

# > DoveTale

SPRING, 2018



*News from across Uniting AgeWell communities*





## ➤ CEO's message

**At Uniting AgeWell, the customer is at the heart of everything we do. We are always looking at ways we can improve our service delivery to better support clients and assist individuals on their journey.**

I was touched to see the staff at Kingsville and Manor Lakes communities deliver a prime example of customer-centred care when they worked together to reunite two sisters. The sisters, who live in separate Uniting AgeWell residences, were brought together for the first time in years in an emotional meeting. It's a wonderful example of the way we put our customers and their needs first in everything we do. Read more about it in this edition of *DoveTale*.

Another initiative, the Ningana Guard of Honour, is enabling residents to openly discuss death and dying, and ensure their wishes are respected during that time. This is a difficult topic for most people, but it has helped open the conversation with residents and their family members in a very positive way. This story is featured on page 5.

Uniting AgeWell recognises the importance of maintaining or restoring our health and wellbeing as we age. We are strengthening the way we provide allied health and therapy services through the implementation of a new Wellness Model. Detailed on page 5, the Wellness Model is designed to ensure clients across all of our services have more choice and more affordable access to allied health professionals.

We are also investing heavily in residential aged care, with several major capital works projects under way. The development of a new 104-bed aged care residence at Preston, and a 120-bed aged care residence and adjacent Manningtree retirement living complex at Hawthorn, are progressing according to schedule. The ground floor slabs of each building have been poured and slab works continue on the first floors.

A \$10 million extension and renovation is also under way at our Strathdevon Community in Latrobe and is due for completion in February 2019. The new laundry and kitchen are now complete, along with the on-site gym and interview room, while work on the new chapel and administration spaces are in progress.

These three major projects will ensure Uniting AgeWell is not only able to meet the demand for quality residential aged care in these communities, but is also able to deliver the highest standard of care in appropriately designed and contemporary residences well into the future.

**Andrew Kinnersly**  
CEO

# > New model makes wellness more accessible

**Uniting AgeWell is changing the way it delivers allied health and exercise services to ensure clients have greater choice, independence and optimum quality of life.**

The organisation's new 'Wellness Model' will enable clients to access allied health professionals when they choose, at affordable prices.

Uniting AgeWell Project Manager Amanda Mehegan said the model was introduced following extensive research and input from clients, staff and referrers.

"Over several months we had many discussions with clients about what was important to them and how we could support them to remain well and independent, or regain independence," she said.

"It was really encouraging to hear how much our clients valued the state-of-the-art air-resistance equipment at our new Senior's Gyms and the choice surrounding how they used those services."

"However, we discovered there was room for us to improve what we were doing and ensure the customer was really at the heart of what we did at our centres."

Under the new Wellness Model, the services offered at Uniting AgeWell's current centres – at Forest Hill, Noble Park, Oakleigh, Hawthorn and Preston – will be expanded.

On top of the current offering – Tai Chi, physiotherapy, podiatry and exercise therapy – the organisation will introduce yoga, stretch classes, pilates and more. Most significantly, clients have the choice of new membership options for access to allied health professionals.

"The Wellness Membership will allow clients to package the services they use through gym or wellness streams," Amanda said.

"A client may want to use the gym once a week and attend a group class with an exercise physiologist or see another allied health professional once a week, so we can package it in a way they can afford." 



*For more information about Uniting AgeWell's new Wellness Model or the allied health and exercise services available to you, call T: 1300 783 435.*



"When I came to Uniting AgeWell's Noble Park gym I was a little bit lost. Now I feel so comfortable there, the staff are so lovely. The program and equipment have helped me so much; they're just what I needed. Now I'm working towards getting back to dancing!"

*Uniting AgeWell Seniors Gym user Kathy Bacsa*

## ➤ Exploring community

Recently I was reminded of the importance of community when I was privileged to participate in the launch of a new carer support group, 'You're Not Alone', in Bendigo.

This group has been established to bring together carers of people with dementia. I spoke with members of the group and Uniting AgeWell staff and was once again inspired by the care and support so evident amongst the group.

What does community mean to you? This is a question Uniting AgeWell has been exploring through a research project with Deakin University. A number of our staff, residents, customers, and volunteers have participated in this project and I thank them all for their time and input.

This project has informed the development of our new Customer and Community Engagement and Participation Framework and Plan which was recently presented to the Uniting AgeWell Board.



I want to thank our AgeWell Community Advisory Committee who sponsored and guided this work, which the Board was very happy to endorse.

