

Cornerstone

VMCH

COVID-19
we're here
to support

Pathways to
Independence

When
carers
need
the care

Edition Three

“When we are distancing ourselves from one another physically, I want to invite you to come close to each other spiritually and personally.”

- Archbishop Comensoli

Publishing Details

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VMCH

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The information in this publication has been prepared by VMCH (Villa Maria Catholic Homes) as a general guide to our services and operations. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, VMCH accepts no responsibility for any loss or inconvenience caused by reliance on the information set out in this publication. Please contact us if you require detailed information about any of our services. May 2020.

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Disability
Services

Now I have
my crew, it's
smooth sailing.

We help people of all ages and abilities become more independent and more involved with the community. We work side by side with our clients and their loved ones to uncover what that means for them. For Wayne, it's being on the water. So every Wednesday, with our support, he goes sailing. It's just one of the ways we help him live the life he chooses.



1800 798 921
vmch.com.au/disability

VMCH

A note from VMCH Chairman, Julien....



Welcome to edition three of Cornerstone, the first in an already exceptionally challenging year. This edition highlights the wide and varied services that we offer, and the people that we support. We would also like it to comfort you when times are getting hard, remembering all the good deeds that are being done all the time across our community.

In a recent public address, Pope Francis advised the Catholic community that in a time of social isolation, where we can no longer find closeness in some of the familiar, everyday habits that made our life meaningful, we must create communion and communication amongst ourselves in other ways.

Where communication is only “virtual” and we cannot visit our loved ones, we need to find strength within ourselves, discovering a new closeness; real relationships made of attentiveness and patience. The Pope described how some families eat together at home in silence – with parents watching television while they eat, and children on their mobile phones as “monks isolated from one another.”

“There is no communication here,” he said. “Listening is important because we understand one another’s needs, struggles, desires.” The suffering people are enduring at this time and the new anxieties we are facing demands a new form of communication, where spirituality can guide us.

In the last few months it feels like a new world has been born and that caring and the role of the carer is changing, and growing more important every day. To us, caring is a mission, not just another business.

We approach supporting our clients first and foremost as a calling – with integrity, unwavering conviction and true compassion – and we never shy away from seeking solutions even in the most challenging circumstances. We show this ethos and integrity through the specialist services we offer, which has led to us becoming a provider of choice for many. Our hand may have been forced to change our daily operations, but we are adapting and evolving to still uphold our values of respect, compassion, integrity and inclusion to all those in our care.

Let us pray to the Lord to give us strength to be grateful for the time we spent with loved ones in the past, and for the time when the dark clouds will pass and we will be able to do so again. Let us all make a special effort to wish someone kindness and exchange a smile or have a chat with someone who needs our love.

I sincerely hope you enjoy this edition of Cornerstone. It is an honour to be able to share the stories of our organisation and our people. We hope you are comforted by the good deeds and positive stories you will find between these pages and that they bring you the hope you need to see you through.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Julien', written in a cursive style.

Julien O'Connell AM
VMCH Chairman

**Have a question
for us? Email:**
cornerstone@
vmch.com.au

Navigating help at home

With so many aged care options, it can sometimes get a little tricky deciding what option is best.

Maybe you just need a hand with the shopping or running errands. Or perhaps you require a higher level of personal care. Either way, we're here to help.

VMCH is an approved provider of Home Care Packages (HCP) and the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP). You might be wondering what the difference is between these two models and we're here to simplify it for you! If you just need a little assistance with everyday tasks and feel that some support could improve your health and wellbeing, then CHSP could be right for you.

The aim of CHSP is to help senior Australians access entry-level support services so that you can live independently and safely at home. There are many helpful services to keep you happy and healthy such as domestic assistance and household tasks, meal preparation, shopping and community access.

CHSP services are especially helpful while you wait for your Home Care Package to be approved. Sometimes the approval process can take up to 12 months, so don't delay, get in touch as soon as possible to organise entry-level support to keep you mobile and independent.

A Home Care Package is another way for you to access affordable care services and is designed for people with more complex care needs. You need a HCP if you require services beyond what the CHSP can provide.

There are a whole range of services you can access, including:

- Personal care
- Domestic assistance and household tasks
- Home and garden maintenance
- Healthy eating and meal preparation
- Podiatry, physio, massage and other therapies
- Respite, social activities and transport.

You can also purchase approved aids and equipment to assist you in the home.

As at 31 December 2018 there were
93,331 people
in a home care package in Australia.



An annual increase of
19.8%
from the previous year.

Source: Home Care Packages Program Data Report 2019

As a part of your HCP, you will have access to a VMCH Case Manager. Our Case Managers offer ongoing service, make regular contact via phone and face-to-face visits and regularly review your services to make sure your needs and goals are being met.

Navigating My Aged Care and understanding the complexities of the system is often a barrier to receiving the help you need, when you need it.

Our expert team know all the ins and outs and can help you understand your eligibility, walk you through the registration process and provide you with personalised information and advice.

There are four levels of a HCP to help meet the different care needs that you require.

Home Care Package levels:

Level 1 supports people with basic care needs.

Level 2 supports people with low level care needs.

Level 3 supports people with intermediate care needs.

Level 4 supports people with high level care needs.

What level of support do I need?

The level of support will be determined by either the Regional Assessment Team (RAS) or the Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT) when they visit you at home. They will then forward this assessment to My Aged Care, which will then determine the level of care and support you require.

Help at home during COVID-19

We understand that during these unprecedented times your needs may differ day to day, or you may be unsure of what services we can still deliver. On the right, we explain the types of care available and a guide on how to get started.

- **Personal shopping** – provide us with a list and we will do your grocery shopping and deliver your goods to your home. Maintaining a safe physical distance, we will unpack and sort your goods for you.
- **Cleaning** – we can continue to clean your home. All staff wear gloves and regularly use hand sanitiser.
- **Wellbeing check and social connection** – need someone to talk to? Our carers maintain strict procedures to protect your health, yet you can still share a cup of tea, have a chat, watch a movie together or go for a short walk.
- **Technology and safety** – have you heard of Umps Health? Many of our clients are signing up to receive a simple device that monitors daily activity and reports back on any unusual changes to your routine that may indicate you are unwell.

