

➤ DoveTale

AUTUMN, 2019



News from across Uniting AgeWell communities





➤ CEO's message

Uniting AgeWell is committed to ensuring older people receive the high quality care they rightly deserve. And our interest stretches beyond our own clients, to older people across the country.

On 1 January, I was appointed Chair of the Uniting Care Australia Aged Care Network, taking over from Richard Hearn, CEO of Resthaven in South Australia. The position presents a great opportunity to network with other Uniting Church aged care organisations across the country.

My new role will provide more opportunities for me to meet with all sides of government and advocate for greater services for older Australians. I hope to influence aged care funding and policy to support all older people to live well with choice and peace of mind.

When advocating for older people we will draw on what our clients tell us is important to them and what our staff experience in delivering care. We recently completed our annual YES survey with our residential and community clients. I want to thank everyone who participated in the survey – the valuable feedback you provided about your experiences, our facilities and services will help shape our future service delivery and advocacy efforts.

Understanding what is important to our clients is of the utmost importance to us and it's information we use every day. When tailoring our leisure and lifestyle programs, managing home care packages or granting our Wishing Well nominations, we consult our clients about the activities and connections that are important for their individual health and wellbeing.

In this edition you can learn about how lifestyle programs across our residences are connecting people with activities that bring them joy, and enabling them to learn new skills or try new things.

Through the Wishing Well program, we've been able to reconnect Strathdon resident and keen 10-pin bowler Stella Vermeulen to her lifelong hobby. We recently arranged for Stella and 14 members of her family to go bowling to fulfil her wish.

We are also fortunate to be able to support 100-year-old Olwen Henry, from Kerang, to continue her weekly sewing class and charity projects, and purchase materials for her to create blankets for hospital patients.

Aged care services can and should look very different from one person to the next, and I am proud we are able to deliver that tailored care to people, whether they are living at home or in our residences. Looking ahead, we hope to further improve our capacity to tailor care to the needs and interests of each and every person.

Andrew Kinnersly
CEO

› Clients happy with Uniting AgeWell's services

More than 90 per cent of Uniting AgeWell's residential and community clients are happy with the care and services they receive, the latest Your Experience Survey (YES) suggests.

Conducted in late 2018, the annual YES survey asks residential and community clients to evaluate Uniting AgeWell regarding attitudes, rights and responsibilities, safety, individuality, choice, and information sharing.

Quality Manager Ruth Baxter said understanding customer experiences and needs was critical to continuously improving Uniting AgeWell's services.

"The survey recognises that a customer's perception of their service is important information, enabling us to better understand how we are performing and to drive service quality improvement," she said.

The 2018 YES survey was offered to all Uniting AgeWell community and residential clients and more than 1,300 people took part – 631 from residential and 693 from community.

In previous years, YES surveys have led to a number of enhancements, including the introduction of feedback posters across all residences, 'You said, we did' posters about local site issues, increased communication with community clients, including transparent funding and budget information, and financial education sessions for families and clients.



The results of the 2018 Yes Survey will be published at a site level and areas for improvement followed up locally. Ruth said further enhancements would be considered following a thorough assessment of the results. 🐾

2018 YES Survey responses

Overall care and services experience

92 per cent of residential and 95 per cent of community clients reported good to excellent experiences.

Individuality

85 per cent of residential and 82 per cent of community clients felt the care and service provided acknowledged individuality.

Choice

83 per cent of residential and 93 per cent of community clients said they were provided choices.

Attitudes, rights and responsibilities

91 per cent of residential and 95 per cent of community clients said staff attitudes in supporting people to maintain their rights and responsibilities was evident.

Information sharing

80 per cent of residential and 91 per cent of community clients said information sharing was good to excellent.

Safety

90 per cent of residential and 94 per cent of community clients felt safe when receiving care and services.

Ease of making a complaint/giving feedback

83 per cent of residential and 80 per cent of community clients felt the process of making a complaint or giving feedback was good to excellent.