We will use this framework and plan to guide us as we continue striving to provide quality care and services and to inform future plans for new or expanding services across Tasmania and Victoria. We will share more about these exciting plans as they are developed and implemented. There is much to look forward to at Uniting AgeWell.

**Raelene Thompson**  
Board Chair

## ➤ Soft touch for children in distress

**A Uniting AgeWell Strath-Haven Community resident is using her knitting skills to provide comfort to children in difficult situations across the country.**

Ninety-year-old Jean Balmer – who moved to the Bendigo residence in April – knits Trauma Teddies for the Red Cross.

The soft toys are designed to support people affected by disasters like fire and floods, or those going to hospital for surgery.

"I always like to do something to help people," Jean said.

**"I get a lot of pleasure out of making the bears, knowing they go to the children."**

Jean has a history of helping people in need. During WWII, she used to unpick soldiers' old uniforms and make much-needed children's clothing for evacuees in England.

With decades of practice under her belt, Jean's quick with a needle and can finish a Trauma Teddy in one day.



**If you would like to donate wool to Strath-Haven Community to assist Jean in her support of others, call T: 5434 3000. 🐣**



## ➤ Praise for Ningana Guard of Honour

**A unique initiative launched at Uniting AgeWell's Sorell Community, Ningana in southern Tasmania was showcased at Brisbane's Palliative Care Nursing Association Conference in May.**

The 72-bed site forms a Guard of Honour when a resident passes away, to allow other residents and staff to pay their final respects to their friend.

It has attracted wide attention from the industry, with Registered Nurse Corina McKenzie being awarded a scholarship to present on the initiative at the biennial conference.

Developed by Ningana's Palliative Care Committee, the Guard of Honour was established as part of a program to open conversations about end-of-life care and dying.

"Many of the residents know of each other or their families from living in the rural community before moving into Ningana," Corina said.

"Previously, residents were notified of a fellow resident's death through a memorial photo in a frame at the front door.

"Residents expressed their sadness at not being able to say goodbye to their friends and they often do not have the opportunity to attend their funerals."

The Guard of Honour began with a small group of residents and staff lining up at the door but it quickly gained momentum. Now, residents gather other residents, and kitchen, maintenance, cleaning and care staff all form a line to say goodbye to the person as their body leaves the building.

"The initiative has been so successful, residents now request a Guard of Honour, and dozens of residents and staff take the opportunity to say goodbye to someone they have known, sometimes for many years," Corina said.

"The family of a resident recently attended the Guard of Honour for their family member who died. They expressed to staff how this small action provided them comfort during a difficult time.

**"It has also had a very positive impact on the residents, starting conversations about dying and their final wishes."**

The initiative has enabled care staff to develop tailored advance care plans with the residents, ensuring they remain in control of the care and support they receive, and all their wishes are met. 🕊



## ➤ Tassie tour dream comes true

**Strathdon Community resident Brian Griffin had long-dreamed of riding the Spirit of Tasmania back to the place he lived as a young man.**

As a child, Brian travelled on the Taruna ship, then as a newlywed he rode the Princess of Tasmania and the Hydroplane out of Port Welshpool, but he'd never had the opportunity to travel on the Spirit of Tasmania.

As the years wore on, he felt that dream drift further and further out of reach. By the time he turned 80, Brian was sure the Spirit of Tasmania ride would remain only a dream.

That was until Leisure and Lifestyle Coordinator Matt Daley submitted a nomination to the Uniting AgeWell Wishing Well program earlier this year.

The Wishing Well program helps people achieve their dreams – from walking the hallowed turf of the MCG or a reunion with friends, to riding on a steam train or a romantic Valentine's dinner.

Uniting AgeWell was able to grant Brian's wish in May.

Matt said he and Brian travelled overnight on the Spirit of Tasmania and spent a day touring the north-west of the island state before their return journey.

**“When we pulled away from the dock at Melbourne on the Wednesday night, Brian really enjoyed looking back at the city lights.”**

“He was really interested in looking at the way the boat was structured on the outside deck, enjoyed the smorgasbord for dinner and slept really well that night.”

It's a good thing Brian slept so well, because after arriving in Devonport at 5.45am, the pair embarked on an action-packed 12-hour self-guided tour of north Tasmania.

They drove to Stanley on the west coast, taking in sights along the way including an antique car exhibition at Wynyard, a stop at Brian's uncle's old butcher shop in Smithton, and a café in Penguin owned by the niece of a fellow Strathdon resident.

A special moment came when they stopped at Summerset, Brian's home as a young man.

