

Villa Maria's History 1907 - 2013

1907 - At the insistence of Louisa Fawcner, an early colonist of Melbourne, the Catholic Braille Writers' Association was founded in the parish of St. Mary's, East St. Kilda by Fr. John Barry who was then assistant priest of that parish.

1928 - Rev. Br. Patrick O'Neill, a member of the Congregation of the Christian Brothers joined the association. Br. O'Neill had lost his own sight at the age of 40.

1931 - Rev. Br. Patrick O'Neill was elected President, a position he held until his death in 1968.

1938 - Villa Maria Hostel opened Donald Street Prahran - our first residence for blind people. This property was donated by Mrs. Mary O'Connor for the purpose and was opened by His Grace Archbishop Mannix. It was home to 16 blind people.

1948 - Name of Association changed to Villa Maria Society for the Blind, as the Villa Maria Hostel became known to an increasing number of people. The Hostel itself was so named for the religious connotation as well as to perpetuate the memory of Mrs. O'Connor.

1950 - Villa Madonna Nursing Home, the Society's second establishment was officially blessed and opened by Dr. Mannix. Property adjacent to Villa Madonna was purchased a few months later to expand the nursing home.

1957 - St. Paul's School for the Blind was established with Br. O'Neill as Principal.

1972 - Villa O'Neill Nursing Home in Prahran was built and opened for 32 people.

1979 - Villa Maria Centre Wantirna, comprising of a Nursing Home Hostel and Day Hospital, was officially opened.

1980 - St. Paul's School reconstructed.

1982 - St. Paul's Respite Care, now known as Gildas House, in Alphington was acquired and modified.

1986 - Camberwell House acquired, modified and established as a Community Residential Unit.

1988 - White Road Adult Day Centre at Wantirna was established.

1990 - Villara, Older Persons' Units, in Wantirna opened and Wantirna Day Hospital extended.

1992 - Villa Madonna, now Villa Maria Bundoora Aged Care Residence, was opened for 40 people.

1995 - Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged (ACHA) program was introduced.

1996 - Carinya Adult Day and Respite Centre opened. Wantirna Gateway Adult Day Program commenced.

1997 - Carer Services (inner / outer east) commenced. Hawthorn Gateway Adult Day Program commenced. Berwick Aged Care Residence opened 52 high level care beds. Bundoora Aged Care Residence opened an additional 51 beds. The first Community Aged Care Packages (CACP) program was introduced in inner east Melbourne.

1998 - Merger with Allura Homes saw the attainment of Community Residential Units (CRUs) in Burwood, Highett and Nunawading.

1999 - CACP program introduced into the Gippsland, Grampians, Hume and Loddon Mallee regions.

2000 - CRUs opened in Braybrook and Taylors Lakes. Ageing with a Disability program commenced.

2001 - CACP's programs introduced Victoria-wide. CRUs opened in Bayswater, Bulleen, Cheltenham, Endeavour Hills, Moorabbin, and Wantirna.

2002 - Opening of new children's respite houses at Croydon, Lilydale and Studley House in Kew, which was relocated from Esmonde House on the Kew site.

2004 - First allocation of Extended Aged Care at Home (EACH) packages.

2005 - Villa Maria wins a tender to deliver the Commonwealth Carer Respite and Carelink Centre in the Hume Region, establishing a large regional presence in Shepparton.

2006 - Avebury House, a respite service for working carers of older people with dementia, opens in Berwick while Base Camp, a men's shed project, is opened by Bud Tingwell at Wantirna.

2007 - Villa Maria wins a major tender to deliver Victoria's first service for young people with complex medical needs. Northern Victoria Community Services purchases and opens a respite facility in Shepparton while Western Community Services also opens a house for younger people with disabilities.

2008 - Villa Maria releases its three year strategic plan 'Achievements and Aspirations 2008 - 2011' and opens the Kialla House Respite Service in Shepparton to provide weekend accommodation for frail older people to enable their carers to take a break.

2009 - Significant progress is made in advancing the unique service model for the '*my future my choice*' development at Austin Street and building construction commences. Villa Maria receives a Victorian Government Fair & Flexible Employer Recognition Award. Outer Encounters is established – an after school and vacation care program for children with a disability in Melbourne's outer east.

2010 - Construction of [Austin Street](#) is completed, staff recruited and procedures developed for this unique service model. Land acquired at 450 Camberwell Road, Camberwell to develop Villa Maria's first retirement living apartments.

2011 - Villa Maria's women friendly work practices are acknowledged with a prestigious 2011 Employer of Choice for Women (EOCFW) citation by the Australian Government in March.

2012 - Major developments come to fruition: Athelstan Camberwell – independent living apartments – opens in October; the new Villa Maria Wantirna opens in December including a 96-bed aged care residence, Gateway Service and Wellbeing Centre. Major renovations of the Children's Respite Houses at Lilydale and Wheelers Hill are completed. Villa Maria again recognised as an Employer of Choice for Women for 2012 and 2013.

2013 - Villa Maria Berwick Aged Care Residence opens its new 16-bed wing, Casey House, and finishes renovations enabling the home to expand its services. Construction of a new Children's Respite House at Croydon gets underway