› Royal Commission hopes

I would like to take the opportunity to reflect on the year to come as we journey together through the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.

In my past professional life I spent a considerable period of time as an Australian Government regulator of the aged care sector. During this period, I saw the best in people and sometimes the worst.

I had the responsibility of imposing sanctions on providers who did not fulfil their obligations to their residents, care recipients, families and the community. Through this process, I came to understand that it is seldom one person or one set of circumstances that leads to substandard care delivery.

Now I am part of this sector and anticipate all aged care providers will engage with and be subject to the scrutiny of the Commission. I understand we will hear some sad and unacceptable stories. Some of these stories may be about Uniting AgeWell.

Whilst we strive for the highest level of care and services, we know things can go wrong. If that happens, we try to fix the issue and we always try to learn. Whilst we cannot change past events, we can learn from them.

This is why Uniting AgeWell is committed to a culture of continuous improvement. We strive to learn from what works and what sometimes sadly may not work. We strive to always be better, to provide a wonderful environment for everyone who uses our services. We always plan for the best and put systems and practices in place to enable this to happen.

As Board Chair, I can assure you we are absolutely committed to a strong focus on quality and safety. In our endeavours to ensure governance of this

organisation is of the highest standard, we constantly re-evaluate our role, how we interact with the executive of the organisation and how we listen to our residents and clients.

Through the Commission process, we will have to be prepared to confront, as a provider, as a sector and as a community, the realities of our current system (both its strengths and weaknesses) and support the remedies proposed to improve the system.

As we go through the Commission process, I hope that:

- › The Commission produces recommendations the community understands and supports.
- › The recommendations go to the heart of the system: recognising funding requirements, workforce challenges, enabling everyone to access services they require in a timely and respectful manner.
- › Sad and awful stories we may hear lead to some resolution for those who bravely tell their story.
- › As a sector, we take the opportunity to learn from what has or does work and what does not.
- › We create a culture that enables us all to be excited for the future – that encourages people to work in our vital sector.

Finally, I hope Australians look forward to being proud of the aged care system it funds and supports.

Raelene Thompson
Board Chair

› Developments taking shape

Uniting AgeWell will accommodate more than 330 additional residents in aged care and independent living once several projects in Melbourne and Tasmania are complete.

Construction of Hawthorn's 120-bed aged care residence and adjacent 49-apartment retirement living complex – Manningtree Hawthorn – along with Preston's 104-bed aged care residence, is on track for completion by the end of the year.

General Manager Infrastructure Glenn Cottee said the main structure of each building was complete and the roofs were installed.

"Most of the internal walls at the aged care residences have been plastered and painted," he said. "Now we're working through the carpentry, cabinets and finishings."

General Manager Victoria, Vicky Jacques – who toured the construction sites recently with Uniting AgeWell's Board and executive – said she was most interested to see how the sites would service future residents.

"Across each of the sites, there are beautiful communal areas, fabulous spaces for residents and families to gather with lots of beautiful light coming through."

Both Preston and Hawthorn aged care residences have been designed to be dementia-friendly. The outdoor areas will have sensory gardens with specially chosen plants. Inside, the sitting nooks will each be themed so residents can go on a journey and there will be activities for them to do in those spaces.

At Hawthorn, large rooms will have a chair that pulls out into a single bed for family members to sleep in when necessary. Four large rooms at Preston will have a bed-sit and kitchenette. Those rooms will each have a double-seater couch that pulls out to a bed.

Manningtree will house a cinema, purpose-designed wine appreciation room and environmentally sustainable options like charging points for electric cars, along with contemporary, spacious apartments.



Manningtree Hawthorn



Preston Community

A \$10m renovation and 30-bed extension of Latrobe Community, Strathdevon is on track for completion by March, with new residents being welcomed in April.

The project will create a modern and vibrant village for the residents, using environmentally sustainable design principles.

