

> DoveTale

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News from across Uniting AgeWell communities





➤ Board Chair & CEO message

There is no doubt this has been an incredibly difficult year for all. On 25 January, the first case of COVID-19 was detected in Australia. On 12 March, COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic. And by July, community transmission of the virus in Victoria, and tragically in aged care, was becoming more widespread.

The impact of COVID-19 has been far reaching and challenged each of us in different ways. It has been particularly difficult for those associated with residential aged care; whether as a resident, family member, staff member, volunteer or service provider. It has understandably caused anxiety, concern, distress and frustration. It has also shown us how resilient, adaptive and positive we can all be, which you will see detailed in this edition of DoveTale.

We are immensely grateful for the patience and understanding shown to us by residents, clients and families, as we have implemented the changes and restrictions needed to keep the people in our care and our staff safe. It has certainly been an extreme situation, yet the overwhelming support we have received has been extraordinary.

Faced with the risks and challenges COVID-19 has presented, we could not be more proud of the commitment and loyalty shown by Uniting AgeWell staff. All Uniting AgeWell residential care facilities have so far remained free of COVID-19. It has been a marathon effort to keep our residents, clients and each other safe and well. And while a small number of staff have contracted COVID-19 via community transmission, we are pleased to say they have either recovered or are well on the road to recovery.

We know that other aged care facilities in Victoria and New South Wales have not been as fortunate and our thoughts and prayers go out to the residents, families and staff at those facilities.

There has been significant media coverage and political debate over the outbreaks in residential aged care and whether aged care providers are adequately prepared.

The Uniting AgeWell Board and Executive made a decision very early in the pandemic to invest heavily in our COVID-19 response to ensure optimal infection management and control protocols, staffing, and communications technology to support family connection was in place, investing well over and above the funding allocation received from Government. We have always taken an uncompromising approach to health, safety and wellbeing and we will continue to do whatever is needed to keep everyone safe.

While we firmly believe the precautionary measures and outbreak management plans Uniting AgeWell has in place have been instrumental in our facilities remaining COVID-free to date, we continue to review and strengthen our processes and maintain our vigilant approach.

The feedback we have received from unannounced external audits specifically focussed on COVID-19 preparedness by the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission and the Victorian Aged Care Response Centre Prevention Team, has reassuringly validated our preparations, capacity and approach. The newly established Tasmanian Aged Care Emergency Operations Centre will also conduct audits over the coming weeks.

In Tasmania our residents, clients and staff are already enjoying eased restrictions as life slowly returns to its usual pattern, albeit with some restrictions and added precautions still in place.

We are hopeful that community transmission of COVID-19 will continue to decrease in Victoria at the pace we have seen in recent weeks, and the pathway to recovery for us all will soon be achieved.

We all deserve some peace of mind and the opportunity to once again gather together with family and friends and those we hold dear.

Thank you again for your ongoing trust and support of the Uniting AgeWell family during these challenging times.

Raelene Thompson
Board Chair

Andrew Kinnersly
CEO



» A very human response

David Hamilton, 87, chats to his wife, Marion, through the love window at Uniting AgeWell's Kalkee Community – Nangatta.

Courage comes in all shapes and sizes

It's the reassuring voice of a frontline worker, worried about her own family, as she tends to a client living alone at home. It's in the tired eyes of an activity worker determined to notch up another laugh or two from residents before he finishes his shift.

And it is this collective courage that forms the beating heart of Uniting AgeWell as we hurtle along the pandemic rollercoaster ride, with all its highs and lows.

"Members of the broader community can sometimes see an organisation as a faceless entity," explains Uniting AgeWell Chief Executive Officer Andrew Kinnerly, "but it's made up of people, in our case over 2500 staff, who are all digging deep to rise up to the demands of doing the right thing during a once-in-a-lifetime event, when there are so many things beyond our control."

He's not exaggerating. Wind back the clock to February this year. Much of Victoria had just come out of gruelling heatwaves, shocking air quality and horror bushfires. "We thought we'd never see anything this bad ever again," says Andrew. Then COVID-19 hit.