Call our customer service team on **1300 698 624**



When carers need the care

Our Carer Support program recently held an event at Coombe Yarra Valley, as an opportunity for the full-time carers to get together, socialise and have some time out from their responsibilities.

The program provides events for people who live in Melbourne's eastern region and care for a loved one with care needs including dementia, disability, chronic condition or illness, or older age-related needs.

It is a chance for the carers to take a break and enjoy some time to themselves.

During the busy and fun-filled day, we asked some of our participants to tell us why they enjoy being involved.

Maggie Hawkes

I've cared for my mother for 17 years.

The social inclusions I have been included in have been just wonderful. I've been to live shows, including the Lion King.

I know I could possibly access some money and take myself to a live show. But it is the connection, it is the companionship. The people you've seen before. The "how are you going?". It's the people, the new faces, the new experiences.

I've also had a lot of practical help. I get my gutters cleaned once a year, and I've had a big front and back garden blitz. Caring for my mother, I don't even get a chance to rake a few leaves or do the composting. And this wonderful quality team just comes in and helps me.



Above Maggie Hawkes

Top Carers enjoying time out from their responsibilities

I have been a carer for 17 years, and I have done some wonderful things. I've been out for meals, coffee, to seminars, tried art therapy. It's good to just cut, chat and chew. There's no right, no wrong and no expectations.

I like my own company, but it's so much more pleasurable to go out with other people.

I just think it's so unique. I go home and we then have quality time. We have a cup of coffee, and I can say "oh mum we did this, here's a photo, here's a brochure. Would you like to come here one time?"

If you're in any way hesitant, it's quite understandable, but you've got to understand that everybody's walked down that road. Same as you at some point or another. Whether it's at the beginning of the journey or the middle.

Do yourself a favour and make that phone call. Don't miss out. I could have accessed these services even longer than I have, so don't be hesitant, you're in good company here.

Buena Di Nuzzo

Someone from the VMCH Carer Support program keeps contact with me once a year to talk about what support I need, and I also attend the carer's events, which are wonderful.

Being a carer, it's a challenging commitment.

It is lovely to be able to see other people and share your experiences with other mums and parents that go through sort of the same thing that you go through. I think this is the best thing that you can

get out of these support group programs, and the fact that you can express yourself. And feeling that you have something in common and not feeling alone in what you go through every day.

We also get to experience a lighter side of being a carer.

I've been in Melbourne over 20 years, but there are still things that you don't get to see because your life is caught up with a lot of things and you are just focusing on your caring role and your child and your family.

It just brings joy, to not have to stress out about 'where's my child'? You can't fully appreciate these events if you go with your family because it's hard looking after your child. And not thinking about yourself every time you go out.

This is an opportunity for us to think about ourselves, and wind down. To energize us after several weeks of having a challenging time or hardship of dealing with your kids with disability.

It's just heartwarming that somebody out there also feels that you need a little bit of a break. It really helps us a lot.

You also get advice from these people in the same situation, and you go, "oh I didn't think of that!" It becomes not just a social gathering, but a forum. You have a good time, you have a drink, a laugh, and you wine and dine. See the world. See what's outside the house.

Come and join. Why hesitate? It's beautiful. It's wonderful. It's fun. It's worth going to.



Above Forging friendships at the lunch event in Coombe Yarra Valley

For more information on the Carer Support program, contact us on **1300 971 720**.

Carers must be unpaid and living in the local areas of Knox, Yarra Ranges, Whitehorse, Maroondah, Manningham, Monash and Boroondara.

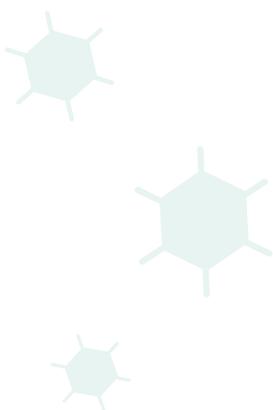
We're here to support you

COVID-19

We've been doing what we can to support you during this challenging time. The wellbeing of our community is our paramount concern, we continue to support the most vulnerable in our society with compassion, love and care.

Some of our services have changed as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. For updates on our changes to our services visit our website for the latest developments.

www.vmch.com.au



Our response

Due to the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic with fast-changing health advice and government directives, our management team have had to make decisions about how we operate our services to manage the risk to the health of our residents, clients, their families, our staff and volunteers.

These decisions have not been made lightly, but all the measures we have put in place thus far have been successful in keeping our community as safe as possible. At the time of publication, we have had no reported cases of COVID-19 at any of our residences or any other service.

During a pandemic circumstance may change quickly, but please rest assured that we will always advise you of any changes to our services as soon as possible.

Some useful sites to keep you informed and up-to-date:

Australian Government Department of Health
www.health.gov.au

World Health Organisation
www.who.int

Victoria State Health
www2.health.vic.gov.au

Working differently, staying safe!

Many of our services are still open but have been altered to meet government directives and our own safety measures.

- **Aged Care residences** are open with safety measures in place. Please check with your local manager for the latest updates.
- **At home care** or one-to-one supports for older people and people with disability continue in peoples' homes or in the community however we have safety measures in place for both our clients and staff.
- **Retirement Villages** have temporally postponed group activities or gatherings.
- Our **Allied Health** professionals continue to provide therapy sessions, whether in person or via 'Telehealth' or 'Teletherapy' using on-line platforms.
- Our **Specialist Disability Accommodation** is open to residents as usual, however we ask people not to visit if they are unwell, travelled overseas or been in contact with anyone diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Our **children's respite** houses in Croydon, Ivanhoe, Lilydale and Wheelers Hill are currently open with safety measures in place, to ensure ongoing support for children and their families.
- We continue to support our **Carers** with case management and over the phone help.
- All **support coordination** services continue, however when possible support will be provided over the phone.
- **Early Childhood and Therapy** continues with some alterations in how we deliver supports. We are working with families by using alternative technology to ensure our children continue to meet their developmental goals.
- **St Paul's College** students are learning remotely, with a limited number of children of essential workers attending the Balwyn campus.