Already complete is a new laundry, state-of-the-art 'cook fresh' kitchen, community café, chapel, multipurpose room with cinema-like capabilities, gym, hair salon and resident activity areas. The new residential wing and garden space will include several rooms designed to meet the needs of the indigenous community, following consultation with indigenous groups.

In 2019, construction is due to commence on a new 30-bed residential wing at Newnham Community, Aldersgate Village in Tasmania's north. Works will also include a new laundry, kitchen, hairdresser, offices and a community centre for the nearby independent living residents, along with a dementia garden and significant facelifts for all of the outdoor areas. 🐦

Latrobe Community, Strathdevon, will open the doors to its new wing and renovated areas at a community Open Day on Saturday, 4 May. There will be tours of the site, activities and information about accessing aged care. For details, or to organise a personal tour, contact T: 6426 2844.

Stella still gets the pins down

Strathdon Community resident Stella Vermeulen recently proved she still has “the gift”.

The former competitive 10-pin bowler recently took 14 of her nearest and dearest bowling and smashed the competition.

Stella was a founding member of Zone Bowling in Forest Hill and spent several years competing with her team, the ‘Midday Movers’.

“About 10 years ago they were building the Forest Hill bowling alley and were trying to get people to come along,” she said.

“Five of us formed the team and we would play every Monday just for the fun.”

With her own shoes and bowling ball, Stella certainly looked the part. However, her large collection of trophies suggests she was also a hot competitor.

After a hip replacement, Stella was unsure whether she would be able to bowl but she really wanted to give it a go. In December, the 88-year-old was granted her wish to bowl with her family at Strike Bowling in Glen Waverley thanks to the Uniting AgeWell Wishing Well program.

“Nearly all my grandchildren were there – 11 out of 14 – and a couple came down from Shepparton,” Stella said.

“We’ve never done anything like it before and it was a wonderful day; it really was.”

Stella surprised herself with her skills, not only winning the game but getting a strike. She really is a force to be reckoned with.

“I was more than happy because I didn’t think I could do it,” she said.

Stella’s grand-daughter Shenae said it was a “lovely” occasion for the whole family.

“I couldn’t recommend Strike Bowling more highly – they were so lovely and accommodating,” she said.

“I want to thank Uniting AgeWell from the very bottom of my heart for making this happen for Nanna. You went above and beyond.”



Stella’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.

More than 100 wishes have been granted since the program began four years ago. The many people who have realised their dreams include Keith, who flew in a Tiger Moth; Brian, who travelled on the Spirit of Tasmania; and Helen, who went to the WWE Super Show-Down. 🐦

› Turning food waste into a resource

Uniting AgeWell's largest aged care residence is diverting about 50kg of food waste from landfill every day.

Strathdon Community at Forest Hill installed an EcoGuardian Gaia Recycle machine in mid-October 2018. The biodigester transforms food waste into garden fertiliser, reducing the amount of organic waste that ends up in landfill and creating a product the residence can use or sell.

Hotel Services Coordinator Ray Hiskins said the staff at the residence immediately embraced the machine.

"All the liquid food – fruit and vegetable trimmings, lettuce leaves or little bits of food left over from the residents' plates – used to go to landfill but now it goes into the biodigester," he said.

"We have buckets at each of our kitchenettes and the hotel services staff bring them down to the biodigester each afternoon."

The machine heats the food waste, shreds it and activates a fast fermentation and dehydration process. Over nine hours, it turns the waste into a natural, nutrient-rich, odourless, coffee grain-like fertiliser and reduces the volume of the food waste by 85-90 per cent.

Diverting food waste from landfill significantly reduces Strathdon Community's greenhouse gas emissions and leachate – liquid runoff that pollutes waterways – along with reducing the cost of waste removal and emissions from transporting waste to landfill.



The introduction of the biodigester is an important step in Uniting AgeWell's efforts to become more environmentally sustainable. Diverting just two tonnes of food waste from landfill causes the same reduction in greenhouse gas emissions as taking a car off the road for a year.

