famous profiteroles.

A man of the people

Declining health led Ron to retirement but it didn't slow him down. After 30 years as a 'lollipop man', helping generations of school children safely cross the road, Ron moved to Mill Park Manor where our team supports him to maintain the social connections that mean so much to him.

"Ron's an avid reader who enjoys time to himself but he also has a wide range of people he loves interacting with," says wellbeing manager, Lisa.

"He dines every day with longtime friends and fellow residents, Phil and Julian. He's an eager participant in our men's group, and our residents love hearing his stories."

"And on weekends, you'll find him browsing through op shops with his great friend, Debbie."

With a world of experiences and a lifetime of stories to tell, Ron's connection with people remains the key to his wellbeing.

Lingering longer over dining **AND LIVING WELL**

How engaging mealtime experiences enable connection for older people.

Camaraderie, companionship and great conversation: for many of us, these are essential ingredients for a memorable dining experience.

For older people living in care, socialising at mealtimes can have profound physical and mental health benefits. Older people are likely to eat more when dining with others, which helps to maintain a healthy weight. And for people who have reduced social circles or don't enjoy larger group activities, mealtimes with a few close friends may be their favoured way of engaging with others each day.

Evelyn's story

Evelyn came to live at **Treeby Parklands Care Community** in Perth with her husband Harry. When Harry sadly passed away, Evelyn found comfort in the friends she's made over mealtimes.

Residents Graham, Ray, Ted, Rigo, Liz and Leonie took Evelyn under their wing. They supported her in her grief, welcoming her into their games of cards and helping her know she wasn't alone. Another special friend is, school student Katelyn, who often visits and joins in games and conversation.

"I always look forward to seeing my friends," says Evelyn. "Having a nice meal with them and staying to enjoy a game is the best part of my day."

Often, mealtimes extend into singing for Evelyn and her friends, with Christmas carols a favourite at any time of year.

"Why not?" as Graham says, with a laugh. "They're great songs!"



The recipe for success

At our Care Communities, healthy, nutritious meals are part of a dining experience where all the elements of wellbeing are carefully considered. Assisting residents to dine in smaller tables of 4 to 6 people who share similar interests encourages inclusion and conversation over familiar topics. It often results in residents enjoying time together in the hours following. Sports fans stay to enjoy supper while cheering for their football team or favourite tennis player. Games buffs challenge themselves to competition, be it chess, dominoes or TV game shows. For others, conversations with friends make them feel like they're at home or out to dinner.



Turning resident insights into real connections

Our new app supports wellbeing by combining smart tech and the timeless art of listening.



Fishing with a close friend. Crochet over a cuppa and a chat. Observing their faith, or putting watercolour techniques to the test. These are just a few ways our residents enjoy spending their time. Every person is unique, so how do we know what residents like to do? We ask!

Engaging with the things that matter to us is essential for our wellbeing, and it's the guiding principle for our new resident engagement app. It helps our teams support meaningful experiences for each resident by helping us understand how they prefer to engage with life.

Each day, our team asks residents what they'd like to do the following day and records it in the app. This helps us develop a diverse range of engagement opportunities that encourage social connection, enjoyment, and a sense of belonging. We also record participation in the app, so we can see what's working for residents and where we can make improvements.

Understanding Christine

When Christine came to live at **Burpengary Gardens Care Community**, north of Brisbane, she was unsure if it was the right move for her. She was pleasantly surprised.

Wellbeing manager, Savi, explains our team spent the time to get to know Christine, using our resident engagement app as a supporting tool to understand and record her preferences.



"Christine told us she enjoyed games with a small group of friends. Before she moved into our Care Community, Christine didn't attend events or activities with large gatherings of people. Knowing we could support her with the activities she enjoyed helped her to feel at home."

"The triominoes game is popular with our residents and it helped Christine form friendships with fellow residents, Doreen and Alison. What started with games of one hour has now expanded into longer sessions, where the ladies now teach other residents and our team how to play."

For Christine, it's all about being heard.

"I think aged care can be the doorway to a good life," she says.

"The team here listens to me and supports me with the things I like to do. Listening to me also means understanding when I'm feeling up to something, and when I'm not."

Savi agrees: *"Simply listening to a person makes such a difference in their lives."*

KAREN'S 30-YEAR CAREER FOUNDED ON CARE

Meet Karen: K-pop (Korean pop music) fan, medieval princess and devoted carer for older people at our Care Communities since 1996.

*"I've never thought of another career," says Karen, wellbeing manager at **Hamlyn Terrace Care Community** on the NSW Central Coast. "I love caring and giving back to older people."*

A purposeful traveller

Early in her career, Karen gained experience in care on Australia's east coast, from Melbourne to Brisbane, then supporting First Nations communities in the Northern Territory. After serving our residents at **Wahroonga Place Care Community** on Sydney's north shore for 24 years, Karen was wellbeing manager at **Wallarah Point Care Community** for five years before taking on her role at Hamlyn Terrace.

From carer to coach

With three decades of experience, her passion for education means Karen's impact spreads far and wide. And as a graduate of the Opal HealthCare Academy's Emerging Leader Program, Karen values the development opportunities available at Opal HealthCare.