Since then there have been more twists and turns than on a rollercoaster ride. Across Tasmania and Victoria, there have been a series of lockdowns, flip-flopping between stages two, three and the current stage four restrictions, each with their own

sets of rules around isolation, PPE, visitors to our aged care facilities, and services to home-based clients.

And all this against a backdrop of unrelenting media coverage and political debate over the outbreaks in residential aged care and whether aged care providers are adequately prepared.

"Everything that has happened should have left us reeling, but instead it's made us stronger," Andrew explains. "I am constantly amazed at our people's ability to adapt and meet the challenges ahead."

He cannot speak highly enough of the staff. "They're amazing and wonderful! They love what they do, and it shows. Their kindness and compassion goes above and beyond. It must be soul-destroying to come home from work and hear aged care completely smashed on the nightly news. But the next day they're back at work again, providing love and support with a smile."

How is Uniting AgeWell achieving this?

"By being true to our mission and placing people's quality of life, safety and wellbeing at the centre of everything we do" Andrew says, "as well as reacting early, being innovative and adding flexibility to the mix. That's what's helped us get it right."

In fact, many innovative strategies will remain in place when the pandemic is over.

So, how did it all unfold?

Putting a new lens on 2020 vision

First up, Andrew says acting quickly and decisively in getting the right people to steer the uncharted course through the pandemic was paramount.

“Not long after the first cases were recorded in Australia we formed a special COVID-19 Taskforce, and met daily, often seven days a week, to address the challenges as they presented,” Andrew explains.

“I’m proud of the work the entire Uniting AgeWell family has done, and how responding so early on in the pandemic meant we were well placed to protect our residents, clients and staff.”

Employees returning from overseas were asked to quarantine for two weeks, well prior to Government directions, visits to aged care communities were restricted before this was mandated, and a 30 cubic metre mountain of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was secured for distribution to all residential sites and home care staff.

The organisation’s pandemic plan was implemented with a raft of necessary safety and education protocols around donning and doffing PPE, cleaning, hygiene and social distancing. Screening and monitoring of all staff and essential visitors was

immediately implemented and residents screened daily for COVID-19 symptoms. Many on-site cafes were closed, dining rooms reconfigured and dining hours extended to facilitate social distancing.

Andrew is adamant that our investment in quality, safety and risk management in recent years has been extremely important. “We have allocated resources to these areas during a period of financial distress in the sector – not because it was affordable, but because it was the right thing to do.”

Thankfully, all Uniting AgeWell residential care facilities have so far remained free of COVID-19, despite a small number of individual staff contracting the virus via community transmission. It’s testament to both the protocols in place and people understanding the important role they play in keeping each other safe. And while it has been a marathon effort, Andrew says preparation has clearly paid off, reflected in the calm and efficient way the COVID-19 exposure risk has been handled. He’s in no doubt that clear, frank and frequent communication with staff, residents, clients and families has been pivotal.

A bucket load of kindness

Technology can only go so far, and staff got creative in finding other ways to keep aged care residents happy and in touch with their families.

“There was no magic solution here,” Andrew explains, “but we are an organisation that has bucket loads of kindness and respect, and over the past months there have been so many examples of our staff going above and beyond. I feel for our residents, it is at times like this they need a hug from family most. But I know that our staff do their best to compensate for this.”

He’s not wrong! Lifestyle staff created decorative love windows, where residents chat to family on the other side of the glass via mobile phones or boom speakers.

Then there are human greeting cards, where staff take photos of residents posed with cards saying “hello, I’m fine” which are being posted to social media and emailed to families to reassure them.

Staff at all residential facilities are sending families regular newsletters, crammed with photos of how residents are keeping busy and happy. They also email and phone families at least weekly to keep them in the loop.

And residents are keeping happy, and feeling like they’re making a positive contribution to society too. They recently raised money for the Cancer Council of Australia through a number of Daffodil Day morning teas and events, and they’ve been sewing masks for Stitch in Time, part of the Uniting Church’s national call for volunteers to make reusable fabric face masks for the most vulnerable in our community.



Human greeting card Patricia Heatherich of Noble Park Community.



Mary Gardiner, a resident at Noble Park Community, celebrates her birthday during "iso".

