

Issue 47 2015  
Autumn

# VillaNews

KEEPING YOU CONNECTED

Physio services expanded

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Help us Build a Bus

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Seniors  
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Australia Day marks  
100th birthday

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**VILLA MARIA**

*For your wellbeing and specialised care*



# CEO's Message

It's been just over two months since I began as CEO of Villa Maria Catholic Homes. I was delighted to be appointed to the position and since then have been working steadily to set the foundations for the new merged entity and provide stability for staff. It is an exciting time for both organisations as we position ourselves for the future.

We are on track to complete the merger by July this year, however there is much to do. The Board and Executive is working to create the strategic plan and vision for Villa Maria Catholic Homes, and a Merger Implementation Committee is meeting fortnightly to ensure a smooth transition to the merged organisation. We have appointed the seven area general managers and company secretary of the restructured organisation – with an equal representation from both Villa Maria and Catholic Homes – and we are now in the process of confirming the senior management positions.

We continue to focus on changes within the aged care and disability sectors, preparing for the

full introduction of Consumer Directed Care (CDC) from July 1 this year and the National Disability Insurance Scheme from July 1 next year.

In addition, the Villa Maria Catholic Homes head offices will move to a central office in East Melbourne early in 2016, bringing together staff from multiple sites to ensure an integrated and consistent approach to service delivery.

During the merger process, Villa Maria and Catholic Homes will continue to provide their high quality, innovative services. I am pleased to note our aged care residence in Prahran, Villa O'Neill, underwent a successful accreditation process last month, achieving all 44 outcomes. The auditors openly praised the staff for the care and support they provide to residents, a great reflection on the efforts of the entire team.

We also started the year with positive news about a number of ongoing projects. Construction of St Joseph's Mews, a premium retirement development of 69 apartments in the heart of Hawthorn, remains on schedule, with 40 per cent of apartments already sold. Our luxury retirement living complex Athelstan Camberwell is almost completely sold, with just three of the 66 apartments remaining. We are also looking towards the opportunity of assisting the Corpus Christi Community Greenvale in developing their new residential facility for homeless men following the exciting announcement of a \$12 million capital grant from the Commonwealth Government.

Personally, I am passionate about public health and providing high quality services, having worked in the sector for 33 years. My positions have included Director of Finance at the Queen Elizabeth Geriatric Centre in Ballarat and CEO at hospitals in Kyabram, Warragul and Shepparton, and Northern Health in Melbourne.

I joined Catholic Homes as CEO in January, 2013, and have been pleased to oversee the expansion of the organisation's services in that time. In addition, I am a council member of the Victorian Institute of Forensic Mental Health.

My interest in strategy and development goes beyond the health sector. I enjoy military history and have visited Gallipoli three times, the Western Front twice, as well as Normandy, Dunkirk and Agincourt.

On a personal note, I am active in my local parish, am an avid reader, a frustrated writer, former director and vice president of the Victorian Country Football League, a dedicated father to three adult children and I love to cook. My wife and I are excitedly awaiting the arrival of our first grandchild this month.

I look forward to sharing more great news with you about Villa Maria Catholic Homes in the coming months. The future holds much hope and we are ready to embrace it.

Kind regards

**Greg Pullen**  
CEO

Our Values: Compassion, Accountability, Respect, Courage, Person Centred.

**VILLAMARIA**



Join the Villa Conversation on



L-R: New physios Andrew Volkoff, Mairead Hallissey and Ash Porwal

Villa Maria is expanding its physiotherapy services across its aged care residences to ensure continuity and quality of care.

Four new physiotherapists will be based at Bundoora and Berwick to provide full time, in-house care for residents from March.

They will provide services such as pain management programs, physiotherapy assessments, mobility reviews and falls reviews. Treatment is one-on-one in the resident's room.

The new physios replace the outsourced services previously offered at the residences.

Rehabilitation and Wellbeing Program Team Leader Jo-Ann Petersen said it was an expansion of the successful in-house services already provided at Wantirna and O'Neill in Prahran.

"By bringing the services in-house, we will have Villa staff, with Villa values, delivering services to Villa people," she said.

"We will be there more on site; they will have a physio there every day, which they haven't necessarily had before."