Strathdon Community's gardener has been using the fertiliser, which is expected to have similar results to Blood and Bone, on the flowerbeds across the residence. 🌿



Anyone interested in purchasing the fertiliser is invited to call Strathdon Community on T: 9845 3111.

› Celebrating the LGBTI community

Uniting AgeWell had its most successful year at the annual Midsumma Carnival in Melbourne, with hundreds of revellers seeking information about the organisation's inclusive aged care services.

It was the third year Uniting AgeWell had a stand at the event in January. Carnival-goers were treated to free two-minute massages by Uniting AgeWell's allied health partners, Transform Physio.

Almost 250 people completed a survey about LGBTI-inclusion in aged care. The survey results will assist Uniting AgeWell to further enhance its LGBTI-inclusive practices in residential and community services. 🌈



➤ In brief

Your Muscles Matter study

Uniting AgeWell is collaborating with Victoria University on the Your Muscles Matter research project that aims to identify and treat sarcopenia – age-related loss of muscle mass and strength – through exercise training. The study will investigate sarcopenia risk by assessing physical fitness, quality of life, body composition, muscle and bone health of clients undergoing strength training at Uniting AgeWell’s Forest Hill, Oakleigh, Noble Park and Hawthorn AgeWell Centres. **To express interest in participating in this study, speak to your Client Advisor or call T: 1300 783 435.**

Transitional community care boost

Tasmanian Health Services has extended its Transition Care Program (TCP) – Community Packages contract with Uniting AgeWell by another two years. Through the agreement, Uniting AgeWell delivers short-term programs to support older people in North West Tasmania to regain confidence and independence after a hospital stay. The contract has been extended until 31 January, 2021.

Uniting AgeWell teams up with MRC

Uniting AgeWell has teamed up with Melbourne Recital Centre (MRC) to celebrate the music powerhouse’s 10th anniversary this year. The MRC is celebrating its milestone by launching the International Chamber Ensemble inaugural series and Uniting AgeWell will be its official sponsor as well as its Aged Care Partner. As part of the sponsorship, MRC will perform a pop-up concert at a Uniting AgeWell site in Melbourne and the organisation will be promoted on screens in the MRC foyer and on its honour board for 12 months.

How are you tracking?

The Australian Government has launched a new website to provide people aged 45 and older with a clear picture of how they are tracking and how to prepare for the future. Life Checks, launched in January, asks users questions about four key areas that research has shown are integral to our wellbeing: health, work, finance and social life. The website then provides users with a free advice plan, giving suggestions on making positive steps towards better health and greater security. **For more information or to do a Life Check of your own, visit lifechecks.gov.au**

➤ Reminiscence radio



Residents at Strath-Haven Community in Bendigo are being transported back to their younger years through the broadcast of a unique nostalgia radio station.

Silver Memories – a special 24-hour radio service based on reminiscence therapy principles – was installed at the residence in December thanks to a grant from the Mazda Foundation.

The station plays calming 1940s-1970s music through television sets across the residence while transmitting still images of performers, movie stars, and evocative images from that era.

Research has found listening to Silver Memories for 12 months as part of regular activities can significantly improve the quality of life of aged care residents.

Resident Jean Fox says the music ‘takes her back to when she was young’, while fellow resident Helen Hollis says listening to Silver Memories in the morning is “soothing”.

“The pictures are lovely, the music is beautiful and it’s nicer than watching television.”

Residential Services Manager Marlene Connaughton said many residents enjoyed listening to Silver Memories in their own rooms, and it was played in communal areas.

The station encourages engagement from residents by taking song requests, doing ‘cheerios’ and birthday calls, broadcasting regular sing-a-long sessions and sharing favourite hymns on Sundays. 🐦

› Marking a decade on the rise

Paul Heather vividly remembers watching the Queenborough Rise Community emerge from the hills of Sandy Bay 10 years ago.

“My wife and I first came across Queenborough Rise when it was being built and we were able to secure our independent living unit off the plan,” he said.

“We first moved into a unit at the top of the hill. We saw the aged care facility and bottom units being built.