Our transition to working remotely

In line with advice from the Government, most of our staff who are not on the front line are working from home.

But just because we are not sitting at our desk does not mean we aren't still part of the team. For most it's business as usual. You can contact us through the usual channels for all our office locations.

Remember – we are all doing our best!

This is all very new to all of us. It's important to show patience and kindness amid the confusion. We are may be overloaded with information right now, so take time to think and process what you are hearing. If you are confused by anything, you are not alone. If you feel anxious or overwhelmed, call on friends, family or loved ones for help understanding. Or, if you need us to clarify anything about our services please reach out to your VMCH contact person.

We're listening

At VMCH, we aim to be clear and open about what we are doing and why. We don't always get it right, so we would appreciate any feedback from you as to ways we can improve, not only our service delivery but the way we share information with you. Email us at hello@vmch.com.au or call **1800 036 377**.

And of course... keep washing your hands, remind others to do the same, use sanitiser, cough and sneeze into your elbow, maintain physical distancing by staying 1.5 metres away from others and most importantly stay home when you can!

We're all in this together

As part of the measures to keep our residents, staff and clients safe, from 1 May, 2020 all staff working in aged care services must have had a current 2020 flu vaccination.

This will also extend to anyone visiting or entering our aged care residences including family, visitors and contractors.

We encourage everyone who is able to, to vaccinate to help stop the spread of infectious diseases for the most vulnerable in our care.

We are following government health and safety directives, which are constantly changing, and may extend further.
Question? Call 1300 845 526



Year of the Nurse and Midwife

In May, it will have been 200 years since the birth of Florence Nightingale and the World Health Organization (WHO) is marking the date by declaring 2020 as the first-ever Year of the Nurse and Midwife.

Our nurses play an integral part in ensuring that our residents are provided with the very best care, and we value the commitment, energy and enthusiasm they show each day.

According to WHO, the world needs nine million more nurses and midwives if it is to achieve universal health coverage by 2030. So, if you know a nurse, make sure you tell them that 2020 is their year!



Meet Malibu

It's a busy life for Malibu the therapy pony. Not only is he super sociable, but he also has a knack of caring for older people and knowing when people are sick or could use a hug.

Our team at Wantirna enjoyed a special visit from Malibu for International Day of People with Disability. Not only did everyone enjoy the opportunity to give him a pat, but they also received souvenir postcards to cherish the memory. Sometimes all you need is a furry friend to brighten your day!

Not all heroes have capes – some have horseshoes!

 **98%**

of people in residential aged care felt **safe**, treated with **respect**, and had their **healthcare** needs met most or all of the time.

AIHW, Consumers' experience of residential aged care, 2017-19

460,000

people with disability aged <65 are expected to be **supported by the NDIS** once it is fully rolled out.



AIHW, People with disability in Australia, 2019

19.2%
(931,544)

of Victorians participated in formal volunteering.



Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017, 2016 Census (October 2017), TableBuilder. VOLWP Voluntary Work for an Organisation or Group by STATE (Usual Residence)



Quilting for dignity

For many, a handmade quilt represents more than just the countless hours dedicated to its creation.

A Dignity Quilt can be used to place over a resident who has passed, and as the person leaves the place that has been their home, staff and fellow residents form a 'guard of honour' as a sign of respect.

Providence Aged Care Residence was grateful to receive a beautiful, hand sewn Dignity Quilt from Lynne Farrer, whose mother, Patricia, was a resident with us.

Thank you to all our quilters.

Calling a comfort in COVID-19

One of Sandra's favourite perks of her Grant and Bequest Officer role is the time that she spends with people.

She normally meets regularly with donors and shows them what their generously donated funds go towards; how it benefits the clients, residents and volunteers of VMCH.

"One of the best parts of my job is the conversations I have with people, who believe in and want to support the work of VMCH enough to donate or leave a gift in their Will to us," says Sandra.

"I love when I get to meet our donors, and I am able to thank them, and they share their experiences and stories with me. It makes my work so incredibly meaningful when I especially hear stories of how they have been connected to VMCH and when they started to support us.

"I hear stories from people who were students at St Paul's College over 40 years ago. I talk to parents who currently have children at St Paul's College or people who had mothers and fathers who were cared for at one of our aged care residences. They may receive our care in their home or are mothers and fathers who have adult children with disability who are being cared for by our services. I also often talk with our dedicated staff and volunteers."

When COVID-19 restrictions came into place, Sandra began to work from home. However, due to these restrictions, it also meant that many of the planned events for donors and home visits had to be put on hold. While Sandra was fine to work from home, she found her thoughts gravitating towards our older donors, and those being supported by disability services.

"Isolation and not being able to see your loved ones are a lot worse for many of the people we support."

After the full realisation of how long this would go for, it made me more focused to continue my phone contact with our donors and supporters to just ask how they are and make sure that they are ok."



Sandra started to make calls to our bequestors, donors and supporters who are older, or on their own. She regularly calls to ensure they are ok and to let them know that someone is thinking of them during this period.

"It is important to always thank and acknowledge people. For me it's important to check in on those I have come to know and have built relationships with. It is important to let people know that they are not alone.

"Everyone I speak to is very appreciative of the call. They always have time to talk about all sorts of things and are all grateful for the support they are receiving from their families, services and their community.

"There are lots of good stories of neighbours dropping off food, people calling and lots to be thankful for."

Sandra says that while she is the one doing the check-ins, she finds that she is the one continually being offered support. She says this is typical of our 'silent generation' and 'Baby Boomers'.

"They always ask me how I am and what VMCH is doing."

During the current pandemic, Sandra says her main priority is fast-tracking the implementation of the **VMCH 'In-Touch' program**.