Staying connected

At first the challenges seemed daunting. Corporate staff needed technical support to work from home; aged care residents needed ways to keep in touch with family; and home-based clients also needed ways to connect with friends and relatives as well as access allied health and social support services with AgeWell Centres now closed. The answer was technology. But, with limited stock and the clock ticking, the question was "how?"

"We had always planned a rollout of laptops and smart phones, but it suddenly needed to happen within days," Andrew explains. "We didn't have enough stock, so we had to go on a massive buying spree. And then we had to get in more IT support to teach staff to become more computer-savvy to make the whole thing work."

And it did! One hundred Samsung tablets and 50 smart phones were rolled out across 20 residential homes and for staff to use with clients across both Victoria and Tasmania. Next up, 500 Samsung tablets were made available to home care clients with the greatest need, with staff available to teach these clients how to use them.

Andrew says so many positives have emerged, with many practices to be continued into the future. Staff were upskilled and many residents reporting feeling more connected with family and friends than ever before.

It was also a way to connect with clients geographically spread across sparsely populated areas of Victoria and Tasmania. Using zoom across the board for telehealth is also proving popular, with usage jumping from one in 100 clients to one in 10 since the start of COVID-19.

Corporate staff have found, with technical support, they were able to work efficiently and effectively from home, which augurs well with regard to more flexible working arrangements post COVID-19.

Special thanks must go to the Synod IT team for their efforts to firstly enable remote working for all corporate staff, and secondly to assist in providing connectivity between residents, clients and families. "They have been wonderful!" says Andrew.

Upsizing home support

According to Andrew, being agile and flexible are key to our team of client advisors finding ways to adjust and increase home care services to help clients get through the pandemic.

The number of home care packages being taken up has increased significantly, with many clients choosing to be taken grocery shopping, having pharmacy orders picked up or having meals delivered.

One client used her home care package to buy a computer tablet, and is now zooming with friends and family on a regular basis – as well as having her grocery shopping done for her.

Another has bought a mobility scooter to make it easier for him to get to and from his dialysis appointments, while a third has installed ramps and an electric bed in his unit to make life in isolation a whole lot easier. Uniting AgeWell is also installing smart home alert systems for many clients to give them, and their families, greater peace of mind.



The team at The Cottage in Hobart's AgeWell Centre with the framed, horrendously difficult peacock puzzle they gave to client David Knight to complete.

Bringing hubs to homes

One of the great learnings from the pandemic, says Andrew, is the ability to come up with new ways of doing things when the old way is simply no longer an option.

"And I am incredibly proud of how staff have done this when it comes to our home-based clients," he says.

For starters, with some 80 per cent of clients living alone at home, around 800 welfare calls are made each week to check if they are okay, or if they need anything.

With AgeWell Centres closed in Victoria and only now starting to reopen in Tasmania, leisure activities and health services are being brought to their lounge rooms instead in order to maintain wellness and wellbeing during "iso".

Staff are delivering activity bags crammed with arts and crafts, word games, puzzles and more to clients' homes. Some are taking creativity to new levels by recording their own musical CD and whodunnit plays for inclusion in the bags. "And because the packs are individually tailored to each client's needs, staff are getting to know them a lot better," Andrew explains.

Making plastic fantastic

Then there's the side to aged care that the media doesn't always seem to see – the “bucket load of kindness” work ethic.

Staff often dress up in weird wigs and fun outfits and play the silly goat, simply to inject an extra layer of fun into the day.

And now that they find themselves looking rather confronting dressed from head to toe in plastic PPE, some are using humour and kindness to deflect the situation.

Staff at the Hawthorn Community, keep residents in fits of giggles by referring to their full PPE gear as Prada or Ralph Lauren outfits.

And social worker Sheena Appleyard (featured on the cover) who wears a T-shirt with her photo laminated on it, is rewarded with chuckles every time she enters a room. She says it also helps residents recognise her.

Luckily there are some clients who are comforted by the sight of carers in full PPE. One of them is Beryl, who says “they're dressed from head to toe in plastic to protect me, but I'd recognise them anywhere by the smile in their eyes and the kindness in their voices.”



Reflections on the pandemic journey

“From the outset, the Uniting AgeWell Board and Executive made the decision to invest heavily in our infection management and control protocols, in additional staff and training, and in technology to keep the people in our care safe and connected with family and friends,” says Andrew.