The physios underwent a two-week orientation period before heading out to their new sites. Mairead Hallissey and Ash Porwal will be at Bundoora, while Andrew Volkoff (all pictured) and Julie Rawlings will be at Berwick.

Ash is also the clinical physio co-ordinator, supervising the physios and liaising with residential care coordinators.

Bundoora residents will also reap the benefits of a more regular podiatry service. Lisa Johnstone, who also works at Berwick, will visit Bundoora once a fortnight.

Until now, an external podiatrist would visit the residence every six weeks. Jo-Ann says this ensures great continuity of care for residents.

The Rehabilitation and Wellbeing Centre is also expanding its programs in community services.

A new Occupational Therapist is conducting home visits to Eastern Community Services home care clients, assessing their living environments and providing advice on maximising their safety and independence.

While the OT will predominantly assist Eastern Community Services clients, she is also able to support other service areas.

She recently undertook an assessment for a resident at Athelstan Camberwell, and a Disability Services' respite house, Jo-Ann says.

"It's about strengthening and diversifying our allied health services for our clients," she says. 



# Tech grant aims to improve communication

Students at St Paul's College will have access to innovative technology to assist greater communication and improve social inclusion thanks to an Optus grant.

St Paul's was one of just 34 not-for-profit organisations around Australia to be awarded funding in the 2014 'yes' Optus Community Grants Program, receiving \$9,290.

The focus for this year's grants program was on assisting vulnerable young people through education and employability, inclusion and wellbeing, and access to technology.

St Paul's Music Therapist Louise Docherty said the grant would enable the school to purchase communication devices and software that would assist students to improve their ability to communicate.

For example, a new "Skoog" device allows students to hear their own voice used in a conversational way, leading to increased motivation for speech and language.

"It can be used by students who have difficulty accessing an iPad and has been shown to boost learning, creativity and language, and can provide a pathway to using an iPad/tablet," she said.

Louise said it was important for the students to have ongoing

access to the equipment, so it would be integrated into the classrooms and every day classes, including sport and art.

"The goal is for the students to communicate in a meaningful way within the school community and more broadly, ultimately reducing social isolation," she said.

"We are really excited to have received the funding from Optus, out of the 660 organisations that applied."

The one-year project will assess improvements to participation and communication for students, and a reduction in behaviours of concern. 

# Help us Build a Bus

*Villa Maria wants to provide more opportunities for students to have a reliable, safe way to get to and from school each day. And we need your help to do it.*



Danielle Burnet smiles as she watches her sons board the chaperoned bus to St Paul's College each morning. Sitting on the bus, she thinks they look so grown up and independent.

But in reality, Sebastian, 7, and Charlie, 6, are completely dependent on those around them. They have Multiple Sulphatase Deficiency, a debilitating condition that requires them to have 24 hour care and both are in wheelchairs.

Without the bus service, Danielle would have to choose which of her sons would go to school, as she can't fit both wheelchairs in the car.

"If I didn't have the bus, I would only be able to take one child to school, which would be quite sad because I have seen the boys thrive on the bus and at school," Danielle says.

Many families rely on the specially-modified chaperoned buses to get their children safely to and from St Paul's College each day.

However with just three buses, each transporting up to nine students, only 35 per cent of the school's students have access to the service.

*Villa Maria is launching a new fundraising campaign to help us "Build a Bus" and provide more opportunities for students to have a reliable, safe way to get to and from school each day.*

Villa Maria believes every child should have the right to get to school safely and benefit from the life-changing specialist educational, social and therapeutic benefits St Paul's College provides.

With your help, Villa Maria can 'Build a Bus' from the wheels up and ensure families like Danielle's have every opportunity to get their children to school.

"As a parent with children with disabilities you are limited physically and emotionally with what you're capable of doing and the school offers more than what I'm able to," Danielle says.

"I'm just thrilled they can go."

To learn more about the Build a Bus campaign or to donate, visit: [villamaria.com.au/buildabus](http://villamaria.com.au/buildabus) 

# "Reel" excitement

All the fun and excitement of the 2014 Villa Maria and Transurban Out & About Family Fun Day can now be seen on the small screen.