“When they were complete, we transferred down to our unit at the bottom of the hill.”

Over the years many people have transitioned from the independent living units into residential care or passed away, but some things have remained the same. Paul says there has always been a great sense of community at Queenborough Rise.

“We all know each other and it’s like an extended family.”

More than 100 residents, staff, families and friends of that “extended family” got together in October 2018 to celebrate Queenborough Rise’s 10th anniversary, coinciding with Uniting AgeWell’s annual Celebration of Ageing Well.

Residential Services Manager Kim Gabriel said the architects who designed the original building – Karen Davis and Peter Cripps – were guests of honour at the event.

“Karen very kindly did a presentation and provided photos of the construction,” she said.

Karen said the pair designed the building to be “modern, spacious and light, but still feel small scale and welcoming”. The aim was to create a lovely environment where everyone would enjoy living and people from all walks of life could visit.

With her father-in-law now living at Queenborough Rise, Karen said it was “wonderful” to see her vision a reality, 10 years on.

Uniting AgeWell also acknowledged 13 residents, including Paul, who had lived at the Queenborough Rise independent living units or aged care residence since it first opened. 🐦



› A century of giving

After decades of tireless community work, Kerang’s Olwen Henry could be forgiven for putting herself first. However, that’s just not in her nature.

At 100 years old, Olwen dedicates her “spare time” to knitting blankets for patients undergoing cancer treatments at the local hospital, along with aged care residents.

“I knit all the squares and I hand them on to another woman who crochets them into blankets, then distributes them,” she said.

“It gives me something to do and brings comfort to somebody else.”

Uniting AgeWell is fortunate to be able to support Olwen to live independently in her own home and continue taking part in her hobbies through a tailored home care package.

“We support Olwen with transport to her weekly sewing classes and purchase materials for her projects through her package,” said Loddon Mallee North Home Care Services Client Advisor Michelle Whitelaw.

Olwen also receives meals, attends exercise classes, goes on monthly social trips to a café and garden club, and has funding assistance for her private gardener who has installed sprinkler systems to prevent falls while watering.

“Uniting AgeWell has done everything for me,” she said. “They’ve been terrific. I’ve thoroughly enjoyed everything they’ve done.” 🐦



If you would like to discuss tailoring a home care package to suit your needs, or want to talk about other support options, call Uniting AgeWell on T: 1300 783 435.



› Lifestyle programs unearth talents

Top-quality leather goods – including handbags, wallets, book covers, keyrings, coasters and teddy bear clothes – are being produced by a creative bunch of seniors in Melbourne’s west.

The creators are residents from Manor Lakes Community taking part in a weekly leather craft class. Class facilitator Aram Omara brings in material each week and guides the residents to hand stitch their own products.

“The residents use the handbags and wallets they make, have their room keys on their key chains and often give the wares as gifts to each other or their family members,” said Lifestyle Assistant Angela Shegog.

“They look so professional and everyone – staff, residents and family members – is proud to see the handmade goods being used.”

Uniting AgeWell is always looking at innovative ways to enhance the health and wellbeing of residents through its leisure and lifestyle programs. This is in keeping with the organisation’s key strategic priority to ensure the quality of life and experience of customers is at the heart of everything it does.

The organisation’s Lifestyle Manager Sharon Levey said a good quality residential aged care lifestyle program provided meaningful and stimulating opportunities for personal enjoyment, social interaction, community engagement and education.

“We know older people have the desire to keep learning and they have so much to contribute.”

“Uniting AgeWell’s diverse lifestyle program will enable people to try new things, make new connections and expand their knowledge base or connect with things they used to do before moving to aged care.”

At Noble Park Community a computer education program, which can be delivered in a one-on-one setting, is teaching residents how to use internet search engines, play games and send emails. The ‘meal for eight’ program at Sorell Community, Ningana supports residents to connect with peers by planning the menu, shopping for ingredients and cooking a meal on-site for seven other dinner guests.