"This appeal, which has been running since April 2019, is now timelier than ever. The In-Touch project will give our aged care residents support to connect with families and explore opportunities that modern technology gives us, but that is often out of reach for our residents.

"We wouldn't be able to implement such a great program without the support of our many generous donors."

Clamping down on illegal parking

From shameless parents at the school gates, to brazen supermarket shoppers, parking by non-permit holders in disabled spots is a topic close to our hearts.

You or a loved one may have experienced this and know the concern it raises when the parking spots are not available for everyday activity. Help is at hand. A nationwide campaign to introduce tougher penalties for drivers caught illegally parking in disabled car spots is under way. Disability advocacy group, No Permit No Park, is spearheading a push for a demerit point penalty to be added to existing fines for drivers caught in disabled parks without a permit.

Founded by Elisha Matthews, No Permit No Park began in Queensland. "At the time of the launch, disability parking had a place under the Federal Disability portfolio," she says. "Many people were seeking support to do what I was doing up here in other states. So I made it a national campaign. Through providing support and knowledge to other advocates I've been able to help them make changes at state and local government levels."



"The campaign was recently revived when the Queensland State Government attempted to pass a bill to double the fine for the offence. Having been through this before, we took the opportunity to give evidence at the public hearing and explain fines mean nothing if they're not enforced.

I'm seeking to improve enforcement efforts both by police and councils. It's more than just a parking ticket. It's upholding the rights of people with disabilities to equitable and safe access."

For more information on this campaign follow **No Permit No Park Australia** on Facebook.

Our regional roadshow



Did you know that we have offices located across regional Victoria?

Our At-Home Aged Care and Disability Services teams provide program support to our clients in Wangaratta, Shepparton, Ballarat, Bendigo, Echuca, Ararat and Moe, and surrounding areas.

To promote what we do and our brand-new look, last year we opened our doors to the community. This was a great chance for people to meet our staff, learn about the services we offer, and raise awareness of what is available in their region. All while enjoying a delicious BBQ.

Each site is different and special, but all of them have dedicated staff who know their community inside and out.

Open days will once again be held, and we look forward to meeting new people, hearing your stories and finding a way to support you to live your best lives. But you are more than welcome to drop in any time too, of course!

Meet our lovely volunteers!

With National Volunteer Week (NVW) coming up from 18–24 May 2020, there’s never been a better opportunity to acknowledge the generous contribution made by some of the fantastic people who give up their time to help others.

With “Changing Communities. Changing Lives” as the theme for National Volunteer Week 2020, we firmly believe that our local heroes are the very essence of community spirit.

VMCH currently has over 600 volunteers who contribute significantly to supporting and enhancing the experiences and opportunities offered to the people we support. Whether it’s through social visits, assisting with spiritual wellbeing and care, arts and crafts, sorting and mending items for sale or customer service in our op shops – the selfless donations of skills, time and collaboration never cease to inspire us.

It’s always great to put a face to a name. Meet three of our volunteers who’ve been making a difference from Balwyn to Berwick.



Left Peter Cooney

Right Brianna George



Peter Cooney and Brianna George are wonderful volunteers at our Balwyn Op Shop.

“Coming to volunteer is a great opportunity for Peter and Brianna to learn new skills and build confidence in customer service,” says Op Shop Manager Gretchen Fitzgerald. “The skills they have gained on a personal development level are self-confidence, independence and social interaction with a variety of people.”

“Each day they price items, sweep, tidy up the shelves, water plants in our little nursery, iron and attend to our customers’ needs. We work hard, but we have fun too!”



The commitment over the years from our volunteers like Carol Pickering really inspires us.

It's hard to believe she started volunteering with us in 1979 – that's over 40 years ago. Still going strong, Carol now shares her time weekly at Berwick Aged Care Residence and is one of our much loved volunteers.

Carol began volunteering when the original Villa Maria Hostel for the Blind opened its doors on Stud Road Wantirna.

Carol knew all of the first ten residents and even managed to find some photos to share her memories of her time.

When the site closed for refurbishment she started volunteering and supporting people within our disability services, which bought her so much joy.

In 2019, Carol and her husband John, down-sized their home and moved to their new retirement unit in Berwick. She admits that part of her reason for choosing this location was because she knew that the we had an aged care residence nearby.

Carol has taken to volunteering life at Berwick like a duck to water, settling in with the team and fast becoming a favourite among the residents there. "I love spending time with the residents, my volunteering is such an amazing way to give back but get so much at the same time!" says Carol.



Above Carol and past residents she's had the pleasure of helping.



"It is an absolute pleasure having Carol here at Berwick. She has a smile and happy-go-lucky presence that simply lights-up the place! Her head runs non-stop with creative ideas and she is a natural team-player, who just dives straight into her tasks. Her energy levels are incredible! Like all of our wonderful volunteers, Carol is worth her weight in gold! We simply could not do what we do, without these beautiful, earthly angels!"

Anita Ross, Lifestyle Coordinator, VMCH Berwick

Considering a move into residential aged care?

Moving into an aged care residence can often be a time of stress, and uncertainty, for both the person moving and their family, friends, and carers. Current circumstances are making this a decision fraught with extra questions and uncertainty.

We have changed the routine in our aged care residences to abide with government regulations and ensure our residents and staff safety. Here are some of the things that we are doing a little differently as we safeguard against the spread of COVID-19 now and into the future.

- Our staff do not attend work if they have a fever or symptoms of a respiratory illness. This is a procedure during influenza peak periods too.
- Our staff have always undertaken mandatory Infection Control training. We practice rigorous hygiene practices including frequent hand washing and/or sanitising.
- Our staff wear PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) such as gloves, gowns and masks when dealing with symptomatic people.
- We have increased the number of lifestyle programs available for residents.
- From 1 May 2020 anyone who enters an aged care residence must have had the flu vaccine, including staff.

We have 11 residences across Victoria, which offer extensive care delivered by experienced, qualified and nurturing professionals.

Our Care Practice is designed to support you to live the life you choose. We're all about independence, engagement and collaboration. We tailor our care to the individual, so if you need a more hands-on approach or a higher level of care, that's what we deliver. Visit vmch.com.au or call **1300 845 526** for more details.