A short video of the 100 per cent accessible event held on November 30 features a chat with Out & About Ambassador, comedian Tim Ferguson, an all abilities Flash Mob dance, singer Kate Ceberano entertaining the crowd, and people of all ages and abilities enjoying modified sports like basketball, yoga and cricket.



We sincerely thank all the sponsors, Villa Maria staff, volunteers, people we support, their family members and friends for helping to make the day such a success.

You can enjoy the video by visiting [villamaria.com.au](http://villamaria.com.au) and clicking on the Our Videos tab. 



## Write a review, share your story

Do you use Villa Maria's award-winning Out & About app? Did it help you find an awesome accessible venue or event? Or do you know of venues not on the app you think should be included?

We want to hear about your experiences with the innovative free app so we can continue to make it the go-to guide to accessible venues and events across Melbourne and Victoria.

There are now some 2,000 venues and 1,000 events listed on the Out & About app, which is available for iPhone and Android.

Among the great venues listed, there are more than 100 in the Surf Coast Shire, and now you can check out dozens of accessible venues in the Frankston area.

We are continuing to load more information onto the app, but anyone can suggest venues and events for inclusion.

We'd love to hear what you think. You can do this in a number of ways:

- Write a review of a venue or event via the app
- Suggest a venue or event to include via the app
- Email [marketing@villamaria.com.au](mailto:marketing@villamaria.com.au) detailing your experiences
- Download the app, have a play around and email your thoughts to the above address

We're always keen to show people how the app has helped make life easier for people with disabilities or mobility limitations. If you're willing to share your story, or tell us your top five or 10 accessible venues in Melbourne, please let us know.

With your help, the Out & About app will continue to grow and

help makes the lives of everyone a bit more spontaneous.

To download the app for Android, visit the Google Play store at:

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.b2cloud.outandabout>

Or for iPhone and iPad, search "Out & About" in the iTunes app store. 





The Social Fairies are in full swing at Athelstan, Villa Maria's luxury retirement living complex in Camberwell.

On special days, they quietly fly in and leave gifts outside residents' doors: chocolates on Valentine's Day, flowers on Mother's Day, wine on Father's Day and cards for birthdays.

The residents get a real thrill out of it.

"When we did the Easter buns for the apartments, you would have thought you had given them a pot of gold," says Helen Mason, the chair of Athelstan's Social Committee.

A strong community is central to Athelstan, which has just three apartments remaining to be sold.

Regular social gatherings give residents plenty to do, such as an Australia Day luncheon, Christmas Dinner, a bus trip to Sorrento or a talk by a resident or featured guest.

The six-member Social Committee sets a busy events calendar each year.

Helen says it's a great way for residents to become connected, particularly those who are new to Athelstan.

"I think here the Social Committee is about being connected and listening and talking to people," she says.

"If you show a ready smile I think it makes a big difference, and all the committee members we have are good at that."

Mrs Mason says birthdays are particularly important for residents, especially those who are living alone.

"We put a card outside their door and they really appreciate it. One resident was so thrilled, he said not even his children remembered to do that," she says.

Then there's themed dinners and regular get-togethers over drinks and nibbles.

However Mrs Mason says there's no pressure to join in – it's up to each resident how much they want to be involved.

"It's all about making our latter years happier and a lovely sense of community." 

# Seniors get connected

iPads have opened up a whole new world for seniors at Villa Maria's Bundoora aged care residence.

Since the beginning of February, five residents aged between 77 and 98 have been taking part in weekly iPad training sessions, learning the ins and outs of the tablet computer and its functions.

The iPads are borrowed from Yarra Plenty Regional Library (YPRL) as part of Seniors Connect, a pilot program run by the library in partnership with Telstra and the State Government.

Villa Maria Bundoora Leisure and Lifestyle Coordinator Lydia Pisevski said the program was introduced to give residents greater independence and choice through access to the World Wide Web.

Lydia said accessing email and Skype to communicate with family members and friends, surfing the internet to research hobbies and interests, and participating in brain game apps such as Sudoku and Words with Friends (similar to Scrabble) had a positive impact on residents' emotional and social wellbeing.

However the process has not always been easy. While iPads have quickly become a necessity for many people of the younger generation since they were released in 2010, all but one of the seniors had never encountered one prior to the program.