She now helps to train new Wellbeing team members. *"I love teaching people about the wellbeing manager role," she says. "It's a role where you can make such a difference in people's lives by helping them to live well on their own terms."*

"One who stands out is Vanessa, who began on our cleaning team. I saw the potential in her and trained her as a lifestyle officer at Wallarah Point Care Community. She's now doing a wonderful job as customer support manager at Killarney Vale Care Community."



Karen's also a firm believer in keeping people safe, contributing actively to work, health and safety committees and initiatives at every Care Community she calls home.

"I make sure we get top marks!" she says.

A lifelong learner

Karen's interest in people and cultures drove her to learn Korean (helping her sing along to her favourite Korean pop tunes!) and Farsi languages, enabling her to communicate with residents of those backgrounds.

And on weekends, you'll find her engaging in her love of medieval fairs, proudly wearing purpose-built costumes crafted with the same love and care she's given our residents for over 30 years.



EVERY VOICE MATTERS

Our Consumer Advisory Body (CAB) meetings provided a meaningful forum for sharing your views with our Board.

When we talk about residential aged care, there's nobody better to share insights than our residents, their families, and all who love and care for them.

Each year, the Australian Government requires residential aged care providers to elicit feedback through CABs. All feedback from residents,

families and representatives at our Care Communities is shared with our Board. They're a valuable way to have your say – every voice is heard and can help us continue to improve our care and services.

CABs were held in person at each Care Communities and via an online survey for those who couldn't attend. Many people took the opportunity to be heard. 147 Care Communities hosted in-person CABs, with 2,333 residents and 688 families/representatives attending. 44 residents and 1,456 families and representatives responded to our online survey.

At our CABs, we asked five questions:

- 1 Over the past year, where do you think we have improved most as an organisation or where we do well?
- 2 For family and/or representatives: what is one thing you hope will be different in residential aged care by the time you may need care yourself?
- 3 For residents: What is one thing you think we could reasonably do today to improve your quality of life – but are not doing or not doing very well?
- 4 If you had an opportunity to speak directly to the Opal HealthCare Board, what overall key message would you want to share?
- 5 What do you think are the biggest challenges facing the aged care sector?

Taking action

Our Board and Executive leaders met in August to review and consider all feedback. In September we emailed all residents, family and representatives with a summary of your insights and the actions we're taking to make positive change.

We have a range of feedback channels available year-round and we welcome your feedback at any time. Please share your thoughts with our Care Community team, or via our website at opalhealthcare.com.au/feedback

Words of thanks

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

BOX HILL VIEWS CARE COMMUNITY VICTORIA

I just wanted to say a huge personal thank you for everything you do for Dad. It was such a joy for me to see him back in his element cooking today. I'm so grateful for you and all the amazing ladies from the wellbeing team for making this happen and for your kindness, care and lovely warm energy. It really is people like you all who make such a massive difference.

ARMADALE PLACE CARE COMMUNITY WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Thank you for watching over my Mum. It doesn't go unnoticed; I appreciate everything you do.

KIRRA BEACH CARE COMMUNITY QUEENSLAND

We so appreciate the lifestyle that Mum enjoys with you. The team are loving and caring with her, and so creative and inclusive with activities.

TWEED VALLEY CARE COMMUNITY NEW SOUTH WALES

Mum called Tweed Valley her home for nearly 14 years. Never once did she feel anything less than valued, known and cared for. That is a testament to each of you; your dedication, kindness, and the genuine human connection you gave her every day.

GLEN OSMOND GROVE CARE COMMUNITY SOUTH AUSTRALIA

I really enjoyed playing modified golf as it brought back wonderful memories of playing with my mates. It was a relaxing afternoon watching all the residents offering each other encouragement and support and sharing lots of laughs.

BUNBURY GARDENS CARE COMMUNITY WESTERN AUSTRALIA

I have been so pleased with the kindness of all the team. They treat all residents with such respect, it's beautiful to see.

VARSITY VIEWS CARE COMMUNITY QUEENSLAND

The spa experience was one of the best activities I've attended. I felt like I was in a spa retreat with the smell of essential oils and the spa music and the treatment areas. Foot spas, hand and feet massages, nail painting and facial masks - it was all a treat!

CAULFIELD HORIZONS CARE COMMUNITY VICTORIA

It was nice to have some classical music. To come and listen to that was wonderful. It was a lovely afternoon. I enjoyed it all so much. Perfect food, music, and company. Lovely atmosphere.

CAMERON PARK CARE COMMUNITY NEW SOUTH WALES

Mum's time at Cameron Park added value to the last months of her life in ways I had not foreseen. The team's acceptance of her, respect, encouragement and support were clear to see. As her daily care needs were met, Mum was free to enjoy life again, and it was great to see her cheeky sense of humour re-emerge.

WANTIRNA VIEWS CARE COMMUNITY VICTORIA

I really enjoyed my lunch today. The pork cutlets were very tender, and the carrot cake with cheese topping was yummy and so fresh. Well done to the Chef and tireless team who are so patient and willing.

KIRRA BEACH CARE COMMUNITY QUEENSLAND

I want to extend my sincere thanks to everyone involved in making my Nanna's trip out to my son's wedding go smoothly. Thank you to your team for getting her ready on time and back home and tucked into bed after a magical day. Our family truly appreciated the efforts made.

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



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