“We have taken an uncompromising approach to resident and client health, safety and wellbeing and have invested well over and above the funding allocation received from Government to ensure this outcome.”

Andrew is also very grateful to the Uniting AgeWell Board for their support of this approach and for also not deferring core business initiatives necessary to meet future needs, such as the expansion of services and building projects.

But Andrew feels, with the benefit of hindsight, the sector should have pushed harder for a more consistent national response to mitigate risk in aged care.

“I was personally disappointed that the national debate during April/May was about aged care visitation, when it clearly should have been about infection control and preparedness across all facilities. That said, I am thankful for Uniting AgeWell's decision to implement risk reduction strategies well in advance of Government directives.”

However, Andrew sounds a note of caution.

“It is very important to understand that while our processes and protocols have helped protect residents, clients and staff to this point, we are only part way through what is shaping up as an ultra-marathon. While there is any level of COVID-19 community transmission, there remains a high level of outbreak risk to all aged care facilities, and as such we all need to remain hyper-vigilant.”

“Our hearts go out to residents, families and staff from the organisations that have experienced significant outbreaks – it is a highly contagious and wicked virus.”

Perhaps the most heart-warming affirmation and something we have all learned afresh, is how much Uniting AgeWell staff are appreciated.

Residents, clients and their families and friends have sent hundreds of messages of thanks over the past six months.

Their heartfelt messages described staff as “selfless angels”, “champions” and “brave heroes.”

They were appreciated by staff – many of whom read them through smiles, laughter and tears.

Even brave heroes occasionally cry. 🕊

A portrait of Rev Clare Brockett, a woman with short grey hair and red-rimmed glasses, smiling. She is wearing a black shirt with white polka dots. The background is dark.

➤ Responding with compassion

Uniting AgeWell Director of Mission, Rev Clare Brockett, says spiritual care is much needed at this time.

Our chaplains are drawing deep to help our residents find comfort and peace amongst the uncertainty and isolation of the pandemic.

“Emotional and spiritual needs are always on the move, never static. And Uniting AgeWell chaplains are noticing this more than ever during the pandemic.”

In one-on-one visits, chaplains hear a longing by residents to be together with their friend from down the corridor, with family and friends from the wider community. They hear how the familiar ways of doing things have been tipped upside down. Large groups no longer gather, church can no longer always be in person. For some, there is a change in how many people can sit at their dining table.

Also expressed is an acceptance, an understanding that isolation is necessary, and an acknowledgement that staff are working really hard to protect and support them. Chaplains note a strength and a

resilience in many residents. Many have faced hardship in their early years, with families facing unemployment, illness, and shortages of food and necessities.

The acceptance chaplains see is about a cycle of life, of what really matters when a crisis hits.

Drawing on spiritual practices

Drawing on their own spiritual practices has been an important part of chaplains being able to show up day after day, offering authentic, respectful spiritual care based on individual needs for each resident. Attending to their own emotional needs for connection, for quiet space, for spiritual nourishment have been crucial self-care.

Changes in spiritual care during the pandemic

One-on-one visiting has become a priority. While these visits have always been in place, there is less focus on group gatherings, including church, and reflective discussion groups. It is even more important to understand individual needs at this time. Chaplains are appreciating worship resources found on the Uniting Church Synod of Vic/Tas website. Recordings and live streams of worship,

have been played through televisions in individual rooms, or in shared space that can keep social distancing. Podcasts and laminated prayers and readings are also used.

Chaplains have gathered in a hallway between two resident rooms to share readings, prayers and reflections. Residents are connected to each other, sometimes through hearing their next door neighbour's voice, or through technology.

Trust and reassurance need to be established in more concrete ways. For example, residents are not always sure who is behind a mask or face shield. Smiles are missed. Pictures of chaplains have been used, and they always take time to re-introduce themselves before carrying on a conversation.

“Chaplains are a major source of support for Uniting AgeWell staff. They have created quiet reflective spaces, teaching moments about spirituality, and offered cards, emails, phone calls and fridge magnets of hope.”

There is also a need to address residents' fears and mistrust of 'who belongs' inside the home. For example, residents have trusted staff who 'kept the virus out,' and are uncertain of others, even family, entering the home.