"The residents have found it extremely challenging, because the technology is so foreign to them," Lydia explained. "However they are really excited and interested in learning how the iPad can enhance their lives."

Resident Joan O'Laughlin said she had learned many games on the iPad, keeping her entertained.



"I'm really enjoying the process, my son thinks it's marvellous."

Fellow resident Sr. Pat said: "In the beginning I found it challenging; you need finger dexterity, as well as brain power."

YPRL volunteer Beverley Dewar has been conducting training sessions for people aged over 60 since Seniors Connect began in September 2014.

"It is very rewarding assisting an older person to 'catch up' with regards to technology, especially when they become more confident and less fearful during the iPad training sessions. Most people are curious and eager to learn and pleasantly surprised by how easy the tablet is to use, especially the touch screen technology and the simplicity of the tablet," Beverley said.

"The benefits for the participants can include increased communication with family far away, having the independence to select and borrow e-books from the YPRL website, being able to challenge themselves with an online game or purely a conversation topic with their grandchildren."

**Seniors Connect is a free service for any YPRL member aged over 60. For more information call Rosanna Library on 9459 6171** 

100 years is an impressive age in anyone's book. It's even more amazing when you're still living independently at home, creating oil paintings, cooking up goodies for guests and tending to the colourful garden.

Villa Maria Northern Community Services home care package recipient Edna O'Halloran celebrated her 100th birthday on Australia Day in January, reaching a milestone very few of us achieve.

She acknowledged the feat with family and friends, including some of her six children, "about 22" grandchildren and 21 great grandchildren.

There was even a full page ad in the local Guardian Newspaper wishing her a happy birthday.

For the last six years Villa Maria has supported Edna to fulfil her

goal of remaining at home in northern Victoria as long as possible.

"I have always said I want to live and die in my own home. Whether I will be able to, that remains to be seen. Anyhow, I will try," she says matter-of-factly. "I think I'm very fortunate that I'm reasonably healthy."

Case manager Fiona Hawken says Edna is known for being very competitive in a weekly game of scrabble with her friends, and can be seen in town on her motorised scooter paying bills or doing the odd bit of shopping.

"Edna still enjoys cooking and always has something yummy to eat with a cuppa - I can recommend the Christmas cake and powder puffs," she says.

"Edna takes great pride in her garden and enjoys having fresh cut flowers in the house."

It was fitting then that Villa Maria marked her 100th birthday with a gorgeous bouquet of flowers and a card.

Fiona says Villa Maria has supported Edna with practical assistance, including housework, garden maintenance and, at times, help with shopping and meals.

Edna particularly likes the help with the garden. "I have a gardener come once a fortnight. He does a very good job, I'm very happy with him," she says.

When she retired many years ago, Edna took up painting, which she finds relaxing.

"I love it," she says. "I have sold a couple, but I don't try to sell them. I've got quite a few hanging around the house.

"I paint anything I see that appeals to me. I might see something in a magazine and think, 'I like that', so I paint it."

Edna is one of 209 people Villa Maria assists in Victoria's north-east and southern NSW through a range of home care packages. 



Edna and one of her family members



Edmund and Catherine Ryan with Community Services Case Manager Nada Sango-Stanisic

# Working together to maintain independence

Nada Sango-Stanisic epitomises Villa Maria's philosophy of working with people to meet their goals and maintain their independence.

Nada, a Community Services Case Manager, shares a special bond with Home Care Package recipients Edmund and Catherine Ryan, both aged 89.

She has been assisting the couple for almost five years, helping them develop tailored, personal care packages that include cleaning, shopping and gardening.

Edmund and Catherine say without that personal assistance, they would no longer be at home, or worse.

"I would not be here if I didn't have their help," Mrs Ryan says.

"My health would really go down and everything would get too much. Nada has been truly wonderful."

That bond is evident as the couple welcome Nada into their home and share stories about their family.

Villa Maria provides the couple weekly help with shopping and home maintenance including cleaning and hanging out washing, and fortnightly garden maintenance.

"The shopping is a great help. We used to leave it until late at night but it just got beyond us," Mrs Ryan says.