“He hadn't been there for about 50 years and we were able to track down his old house,” Matt said.

“It was really special for him to see where he lived and look at how the street had changed.”

After returning from the whirlwind trip, Brian told Uniting AgeWell how grateful he was.

“My wish was to go on the Spirit of Tasmania and what I received was so much more than that,” he said.

“The icing on the cake was to share the experience with Matt.”

Brian's wish, and so many others like it, are made possible through corporate sponsorships and participating teams at Uniting AgeWell's Annual Charity Golf Day, as well as donors who contribute to the Wishing Well appeal. 



*The 2018 Annual Charity Golf Day will be held on Monday, 19 November at the stunning Commonwealth Golf Club. This year, Uniting AgeWell aims to raise more than \$50,000 to grant more wishes.*

*If you would like to take part in the Uniting AgeWell Charity Golf Day, call T: 9133 5005 or email [golf@unitingagewell.org](mailto:golf@unitingagewell.org)*

## ➤ New standards put customers in control

**Customers have always been at the heart of what Uniting AgeWell does. And when new Federal Government accreditation standards come into effect next July, the needs of customers will be in even greater focus.**

New single quality standards covering all residential and community services – known as the Aged Care Quality Standards – will be in place from 1 July 2019.

They replace the four sets of standards now covering residential care, home care, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care program and transition care.

The new standards require aged care providers to focus on enablement and independence, customer choice and partnerships, care and services based on evidence/best practice, and cultural diversity.

The Government hopes the new standards will encourage innovation and excellence in care, resulting in great outcomes for customers.

Uniting AgeWell Quality Manager Ruth Baxter has been working to ensure Uniting AgeWell is well prepared for the new standards.

“Uniting AgeWell has always delivered a high standard of care and services. This will continue and get better through the new standards and unannounced auditing,” she said.

**“Our goal is for great care all day, every day, aiming to provide greater assurance for our customers.”**

Ruth said the new standards would better meet the needs and expectations of seniors, enabling them to participate in decision-making, owning their care and services, supporting good health and improving quality of life and wellbeing.

“Single standards across programs should also result in a seamless journey from home to residential care if needed, and more opportunities to stay at home and receive very high care,” she said. 🕊





## ➤ Bendigo carers to get better support

**A new Loddon Mallee support group for carers of people with dementia promises to reduce carer stress through friendship and professional advice.**

Uniting AgeWell officially launched Bendigo's You're Not Alone carer support group in July with the aim of providing carers with the supports, practical strategies and networks they need to maintain their emotional health and wellbeing. Already, this region-first group has attracted more than 20 members.

Support group member Wendy Sheldon and her husband of 60 years, Laurie (both pictured), attended the official launch. Wendy cares for Laurie full-time and acknowledges how challenging her role can be.

"I can't leave him in the house by himself, so it can be very socially isolating," she said.

The support group will enable Wendy to discuss concerns with fellow carers and learn from other people's experiences.

Uniting AgeWell Board Chair Raelene Thompson said the Board was "delighted" to be able to support people like Wendy and Laurie.

**"The number of registrations for the group shows us how interested people are in this initiative and how much of a need there is in the community for this sort of program."**

It is estimated more than 2,000 people in the City of Greater Bendigo are living with dementia. The vast majority of people living in the community with dementia rely on an informal carer – usually a spouse or adult child – to support them. It means there is a great need for carer support in the Bendigo area.

To establish the group, Uniting AgeWell was provided a \$10,000 grant from the State Trustees Australia Foundation's 2017 Grassroots Grants program. State Member for Bendigo East and Minister for Public Transport and Major Projects, Jacinta Allan, provided a letter of support for the organisation's grant application.

"I'd like to really commend Uniting AgeWell for bringing this to our region," she told the launch.

"That theme of 'you're not alone' is a really important one. The work of a carer can be an incredibly rewarding and fulfilling role but it can also be tough at times and you need someone to walk with you on that journey, to reach out and get support from.

"This group is something the community has been looking for and is really fulfilling a need."

You're Not Alone carer support group meets monthly at Uniting AgeWell Seven Hills Respite House, 25 Dundas Street, White Hills. 



For more information or to register your interest, contact Loddon Mallee South Community Services – Bendigo on T: 5454 2100.

# › Assisting someone with dementia

**Ninety-one per cent of people with dementia living in the community rely on an informal carer, like a child or partner, to support them. In many cases, people without prior knowledge or experience find themselves with the important job of caring for someone with dementia.**

There are many things carers can do to ensure the person they care for is supported, well and safe.