What we have learned

Understanding disconnection and the impact this has on our lives, is a central learning from this pandemic.

While situations are complex, some of the needs are simple. Chaplains know that the spiritual practice of seeking meaning, understanding who we are and how we belong in the world, is central to holistic wellbeing.

Taking notice of emotional and spiritual needs and being accompanied to explore them, lets people examine their values, beliefs, sense of place and identity. It lets people connect to their lives, to the stories of their spiritual and religious traditions, to the stories of family and community.

Ultimately, being in the sacred presence of another who listens with depth and allows people to move at their own pace, and asking their own questions, is what contributes to transformation. 🕊



Chaplain Peter Beale – before it was necessary to wear masks – conducts a church service with residents of the Uniting AgeWell Box Hill Community.



The new Hawthorn Community (pictured at top) and Preston Community residential care facilities.

➤ Eyes on the future

It's been a significant period of transformation for Uniting AgeWell over the past 18 months, with two new residential care facilities opening up in Melbourne, as well as expansions and revamps completed or underway at two sites in Tasmania.

We're investing in the current and future needs of older Australians and these developments, totalling \$116 million, represent our absolute commitment to supporting older Australians in both metropolitan and regional locations, says Chief Executive Officer Andrew Kinnersly.

These state-of-the-art developments include:

In Victoria:

- the \$66.89 million Hawthorn redevelopment comprising a 49-apartment retirement living complex (Manningtree Hawthorn) and a 120-bed residential care community opened in February and June respectively this year;
- the \$28.19 million 104-bed Preston Community, which opened in November 2019.

In Tasmania:

- the \$10 million Latrobe Community, Strathdevon 30-bed wing and renovation which opened in May 2019;

- the \$10.9 million revamp and new wing at Newnham Community, Aldersgate Village currently underway, which will deliver an additional 30 beds and a community centre, which is slated to open early next year.

Add to this the planned expansion of a further four sites – three in Tasmania and one in Victoria – following the awarding of additional bed-licences in the last ACAR round, and Uniting AgeWell's intent is clear.

And on 1 October this year, Uniting AgeWell will take over the \$2.2 million contract for the delivery of home care services from the Brimbank City Council and provide home care packages and in-home support services to around 900 clients. For the past year Uniting AgeWell has been providing in-home support services in Hobsons Bay and Maribyrnong on behalf of each council.

"Operationalising these developments has been a significant achievement, given that much of it has taken place during the pandemic, which has been the most challenging time in our organisation's history," Andrew adds. "It shows we're not deferring core business initiatives necessary for future expansion while also coping with the challenges of the here and now."

Working around the pandemic

Uniting AgeWell Admissions Manager Sharon D’Rozario says the pandemic has made choosing residential care an even more of a challenging decision for individuals and families, but she believes things will change with the lifting of Stage 4 and easing of visiting restrictions.

“We are now hearing of a rising tide of carer stress among families, who are looking after older relatives during the pandemic as well as home-schooling kids and working from home.”

“We are supporting a number of families as they start to consider making the move as restrictions ease.”

She says we are beginning to see a slight increase in the number of inquiries from families with loved ones in other residential care facilities outside of the Uniting AgeWell fold.

The Preston Community open day in November last year was well attended, with around 400 people coming through. Thirty residents from the now-closed Carnsworth Community in Kew transferred over to Preston in that same month and resident admissions steadily increased until the pandemic hit earlier this year. Unfortunately, the planned opening of the Hawthorn Community in March had to be cancelled due to the pandemic, with the facility closed until June and staff temporarily relocated to other sites.

“The Hawthorn facility is beautiful, and since opening we have admitted 14 residents. It’s pretty special being in a brand new building,” Sharon says.

What the new sites offer

Project manager Ian Blair says the future of aged care is in providing tailored care and support to older people where they had choice, control and importantly, peace of mind.

He says this is reflected in Uniting AgeWell’s model of care which not only provides flexibility to meet individual resident preferences, but also enables them to contribute to day to day household activities if they want to.

The fresh and contemporary sites offer spacious rooms with ensuites and flat screen TVs, generous,

light-filled community spaces, themed sitting areas, sensory gardens and expansive views across Melbourne.