"People should not have any preconceived ideas about receiving home care, they should take any help they're offered," Mr Ryan says.

Research shows that enabling people to remain living in their

own homes and connected to their community is important for health, wellbeing and a sense of self sufficiency.

It also lessens the likelihood of premature admission into residential care and through regular contact, monitoring and support can reduce unnecessary hospital admissions.

Home Care Packages are among the many programs delivered by Villa Maria Community Services to assist thousands of older people to lead active, social lives while living independently in their own homes.

Nada says the Ryans understand home care is a collaborative effort.

"They are a good example of how we can work together," she says. "They value the support that is provided by Villa Maria and how we can help them achieve their goal of continuing to live in their own home." 

# Funding ensures ongoing harp therapy



Wednesday afternoons are particularly calm at Villa Maria's Wantirna aged care residence.

Residents relax in couches and arm chairs arranged around the lounge area, soaking in the melodies that drift peacefully from the strings of Carla Whiteley's harp.

Carla has run a Harp Therapy program at Wantirna for two years as part of the centre's innovative wellness program.

And now, a \$5,000 grant from the Pierce Armstrong Foundation will ensure residents continue to feel the healing benefits of the instrument for a long time to come.

Studies have shown the sounds and vibrations of the harp help to lower blood pressure, reduce heart rate, anxiety and pain levels, and bring a sense of calm, inner peace and emotional balance to listeners.

Carla, a trained harp therapist, plays for residents identified by staff as needing particular attention, and also performs in the lounge areas so everyone can enjoy the calming music. Wantirna Centre Manager Tania Bugat said the generous grant would ensure the program could continue.

Tania said the alternative therapy aligned with the centre's holistic model of care, enhanced the wellbeing and comfort of all residents and created a calming

environment for residents, families, visitors and staff.

"Our residents look forward to Carla's visits and thanks to the generous support of the Pierce Armstrong Foundation they can continue to benefit from the wonderful harp therapy," she said. 

# Easing the transition from high school

Villa Maria is helping young people with disabilities prepare for life after high school through a transition program at Gateway Services.

People leaving high school can find the transition to day options challenging as they deal with a new environment and mixed-age groups.

STEPS – Self-directed, Transitional, Experiences, Planning and Support – helps young adults integrate into day options before they leave school through a range of opportunities and structured learning experiences.

The service, now in its second year, was developed in consultation with the young adults and their families who attend the Gateway Services day program at Wantirna and Mt Waverley.

Gateway Wantirna and Mt Waverley Coordinator Sharon

Browne said the service evolved over the first year as their knowledge of what was important for the people accessing the service grew.

It has proved to be a huge success, with the individuals embracing the experiences and activities offered in the program, including computer technology, self-advocacy, independent living skills and creative arts.

“Over the past 12 months young adults participating in this service have had the opportunity to broaden their life experiences and social relationships,” she said.

Sharon said every Wednesday morning, the individuals would visit a café for morning tea, where they would use their own communication style and aids.

“In turn each person has been encouraged and supported to use their communication devices and styles to express their choice, and build relationships with each other and the people who work at and visit the café,” she said.



Sharon said an integral part of the service was consulting with the young people and their circles of support to tailor the program to meet an individual's needs.

Transition into the service begins during the student's last year at school. They then participate in the STEPS service for three years before permanently moving into the mixed-age group. 

## Thank You

The future of Villa Maria aged care residents living with dementia and their families is looking brighter thanks to more than \$43,000 in community donations.

Villa Maria's Christmas Appeal, launched in November, aims to raise \$261,000 to fund a life changing Dementia Care program to help provide specialist training to nurses and carers, support dementia care mapping, reach people in the community who have dementia, and help make the transition into aged care smoother for new residents and their loving families.

The call out followed a recent move by the Federal Government to end the dementia care supplement in residential aged care.

Generous donations of \$43,884 will go a long way to improving the lives of Villa Maria residents like Glenys and her devoted husband, Herman. Herman said despite the heartbreak of Glenys' early onset dementia diagnosis nine years ago, and subsequent health decline, he took comfort in knowing that his sweetheart of more than four decades was well taken care of at Villa Maria. 

## VILLA MARIA

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