When you are ready to choose your new home

With so many options, it can be overwhelming deciding what is best for you. Although times are changing, the questions and considerations you need to contemplate remain the same.

We've put together some things to consider when you start looking at residential aged care, and some suggested questions to ask.

1. Do your research

Once you know where you want to live, it's time to see what options there are. Then it's time to start visiting! This is going to be your home, so you want to feel comfortable as soon as you walk in the door. We know this can be daunting, but it's worth doing.

2. Get a feel for the place

Pay attention when you walk through the door, observe the interactions between staff and residents. Are they engaged, is there a positive energy, is there eye contact between carers and residents? Are people actively involved in the activities?

3. Don't be shy

Ask about everything you want to know. Have a list of questions, and don't feel shy about asking a hard one. You want to know that your needs will be catered for, and respected. Questions about catering for dementia, culturally appropriate care, effective pain management and their individual care approach are all fundamental to ensuring your comfort.

4. Think ahead

Do they provide pastoral or spiritual care? Do they have procedures in place to ensure your Advanced Care Plan will be respected as you enter the later stages of your life? These questions can feel uncomfortable but knowing their end-of-life care policies is necessary, and important.

5. Care and services

Find out what's included and if there are any extra charges. You want to know what you will be paying for, and not be surprised by out-of-pocket expenses.

6. Don't stop until you find the right one

This can take time. Plan ahead and start exploring your options early. Take a family member with you, as their input may help you to decide. Take your time and find the place that will feel most at home for you.

From student to customer

Sheilah Blanchfield is a very special lady. Not only was she a student in the first ever intake of St Paul's College in the 50s, but she also retains an active connection with the school to this day as both a donor and volunteer.

Of course, the school has changed considerably since the days when Sheilah was a student in Kew. Here she shares a few memories:

"It all began with around 25-30 kids in one building at 3 Fernhurst Grove. We boarded from Monday to Friday and there was a great camaraderie between the kids. It was all new at the time and very fun. I really loved being there. The classes were small. It was always good to go back to class on Monday morning, or after the holidays – a sentiment pretty much unheard of at school in the 50s."

"It's hugely different now at St Paul's, obviously education has changed and now of course it's not just a school for the blind, but for children with many special needs. The facilities on offer are like we could never have dreamed of when I was a student there. There's always so much going on there. I especially love the Black Cat Café, which is a great initiative giving senior



Above Sheilah is pictured with St Paul's College student, Ben.

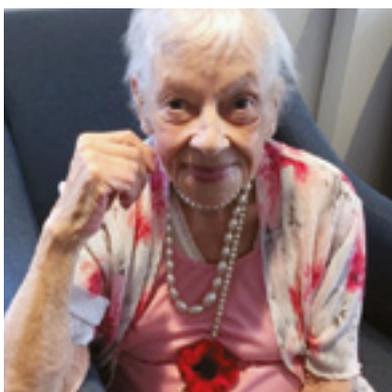
students the opportunity to develop essential hospitality and life skills to pave the way for their future employment and independence."

"I went down on a Tuesday morning and was pleasantly surprised to be greeted with a crowded room of café customers and students eager to take your order. It was a truly great initiative that was obviously building students' confidence."

A special Anzac Day

Providence Aged Care Residence commemorated Anzac Day in a different way this year.

Maria, our Pastoral Care Worker made some lovely poppies out of felt for our residents.



Then, at 10:30am the team used the internal microphone to recite a poem, perform a minute's silence, then play the "Last Post".

This was followed by a lovely morning tea with Anzac biscuits, followed by an Anzac Day Quiz, as well as a sing-along of the classic songs of that era.

The residents enjoyed the day and said that the focus on Anzac Day made the whole day feel very special.

Cards of love

We are always finding new ways to keep our residents engaged, communicating and smiling.



“What a lovely idea, I look forward to sending a card to my nephew.” - Mary

Our Mission team focusses on the spiritual wellbeing of all our residents, helping them to cope with stressful situations. During this particularly challenging time, they decided to use craft as a positive creative outlet.

The Cards of Love program involves our lovely residents and volunteers creating cards that are sent to our resident's families. An extra card is also included for families to return to the resident.

Iris, Thelma and Mary from John R Hannah Aged Care Residence have put their creative hats on and designed some beautiful cards.

We loved hearing how excited these ladies were about being involved!

“How nice to be out of my room doing something creative.” - Thelma

Monica, our Residential Services Manager shared that she had received a letter from a resident's daughter who said in the seven years her mother had been in care she had never received anything like this before and it brought tears to her eyes.

It is great to hear the impact a small gesture in these times is having.

A group at Wantirna Aged Care Residence loved being some of the first participants in the program too and had a great time keeping connected while being creative.

We send our heartfelt thanks to our donor community whose funds have been able to make this program come to life.

We are most happy when we see our residents happy!

“I have never done this sort of thing before, how wonderful to learn a new skill. I never thought I could create these cards.” - Iris





Hand Hygiene

With current world health concerns with COVID-19, we have an effective way to protect ourselves and others from illness, simply through good personal hygiene. Hand washing is one of the most important personal hygiene actions we can perform.

Our Safety team recommends you should wash your hands thoroughly:

- after using the toilet or changing nappies
- before, during and after preparing food
- between handling raw and cooked or ready-to-eat food
- before eating
- after using a tissue or handkerchief
- before and after attending to sick children or other family members.
- after handling rubbish or working in the garden
- after handling animals
- when you return from community outings

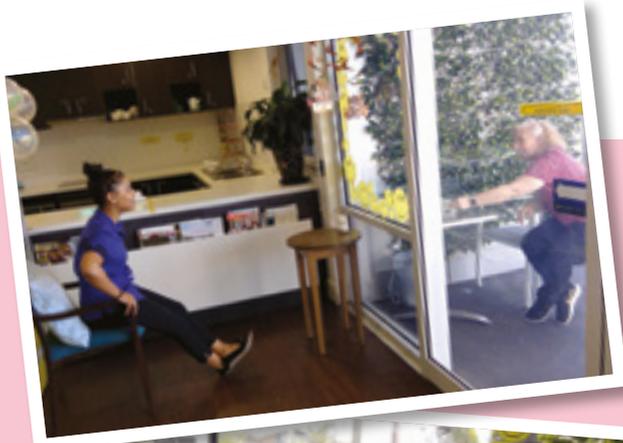
It's important that we wash our hands properly to help protect ourselves and our loved ones. It's the simple art of hand washing, done right.