Both sites offer an onsite chaplain, hairdresser, al fresco dining areas, gourmet food cooked by qualified chefs, Registered Nurses on duty around the clock and allied health services including podiatry, physiotherapy, dietician, speech therapist and more.

Tasmanian sites

Meanwhile the new 30-bed residential wing at Newnham Community, Aldersgate Village in Tasmania’s north is slated to open towards the beginning of next year.

Works include a new laundry, kitchen, hair salon, offices and a community centre for the nearby independent living unit residents, along with a sensory garden and significant facelifts for all the outdoor areas.

Residential Services Manager North, Suezanne Horder, says there is significant demand for quality residential aged care in the area, and the additional capacity and upgrade will go a long way to addressing this.

The redeveloped Latrobe Community Strathdevon, in north west Tasmania, which was officially opened in August last year by the Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians Senator Richard Colbeck, has a new community café, chapel, gym, hair salon, a state-of-the-art cook fresh kitchen, multipurpose room with cinema-like capabilities and activity areas for residents to spend time with family and friends. The new wing is also designed to meet the needs of the local indigenous community.

Andrew Kinnersly says the upgrades and extensions to both Tasmanian facilities mean Uniting AgeWell can continue to support more people across the less-populated north and north-west regions to remain in their local community and maintain social connections with the important people in their lives.

“Enabling people to live their best lives means ensuring they are able to live close to friends and family,” Andrew says. “That’s what we strive to achieve.” 🕊



Check out our virtual tour of the brand new Hawthorn Community at www.unitingagewell.org/our-services/residential-care/hawthorn-community

› Treating pain more effectively

Uniting AgeWell is implementing new and better ways to manage pain – from trials to help residents in aged care facilities who are unable to verbalise their pain, to introducing safer more streamlined ways to enable people to do the things they love and to be more comfortable.

According to Uniting Age Well’s Clinical Systems Advisor Janine Carter, controlling pain is essential for quality of life, but it’s not as simple as it seems.

There’s building up strength to increase wellness levels, applying other pain relief like physio or heat packs and using cues to recognise pain in clients who may not be able to verbalise their feelings.

Creating efficiency to increase care time

Enter the AlayaCare Residential (formerly known as Procura) and Medi-Map projects, which are running concurrently.

They streamline processes, get rid of the paper trail to put added safety measures in place and free up nurses to do what they do best – looking after clients. And obviously this increases safety for the resident as there are fewer risks associated with data being rekeyed incorrectly or missed.

AlayaCare Residential is an electronic medical record system that is user-friendly and intuitive, paperless, and supports personal goal-directed care plans for each client.

Janine says it’s running in 14 of Uniting AgeWell’s 20 aged care residential facilities with the rollout to the remaining sites to be scheduled when the time is right amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Medi-Map is integrated with AlayaCare Residential which provides an electronic medication management solution.

Using Medi-Map, a doctor visits the resident either in person or via teleconference, writes an electronic



Strath-Haven Community resident Pam plays carpet bowls for the first time.

script which then automatically uploads to the pharmacy to be dispensed. All the resident’s medical details are included – including drug allergies. This gets rid of faxing scripts and chasing up any paper trails.

Because Medi-Map affords a medical overview of the resident, it facilitates a holistic approach to treatment. Janine says pain medication is administered both regularly and on demand, but pain can also be alleviated through other measures such as heat packs, massages and physiotherapy.

Behaviour and pain charting are also recorded on AlayaCare Residential and the end goal is to link this information with the medication chart to look at how a client’s behaviour is influenced by pain, and how effective pain medication is.

“With all the details in one place, it allows us to put the pieces of the puzzle together, to get a good overall picture of the client’s pain and the care needed to manage or prevent it,” says Janine.

Listening to those who are unable to communicate

Recent research done in an Australian hospital shows that those with dementia are often unable to communicate their pain levels when it comes to receiving pain relief medication.

And Kerry Whitlock, Uniting AgeWell's Palliative Care Specialist, says pain is under-recognised and under-managed in people with dementia.

“Our goal is comfort and increased quality of life, and our residents can't always tell us how they feel. So, we need to look at how they interact and see what signs they show to find answers.”