## Tailoring communication:

A person with dementia may have difficulty understanding instructions or questions, but they do still have feelings and emotions. Dementia Australia provides the following communication tips:

- › Remain calm and talk in a gentle, matter-of-fact way
- › Keep sentences short and simple, focusing on one idea at a time
- › Always allow plenty of time for what you have said to be understood
- › It can be helpful to use orienting names whenever you can, such as "Your son Jack"

## Maintaining independence:

In the early stages of dementia, people are often able to maintain independence with some support. Labelling doors and cupboards, printing a weekly timetable, placing important phone numbers near the phone and encouraging the use of a diary for appointments and to-do lists will assist someone in the early stages of dementia.

## Connect with services:

There are many services available to people with a dementia diagnosis and their carers. Services may include educational resources, respite options to give carers a break, or programs that allow people to remain connected to their community after their diagnosis.

Uniting AgeWell offers a variety of services for people living with dementia and their carers. They include centre-based respite, which comprises social support groups and outings, individual support in the home and in the community, cottage respite to provide carers short breaks, and carer support groups. 



For information about services near you, contact Uniting AgeWell on T: 1300 783 435.



# › Taking the plunge

**One person hadn't been in a pool for 50 years, one was scared of water and another wanted to learn to swim 25m.**

A new partnership between Uniting AgeWell's Lillian Martin Community and Oceana Aquatic & Fitness Hobart has helped residents overcome their fears and set new goals, while improving their health and wellbeing.

Over eight weeks, six residents – including 100-year-old Doris Thackery (pictured) who hadn't been in a pool for more than 50 years – took part in hydrotherapy classes.

Extended Care Worker Clare Alsford said the program, which started in June, resulted in "some really good improvements with pain management and with mobility".

"One resident wanted to swim 25m, which she's almost done," Clare said in July.

"We've got one lady who previously had to use a wheelchair for long distances, but she just went out the other day without a wheelchair."

Lillian Martin Community looks forward to continuing the program and offering it to more residents in the future. 



## ➤ Twice the surprise

**Tears were flowing at a Uniting AgeWell residence recently when two sisters unable to see each other for almost two years were reunited.**

Physical distance and access to transport made it difficult for Manor Lakes Community resident Ruth Orr and her sister Mirl Loft to keep in touch as they aged.

But when Mirl moved to Uniting AgeWell's Kingsville Community in June 2018, the staff at both sisters' residences made it their mission to bring them together.

"We knew how much Ruth missed her sister and when Mirl moved to Kingsville we discovered she desperately wanted to see Ruth," Manor Lakes Community Leisure and Lifestyle Coordinator Angela Taylor said.

"We worked closely with the Kingsville Leisure and Lifestyle Team to arrange a surprise reunion and had so much fun planning it."

Angela staged a group outing for Manor Lakes residents to a 'café in Melbourne' and invited Ruth to come along. The group was taken to the Uniting AgeWell Kingsville Community café, where local staff had also suggested Mirl grab a cuppa.

"It was something from a fairy-tale," Mirl said. "She was just sitting there."

**"We just hugged and laughed and cried."**

The pair instantly reconnected and began reminiscing about growing up in Williamstown with their brother and sister.

The oldest of four, Mirl said she and baby sister Ruth spent their days playing shops on the neighbour's fence and visiting their grandparents for Sunday roast. When the women married and moved away from home they remained close, catching up for weekly lunches for decades.

The sisters had so much to catch up on, but Mirl said they "cried too much" to talk throughout most of the reunion. Eager to enable the sisters a proper catch-up, the staff quickly began arranging another meeting.

In July, their plan came to fruition when Mirl visited Ruth at Manor Lakes Community. The sisters were overjoyed to see each other again and continue catching up on time lost.

Kingsville Community Leisure and Lifestyle Coordinator Michael Silva said connecting with her sister helped Mirl adjust to living in an aged care setting.

"Mirl was quite anxious about her transition into aged care," he said.

"She has since told me all those fears have been allayed and she feels at home due to the fact that the staff reunited her with her sister and gave her the opportunity to be herself."

Angela said Uniting AgeWell staff were now working to reconnect the women to their other sister, Gwen, who resides at an aged care residence in south-west Melbourne. 🐦





## ➤ Dining initiative earns industry award

**A Uniting AgeWell initiative that led to a reduction in food-related complaints has earned the organisation a prestigious industry award.**

In July, the organisation received an ACSA Victoria Aged Care Award for Innovation in Service or Design. Sponsored by Epicor, the award recognises a program, project or initiative that shows originality to improve the lives of older Australians.