1. Wet your hands with clean, running water, turn off the tap.
2. Apply soap and lather well for 20 seconds (or longer if the dirt is ingrained).
3. Rub hands together rapidly across all surfaces of your hands and wrists.
4. Don't forget the backs of your hands, your wrists, between your fingers and under your fingernails.
5. If possible, remove rings and watches before you wash your hands, or ensure you move the rings to wash under them, as microorganisms can exist under them.
6. Rinse well under running water and make sure all traces of soap are removed.
7. Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.
8. It is best to use paper towels (or single-use cloth towel).
9. Dry under any rings, as they can be a source of future contamination if they remain moist.



#thekindnesspandemic

We've been blown away by the kindness of everyone in and outside of our community during this time. Here we share just a few of the things that have been happening. Let's spread it far and wide #thekindnesspandemic



Communication and social connection is key, especially in current times! Our hard working team at Shanagolden Aged Care Residence had a great idea that allows our residents to **communicate with family members via a window**. On one side will sit a resident and on the other side will sit a loved one, with a speaking devices so you pass on messages!



Our friend Eddie Tsai from imobilestore.com.au supplied us with **1,000 PPE face masks**, just when we needed them. Thank you Eddie!

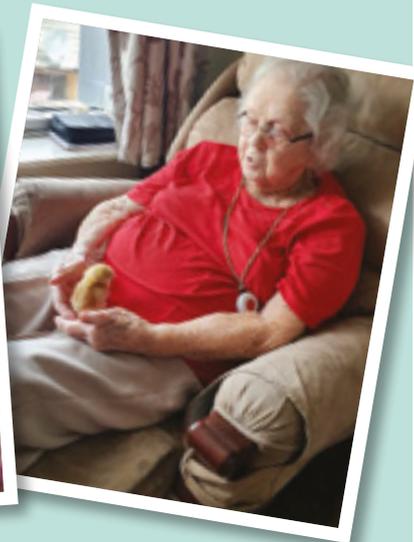


Our team at Bundoora Aged Care Residence has been setting up **video calls for residents** and their families, to ensure our residents are still able to remain connected despite visitor restrictions. We'll be extending this with the launch of our In-Touch program, read more on page 25.



With physical distancing restrictions, a fun initiative has started, based on the classic book *We're Going On A Bear Hunt*. It asks our neighbours to pop teddy bears in their windows.

The idea gives children, who are currently spending more time inside, an outside activity to look forward to. They can spot the teddy bears while going out for a walk! Do you have a teddy in your window?



Wantirna Aged Care Residence has played host to these **gorgeous little chicks** over the past fortnight, and have put lots of smiles on the residents faces. So snugly!

How lucky is this resident from Star of the Sea Retirement Village? Their very own grandchildren went to a colourful effort to pass on a **thoughtful message** during this time of necessary physical distancing. What a lovely and clever way to keep up the communication!



Even though we are living in a time of advanced technology, it is the simple and fun games that stand the test of time. Our team at our children's respite in Croydon have been busy playing inside and telling stories, using **shadow puppets**!

With the blinds down, and imaginations running wild, a fairy show started. This was a wonderful way to be creative and sparked an interest in the kids.



Donations keep on giving

No matter how you choose to donate, we are always grateful for your generosity.

We can't thank our donors enough, which is why we wanted to take the opportunity to showcase just a few of the great things we have achieved from fundraised funds and just how far the goodness has reached. From the bottom of our hearts... thank you.

St Paul's College Bike Program

Donated by: Frank Dibble, long time donor

The school placed a request for two custom-made bikes with accessories for a program aiming to help with students' cognitive development and visual perception. The Commonwealth and state funding for schools does not cover Allied Health equipment. With more students needing support, the donation was used to support the request. This equipment has improved students' learning ability, supported their physiotherapy needs and helped meet disability standards for accessibility.

Palliative Care Kits

Funded by: William Angliss Charitable Fund Grant

Most residents require quality personal care assistance, at end of life, these needs increase requiring more frequent attention and trained staff. Our approach to Palliative Care is to ensure dignity in life is maintained physically and spiritually.

Funding was applied to support Pastoral Care Practitioners in their care for over 900 residents across 11 locations. Pastoral care offers spiritual and emotional support to individuals of all cultures faiths and nationalities. The team created multiple Palliative Care Kits which included a CD Player, relaxing music, candles, water fountain, oil diffuser, creams and oral mouth swabs, for each location and enabled our continuity of care during this difficult life stage.

Flexible Respite Children's Christmas Party

Funded by: Harold Payne Trust

The Flexible Respite and Respite accommodation programs held a Children's Christmas party attended by 30 children and 30 adults. The festivities included food, a jumping castle, face painting and entry to Chesterfield Farm. The Mission team then also sourced toys for Santa to distribute to the children!

Flexible Respite is a fee for service program that no longer receives funding from the government. As a result, all programs and activities need to be paid for by clients. Without this generous financial support, we would not be able to offer this celebration that has had real meaning to our client of all ages.



If you would like to donate or find out more about our next appeal, please contact the Fundraising teams on **1800 036 377** or donate securely online at vmch.com.au/donate

Your spirituality needs



When the time comes to move into an aged care residence, there are many things to consider. Location, amenities and reputation are some of the first things you might want to know. But what about your spiritual needs?