Sharon said many activities were instigated or led by residents, which helped them feel valued, supported and in control, with activities reflecting the diversity of experiences, backgrounds and interests of the residents.

“We want to ensure residents are more involved in planning forums about programs, entertainers, outings and ensuring they have a greater voice about what happens in their home,” she said. 



➤ One for the history books

A group of residents from Kingsville Community had the experience of a lifetime, after stopping by Flemington Racecourse on a regular bus outing.

Days before the Melbourne Cup, in October 2018, Lifestyle Coordinator Michael Silva and Lifestyle Assistant Tanya Owens took a group of nine residents for a drive past the racecourse to look at the blooming roses and talk about the Racing Carnival.

Egged on by the excited residents who could see race horses inside the grounds, Michael turned the bus into the racecourse carpark for a better look.

“We ended up around the stables where we could see a few horses and we saw a familiar woman with a distinct hat getting out of a chauffeur-driven car,” he said.

“Well blow me down, it turned out to be horse trainer, racing legend, the Queen of the Turf, herself – Gai Waterhouse.”

Tanya jumped out of the bus and attracted the busy trainer’s attention to request a quick photo. That is when the outing got really interesting.

“Gai insisted all the residents come out of the bus and have their own photo with her, then she insisted we all come into her stables for a private tour,” Michael said.

She spent the next hour taking the residents through her stables, talking to them about her own family and asking about their lives, before bringing out three of her racehorses for the residents to meet. They even met Northwest Passage, which was due to run at Derby Day that weekend.

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“One of the horses was 17-hands high, but they were all so placid and there was no fear at all from the residents,” Michael said.

“Gai was standing right beside them and reassuring her horses while she encouraged the residents to reach out and pat them.”

Michael said Gai was engaged with the residents for the entire visit, showed a great respect for them and appreciated hearing their stories.

When the group returned to Kingsville Community later that afternoon they were eager to share the story of their brush with racing royalty with the other residents and staff. 🐾

➤ Finding the perfect home



Duncan Geensmith moved into Uniting AgeWell's Nangare independent living units at Burwood with his wife, Yvonne, in 2001.

The pair was looking for a new home with enough room for their family to visit and some space in a lock-up garage.

"Yvonne and I looked at a few places before we decided to move," Duncan said.

"When she walked in and saw the big lounge room she clapped her hands and said, 'This is it!'"

Duncan said moving to Nangare was the best decision for them and their family, who could visit any time they pleased.

In fact, Duncan still invites his daughters around every week and cooks them dinner – not bad for 95. Being situated just off Burwood Highway, the units are right near the tram line, which Duncan said was a real drawcard.

"The tram goes straight into the city or wherever you want to go and it's just outside the door," he said.

"Before Yvonne died, we decided to go on a spontaneous trip to Tassie on the boat because she'd never been.

"The very next day we walked to the tram stop outside Nangare and were on our way to Southern Cross Station. It was that easy because we were so close to the tram."

For more information about Uniting AgeWell's Nangare, call T: 9845 3139. 🐦

Uniting AgeWell operates independent retirement living units at the following locations:

- Victoria: Belmont, Bentleigh, Burwood, Camberwell, Forest Hill, Hawthorn (under construction), Kingsville, Mount Waverley and White Hills.
- Tasmania: Berriedale, George Town, Kingston, Latrobe, Montrose, Mornington, New Town, Newnham, Perth, Sandy Bay, Sorell and South Launceston.

For information about our independent retirement living options, call Uniting AgeWell on T: 1300 783 435 and ask for the housing manager of the suburb you are interested in.



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 and Social Media Advisor Caitlin Pearson at cpearson@unitingagewell.org or call T: 9133 5018.



Uniting AgeWell

*Front Cover:
Strathdon Community residents Tim Heartnett (left) and Brian Griffin know that moving into aged care marks a new chapter of life, that comprises making new friends and trying new things.*

Uniting AgeWell is an organisation of the Uniting Church in Australia