And this goal underpinned two successful trials using the pain measuring tools of PACSLAC-II and Paincheck, conducted at Uniting AgeWell Manor Lakes Community.

As a result, PACSLAC-II has been rolled out in a number of Uniting AgeWell's residential aged care facilities with overwhelmingly positive feedback and with more sites to follow.

So how do these pain measuring tools work?

Paincheck uses an app which includes taking photos of the person's face to check their expressions, voice, movement, behaviour, activity and their body against a checklist. For example, was the person grimacing, were they relaxed or was their behaviour out of the ordinary? Checks are done by a nurse every three hours over a 72-hour period, with pain scored as mild, moderate or severe. The app then uploads the data to AlayaCare Residential to work out therapy and medication with the aim of reducing the person's pain score.

The option Kerry prefers is PACSLAC-II (Pain Assessment Checklist for Seniors with a Limited Ability to Communicate) which entails in-depth observational checks three times a day over three days to monitor expressions, voice, movement and behaviour. Pain is scored against a checklist, with unique individual scores.

Kerry says PACSLAC-II is also a brilliant educative tool with those conducting it soon becoming expert at recognising and interpreting body language.



Kalkee Nangatta Nurse Rebecca Patton using Medi-Map.

PACSLAC-II was piloted in Uniting AgeWell's Strath-Haven Community in Bendigo and is now an alternative pain assessment tool to the Abbey Pain scale used across Uniting AgeWell's residential facilities.

And according to staff, the system is working well and making a massive difference to people's lives. 🕊



➤ Help for those with muscle mass loss



Pam Keating was a participant in the study.

The loss of muscle mass and strength in ageing, known as sarcopenia, can be prevented and treated with exercise, particularly resistance training, as well as by eating adequate levels of protein.

These are some of the main findings of the “Your Muscles Matter Study” which put sarcopenia under the spotlight and looked at how it impacts on health, wellbeing and quality of life.

The study, conducted by Victoria University researchers and supported by Uniting AgeWell, investigated the incidence of sarcopenia along with the impact of diet and exercise on the disease’s progress.

With muscle wastage at the core of many age-related health concerns, finding how best to combat and treat this condition – which affects mobility, increases the risk of falls and fractures and often affects independence – is particularly important.

Recruitment for the study was done in the first half of 2019, with 100 participants signing up for the research from Forest Hill, Hawthorn, Noble Park and Oakleigh AgeWell Centres.

At the first round of testing, 80 participants completed all the required assessments and body density scans looking at their bone and muscle health.

At the six-month half-way mark, this number was slightly lower with 66 participants who had completed scans and assessments.

Participants were asked to continue to work through their individual exercise programs under the supervision of Uniting AgeWell exercise

physiologists and physiotherapists. Researchers also evaluated participants’ food intake, quality of life, sarcopenia risk and physical ability including strength, balance and other functions.

Uniting AgeWell Senior Manager Research and Innovation, Nina Bowes, says the study findings will be used to inform guidelines and programs to help people avoid and beat sarcopenia.

“Sarcopenia was formally recognised as a disease in the US in 2016, and was only recognised in Australia in July 2019 with Uniting AgeWell and Victoria University leading the charge for localised understanding of the condition,” Nina says.

Findings of the Your Muscles Matter Study:

- Sarcopenia can be prevented and treated with exercise, particularly resistance exercise;
- Conventional and HUR (Helsinki University Research) gyms have similar effects on sarcopenia;
- Exercising only once a week is insufficient to provide significant protection above routine activities of daily living;
- Gym attendance should be additional to usual daily activity, not a substitute;
- Improving nutrition in older adults and ensuring sufficient protein is eaten, aids muscle mass; and
- Maintenance of adequate nutrition and non-supervised physical activity may enhance the benefits of supervised training.

The detailed study findings will be released by Victoria University. 



> We see you #thanks for caring

By August, as the world was almost six months into responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, Aged Care Employee Day took on greater poignancy, as people paused to say #thanksforcaring.

Aged Care Employee Day is an official day to thank, honour, recognise and celebrate the hundreds of thousands of people who provide services to people as they age.