Meaningful Ageing Australia is the national peak body for spiritual care and ageing and is made up of 111 member organisations, and rising. According to Meaningful Ageing, spirituality is about what gives us a purpose to our lives. It is about our sources of meaning and hope, and our connectedness to ourselves, to others and to the world.

“We want to ensure that older people’s spiritual needs are being met, and we provide practical resources for providers, to show them how they can do that,” says Ilsa Hampton, Meaningful Ageing Australia CEO.

Formed in 2013, the idea for the organisation came about through engaging with those who worked with older people and saw the benefit of a support resource for spirituality.

Their “See Me. Know Me.” campaign, which commenced in February 2019, was a catalyst for the organisation. With assistance from its members, including VMCH, and financial support from the Commonwealth government, the campaign started as a way of educating older people about how spirituality fits into their lives, and how to look for an aged care provider who will give the right support.

It also brought about some outstanding outcomes.

“Some of the things we’ve seen happen as a result of the campaign is how surprised, relieved and enlightened people are to have an opportunity to reflect in a deeper way about themselves and their lives and to share that with others,” says Ilsa.

“Our initial goal was to help people find service providers that will value them as a whole person, and to build spiritual literacy and empower older people.”

“What we then uncovered was this real gap in older people’s lives around feeling well regarded, well

connected and well understood. Even by their own families and communities. In life right now, some older people are saying “my family don’t even know what I am interested in, or some of my big life stories.”

“We published additional material, including a list of suggested questions, to equip people to have those interesting and deeper conversations, hopefully in a fun way, but adding something to their lives and relationships.”

Ilsa says it’s important to ask aged care providers questions about their spiritual care.

“It’s not about providers having the perfect answer, but how they respond.”

“Do they try to fob you off, are they uncomfortable, or do they actually engage? If they don’t have the answer that’s ok, they can consider your questions and get back to you. You need to look, listen and get a feel of the quality of the relationships between the staff and older people.”

Ilsa says her vision for the future is that every engagement a person has with a service is one that leaves them walking away feeling like they were profoundly understood.

“It is important for our spirituality as we age that we have a chance to reflect, to have a sense of legacy, and to be seen as a whole person. If these needs are met, the inner self will then become stronger, even as we become physically weaker.

“I would just love for every person to have that deep feeling of being valued, nurtured and supported, at every touch point.”



Pathways to independence

What does being independent mean to you? For many people living with a disability, this means being able to cook your own meals, make a cup of coffee or do the washing up.

Last year, we were proud to celebrate the first module of our new Pathways to Independence pilot project.

Designed by one of our Occupational Therapists, Taryn Muller, the new training program focused on nutrition, where participants learned to cook quick and easy wholesome meals, from piping hot jacket potatoes to crispy fish and chips. The program was brought to life with the leadership of Lifestyle and Respite Manager Sonia Berton and the stewardship of Disability Support workers Brendan Donohoe and Irene Mukiira, who ensured that all four participants not only got the most out of what they were doing, but that the chefs-in-training felt supported at all times.

Crucially, this program would not have been possible without the generous donations from Anthony Prowse and his team and also from Camberwell Rotary club, who collaboratively donated \$10,000 to launch the project.

Our project participants thanked our donors by inviting them to a Christmas buffet lunch of home-cooked treats to showcase their new skills.



Above Anthony and Courtney
Top Maria, David and Irene

“It just makes the world much smaller and brings so many things to their doorstep.”

Below The group celebrate the success of the program together



With a graduation ceremony and plenty of guests, it was quite the celebration. New graduates Maria, Emily, James and Courtney say they thoroughly enjoyed the course and have been enjoying practicing their new skills at home. Emily is also hoping to build and develop her skills with the hope of some vocational work in the hospitality industry.

But that’s not all

As part of the pilot program last year, Maria, Emily, James and Courtney also learned some red hot barista skills from freshly graduated indigenous students in December.

Visiting from the Northern Territory, the guys shared their coffee creation knowledge and more at “The Little Kitchen That Could” in South Melbourne, in collaboration with Social Engine (a social enterprise network helping young people get into work).

Not only was this a great exercise in coffee making processes, but also one in meeting new people and making friends.

The team at Wangaratta has been reaping the benefits of a similar initiative.

Disability Services Coordinator Tammy Genn explains more about their Pathways to Possibilities (P2P) programme and their visit to beautiful Café Dumu in Bright in February.

“We were invited to visit to see if the program venue aligned with our goals. We travelled as a group up to Bright to see the café for ourselves, arriving just in time for lunch. We watched as a vivacious crew took customer orders, prepared flatware and set tables, and cooked up a storm of delicious meals for us. The pumpkin gnocchi with a Native Herb dukkah in particular was delightful.

I am hopeful this partnership will support further dining opportunities. The program has previously helped out at the Open Doors Neighbourhood House in Wangaratta with their Community Meal once a month, preparing for up to 30 people.

The café is the next step up in work experience and responsibility, and we are very excited to work in partnership with Café Dumu. We are hoping to offer two participants a day’s experience once a week, accompanied by a support worker.

In Melbourne we are working to formalise how we might be able to provide participants access to in-the-work environment training experiences through the NDIS. The aim is to give participants access to a range of social enterprises associated with the Social Engine network that will help them gain skills towards employment. This is expected to start at the “Pouring with a Purpose Café” at the Docklands where we hope to announce more details about the program over the next few months.”





Find a community that cares

If you're interested in St Joseph's Mews or any other of our retirement communities contact us on **1800 036 377**

Alistair and Shirley Lloyd first turned to VMCH to support their adopted daughter Alana, who has cerebral palsy and cortical vision impairment.

Now they've entered a new chapter of their lives, retirement. Again, we are going on the journey with them after they moved to St Joseph's Mews, our luxury retirement apartments in Hawthorn.

"Moving into St Joseph's Mews, we're not buying bricks and mortar, we're buying into a community with people that care about each other," Alistair says.

St Joseph's Mews features 69 beautifully appointed retirement apartments in the heart of Hawthorn.

Alistair and Shirley moved in 2016 and say downsizing from their family home was a bit daunting.