Masterclass 2017 was introduced to change the dining experience for clients, with the understanding that quality of meals at aged care residences was one of the biggest areas of complaint.

The unique professional development opportunity was designed to educate and inspire chefs to provide nutritious, tasty and attractive meals that met the aged care dietary requirements.

Masterclass 2017 saw chefs from across Uniting AgeWell's residential communities battle it out 'MasterChef style' to create a main and dessert dish in just 90 minutes. They were judged on presentation, creativity, cleanliness of workstations, adherence to the aged care dietary guidelines and taste.

The chefs also attended a private Masterclass with Unilever Chef Mark Baylis, who showed them how to cook menu items suitable for aged care residents using common and fresh products in a short amount of time.

Post-event evaluations and feedback from residents highlight the success of the initiative. Food-related complaints reduced by 26 per cent across the organisation since Masterclass 2017 and the staff involved reported increased knowledge of cooking in aged care.

Senior Hotel Services Manager Melissa Nicholson, who accepted the award, said she was "immensely proud" of the Hotel Services Team and grateful for the support received by the Uniting AgeWell community.

**"It is rare that food services are recognised at these industry awards, so we were blown away."**

"I want to thank the Uniting AgeWell Board and CEO, who encourage us to think outside the square and be creative in the way we deliver services to our clients."

The organisation joined award winners from each state and territory at the ACSA National Awards presentation in Sydney in September. 🐦



Visit [unitingagewell.org](http://unitingagewell.org) to find out whether the organisation was successful at the ACSA National Awards.

*ABOVE: Accepting the ACSA Victoria Aged Care Award for Innovation in Service or Design was Uniting AgeWell's Hotel Services Manager Tasmania Craig Gleeson (left) Senior Hotel Services Manager Melissa Nicholson, General Manager Tasmania Jane Johnston, Hotel Services Manager Victoria Carlo Napoli and CEO Andrew Kinnersly.*

## Celebrating our seniors

October is the month for seniors, with celebratory events being held across the country. Uniting AgeWell's Victorian sites will host Senior's Week events from 8-12 October, while its Tasmanian sites will celebrate from 15-18 October.

Victorian Seniors Festival, which runs throughout October, offers more than 2,000 events hosted by local councils for fun, pleasure and a chance to try something new or different. All events are offered at little or no cost and seniors will be treated to eight days of free public transport from 7-14 October. In Tasmania, the Council on the Ageing's (COTA) Seniors Week runs from 15-21 October. This year's theme, 'Food Glorious Food', calls for older people to share great food with friends and like-minded people. COTA is encouraging people to host a picnic or morning tea, book a restaurant or just share a coffee and cake with friends.

## Zumba craze hits Manor Lakes

Once a week, a little bit of Latin America comes to the western suburbs of Melbourne, with catchy beats encouraging seniors to wiggle and groove.

Zumba – the highly popular Latin-inspired dance fitness class – has made its way to Uniting AgeWell's Manor Lakes Community.

Recently added to the lifestyle program, the modified 'Zumba Gold' classes have residents flocking to the lounge to participate.

Leisure and Lifestyle Assistant Angela Shegog, who recently obtained her licence to teach the class, said Zumba Gold was a welcome addition to the residence's music therapy and exercise programs.

"Zumba Gold is a structured class and everyone can participate, regardless of mobility limitations," she said.

"The residents absolutely love it. Aside from being a lot of fun and very social, they learn about rhythms from different countries and the cultural side of dance."

## Exercise to improve brain health

New guidelines have been released for Australians aged 60 and over, who have noticed changes in their memory and cognitive abilities.

The University of Melbourne has outlined how much and what type of physical activity should be undertaken to improve brain health. The guidelines call for older Australians, in consultation with their doctor, to engage in 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity or 90 minutes of vigorous activity every week, progressive resistance training twice a week and activities that help improve and maintain balance.

Uniting AgeWell's Allied Health and Therapy Services can assist you in developing a personalised exercise plan. Find out more by calling T: 1300 783 435.



The classes, introduced in March, regularly attract a crowd of family members, eager to watch from the sidelines or participate in the fun.



How can we support you to live well with choice and peace of mind? Find out today, by calling our friendly team on 1300 783 435 or visit [unitingagewell.org](http://unitingagewell.org)

We appreciate your feedback and welcome any story ideas.

Contact: Communications and Social Media Advisor Caitlin Pearson at [cpearson@unitingagewell.org](mailto:cpearson@unitingagewell.org) or call T: 9133 5018.