As one of Australia's largest employers in the aged care sector, it was important that after months of resolutely stepping forward with absolute focus on keeping residents, clients and each other safe and well, our staff felt recognised and appreciated. Not just as colleagues, but by the wider Uniting AgeWell family – residents, clients, families and communities – who we invited to say a very personal thank you.

So, on Aged Care Employee Day on 8 August, Uniting AgeWell went digital to put the spotlight on the wonderful work our staff do every day. Uniting AgeWell invited people to send their messages of

“It’s hard to put in words just how thankful I am to know that our loved ones are cared for.”

“Thank you to everyone at Uniting AgeWell for looking after our loved ones and showing how much you care for them especially at this sad moment in time.”

thanks and support via special digital ads in the Herald Sun, The Age, Geelong Advertiser, Hobart Mercury, Bairnsdale Advertiser, Sunraysia Daily, The Advocate, The Examiner and The Bendigo Advertiser and social media platforms Facebook and LinkedIn.

And the response was overwhelming, generous, kind, and so appreciated.

Staff were invited to share selfies of themselves in their workplace to create a “come as you are” capture of this unique moment in time. The submitted images were brought together to create a time-capsule collage of our diverse and dedicated workforce.

Our teams are carers, nurses, cooks, cleaners and chaplains. They work in lifestyle, allied health, administration, maintenance and corporate services. They work in our residences, in people’s homes, and remotely, creating a tightly woven network of professional care and support. And they share a passion for making a difference in people’s lives. 🐦

“It is a difficult and unprecedented time for all of us. We applaud you and the wonderful caring job you are doing. You are heroes.”



Read more, or add your own thanks here: www.unitingagewell.org/thanks

» The volunteer who expected nothing and gave everything

Jann Brearley, Volunteer Manager of Uniting AgeWell Kalkee Op Shop in Geelong, is being remembered as a powerhouse with a big heart and smile, who dedicated her life to helping others.

The 73-year-old grandmother died unexpectedly on 31 August after being at the helm of the Kalkee Korner Shoppe since 2000 – first at the corner of Roslyn Rd and Francis Street and then at its current premises at 93 Francis Street, Belmont.

The much-loved Op Shop is one of Geelong's little gems that locals are fiercely loyal to and protective about.

And none more so than those at Uniting AgeWell's Kalkee Nangatta and Murray Communities, as well as home-based clients, who have benefitted from Jann's ongoing generosity and kindness for years.

Uniting AgeWell Residential Services Manager Louise Harvey paid tribute to Jann's dedication and extended her condolences to her family, on behalf of everyone at the organisation.

“Volunteers are the lifeblood of Uniting AgeWell, and Jann was a shining example of our many unsung heroes who dedicate their lives to helping others.”

“We are grateful to her for her years of loyalty and hard work.”

Jann's energy and drive resulted in the Op Shop being able to provide funding to help install air conditioning to Uniting AgeWell's independent living units at Kalkee and to buy a minibus to facilitate outings for residents.

Jann was also the force behind funding animal farm days for our Kalkee Nangatta and Murray Communities to enjoy.

She is remembered for her compassion and help for those in need. As the kind person who often gave struggling young families things they simply could not afford.



Glenda Harvey, Care Manager at Uniting AgeWell Nangatta Community, says Jann was a person who would never say no to any request for help.

“If we needed something, she would find it for us. This varied between dolls for therapy or two wings at Nangatta being set up with beautiful new furniture funded by the Op Shop,” Glenda says.

“I remember Jann searching a whole shed for a much-loved item thrown out in error, and yes she found it, bless her tenacity and huge heart.”

Jann was a role model, and also took on the supervision and guidance of over 15 volunteers at the shop. They became her extended family.

Volunteer John M says Jann had a ready sense of humour and an infectious laugh.

“We will miss her, but her legacy lives on.” 🕊



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

We appreciate your feedback and welcome any story ideas.

Contact: Communications Specialist Cathy Withiel at cwithiel@unitingagewell.org or call T: 0419 525 905



Uniting AgeWell

Uniting AgeWell is an organisation of the Uniting Church in Australia

Front Cover:

Uniting AgeWell social worker Sheena Appleyard, pictured with Strathdon Community resident Margaret, wears her face on her chest and her heart on her sleeve.