It was a home where they raised three biological children, two adopted

children and also fostered more than 70 babies.

The couple say their history with us and the friendly community they have joined has helped them make the transition.

"This is a wonderful community and it really truly is like nothing else we've experienced," Shirley says.

Our retirement communities are designed with long-term comfort and security in mind and are located throughout Victoria.

We aim to maximise people's independence and social interaction by maintaining close links with the local parish, social groups and community organisations.

We provide environments where residents can feel safe and well-connected and enjoy complete peace of mind.

Career opportunities

Working at VMCH is much more than just a job. It's a chance to be part of a community of dedicated individuals who share a common goal – a commitment to helping people to live their best life.

We like to highlight some of the roles we are currently recruiting for – perhaps you or someone you know would be perfect!

Speech Pathologist

About the role

At VMCH we work hard to ensure every client achieves an optimal outcome and the best support.

We have an exciting opportunity for passionate and highly motivated Speech Pathologist to assist our aged clients or young and adult clients with disabilities to achieve their goals.

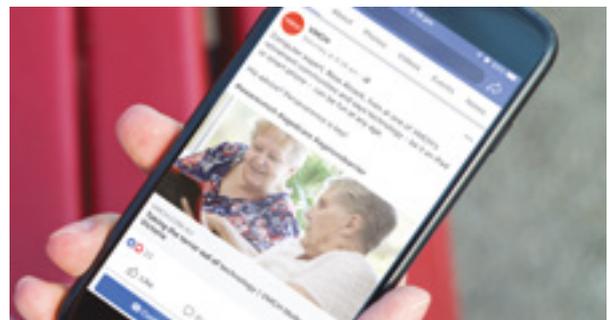
In this role you will:

- Have an opportunity to work with various clients – you will provide support to young and adults with disabilities and older people
 - Become the part of multidisciplinary Allied Health Team which will give you the opportunity to exchange your knowledge and learn from others. We believe in and apply team collaboration on a daily basis!
 - Have the opportunity to learn something new every day
- Have a real impact on the improvement of our clients' lives
- Currently this role is based in Wantirna and travel to other sites will be required.
- ### About you:
- 2 years + experience as a Speech Pathologist with clients who have significant complex support needs
 - Eligibility for membership with Speech Therapy Australia
 - Experience in delivery of Speech Pathology services for young people and adults and the aged
 - Knowledge and experience in aged and disability funding streams, eg. NDIS
 - Passion for ongoing learning and progression
 - Excellent communication skills and the ability to build rapport with clients, co-workers and other health professionals
 - Current first aid and CPR or the willingness to obtain
 - Current driver's licence.

For more information please contact Jo-Ann Petersen (Senior Manager of Allied Health, Community and Disability Services) on 1300 919 850

Get Social

Come and connect with us! Stay in the loop with lots of information and stories about our services, clients, residents and staff, there's something for everyone.



@VMCHVic



@VMCHVic



@vmchvic



@VMCHVic



@VMCHDisabilityServices

Friendship and fun

Mina Caldwell and Eric Goldspink were both born and raised in England, until they were nine years old. Then, they became child migrants, sent to Australia in 1939 to live at Lady Northcote Farm School, near Bacchus Marsh. There, alongside their new 150 brothers and sisters, they spent their childhood days studying and working, with no parents to depend on.

Now, at 90 years old, they again live together, at VMCH Providence Retirement Village, Bacchus Marsh.

Mina

I lived at Lady Northcote Farm School until I was 16 years old. I remember the boat ride across, we celebrated Christmas on the ship. The day we arrived was the week of the Black Friday deadly bushfires. We didn't know what we had arrived to. We watched the pretty lights created by the fires at night from our cottages, and some of the older boys were even called upon to help fight the bushfires in the area.

I remember Eric was a great rabbit runner. He used to chase them down the fence and catch them. He was always very fast.

We always kept in touch over the years; we all did. He would often visit us on his way to Melbourne, when I was living at home and then when I moved in here in 2014.

Then he decided to come and live here too. Now we're both part of the social club. We also go out and about and visit people that we know.

I like having family here, we're brother and sister. He's a good friend, he brings me the paper every Wednesday. We have made a lot of friends here, but together can reminisce about the old times,



and it's just nice to have someone here who knows what you've been through. Like family does.

I also know Eric's daughters very well now, we're like one big family.

Eric

(Lady Northcote) was not a very nice time. We would all have cold showers, and I remember in summer we would have to wash in the dam and then rinse off in a bath with a couple of inches of dirty water. But it taught you to be independent.

I went back home to England in 1950. I was there for eight years and then I migrated back, as a 10-pound pom with a wife and a daughter. I needed to have a job, and somewhere to live.

It's good here. We organise games days, where we play bowls, cards and darts, which is always a bit of fun. I can't play cards or darts anymore because I can't see, but I can still play bowls!

It's just nice to have a friend living down the road from me, especially because there's not many of us 'Lady Northcotians' getting around anymore.

Mina is just a lovely lady! We are good friends; like brother and sister. We always kept in touch, saw each other at reunions, and now 5 years later I am here! The time has gone quick.



Left and top Mina and Eric continue to share a friendship of over 80 years.



Prestigious retirement apartments.

Be charmed by St Joseph's Mews in Hawthorn. Step inside and discover beautifully appointed apartments, architecturally designed spaces, an on-site restaurant, state-of-the-art cinema and temperature-controlled wine cellar.

Quite simply, St Joseph's Mews offers the full package of luxury living.

St Joseph's Mews | Retirement Apartments
108 Denham Street, Hawthorn
03 9291 5300

VMCH



Residential
Aged Care

The care you expect.

As a community we are in uncharted territory as we navigate the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic. VMCH is a trusted, Catholic, not-for-profit provider of aged care services. Our mission is to protect those who are vulnerable or who need support and care.

Now, more than ever, our priority is to protect those that need it most.

Our aged care residences remain open, with respite and permanent places available. Whilst visitors are restricted, we do not turn away anyone that needs us.



To learn more visit
vmch.com.au

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