

SEASONS

KEEPING YOU CONNECTED

ISSUE **53**

VMCH pool
milestone

A day for
golf lovers

Planning for
a happy future

Austin Street
celebration



MAKE A DIFFERENCE
TO OUR 'MAKE A
SPLASH' CAMPAIGN

TURN TO PAGE 12
TO DISCOVER HOW

MAKE A SPLASH CAMPAIGN



CONTENTS

03

CEO's message

04

Austin Street
celebrates

05

A place of friendship
and fun

06/07

Planning for
a happy future

08

'Encore' evokes
memories

09

Pool dream hits
milestone

10

Donor profile:
Sue Carrick

11

Golf lovers save
the date

12

Help us change
lives

SEASONS

We welcome your feedback and
contributions to Seasons.

Contact:

Louisa Ragas on 0408 136 437,
louisa.ragas@vmch.com.au

or

Mariza O'Keefe on 0406 382 560,
mariza.okeefe@vmch.com.au

CEO'S MESSAGE

July 1, 2016 marked one year since our two organisations Villa Maria and Catholic Homes united to become one and we are pleased to say the transition has been a successful one.

To acknowledge this great milestone, staff and volunteers from service sites celebrated the day with various events including a prayer service, Foundation Day cake and a rose bush planting service.

Someone who has been instrumental in driving this successful merger has been our inaugural CEO Greg Pullen and I want to take this opportunity to recognise his strong leadership during this time of transition.

Greg has advised that due to health reasons he will be resigning as CEO of VMCH on September 30, 2016.

He is also on leave until this time to concentrate on recovering from recent surgery – which I am happy to report went well and his prognosis is positive.

Until such time as Greg's replacement has been chosen, I have willingly accepted the role as VMCH's Acting CEO.

I hope you will join me in wishing Greg a full and speedy recovery and thank him for leading this organisation with great skill into new and exciting times.

Our spring edition of Seasons shares more stories about the programs and support VMCH is able to provide to people of all abilities, largely thanks to the support of our generous donors.

The NDIS has recently started its full rollout throughout Australia and is a time of great opportunity for us as an organisation and the people we support. We share the story of one family, their NDIS dreams and how VMCH hopes to help them and many more families.

Kind regards



Michael Dillon
Acting Chief Executive Officer



Last month we told readers of this newsletter about our Make a Splash campaign to raise money to transform our swimming pool used by adults and children with a disability.

I am delighted to say we have raised more than \$270,000, which is more than halfway towards our target of \$400,000.

Thank you to everyone who has generously supported this worthy campaign.



AUSTIN STREET CELEBRATES SIX YEARS OF MILESTONES

Austin Street, VMCH's permanent residence for young people with an acquired brain injury (ABI), celebrated its sixth birthday in August.

Opened on August 18 in 2010, this unique, purpose-built home, developed under the government's 'My future my choice' initiative represented a new era; a new model of support that blended nursing care with rehabilitation and community inclusion. It is the only home of its kind in Victoria and was the first of only two such residences in the nation.

While this makes Austin Street all the more amazing, it is also a sobering statistic as it means thousands of young Australians are still living in aged care homes as there are no other options open to them. ABI units exist in several metropolitan hospitals but they do not provide long-term support.

Austin Street in Alphington is specifically designed to be an enriched, warm and dynamic environment where the residents are encouraged to make their own life choices and remain connected to family, friends and the community.

"We encourage their independence and we ask all the residents what their personal dreams and goals are," says Austin Street Manager Jo Herbert.

"It's part of our philosophy to work *with* our residents, not for them, and to empower them to pursue their

dreams and independence. It doesn't matter if the dream seems unobtainable – we encourage them in that direction."

A high staff-to-resident ratio means that Austin Street residents receive intensive support aligned to their specific health, rehabilitation and personal care needs and preferences. A team of physiotherapists and allied health professionals visit residents who have 'slow to recover' funding ensuring they receive expert care to sustain and improve their health and wellbeing. If the resident does have this type of funding, they receive support from a Rehabilitation and Therapy Assistant. Twenty four hour nursing support at Austin Street also means residents receive clinical support and can avoid periods of hospitalisation.

Of the ten current residents at Austin Street, eight have been there since the house opened six years ago. It's a reflection of how successful this model of support is, but it does not mean that some residents are not making cognitive and physical gains.

"Many residents have made real progress," Jo says. "Gains for people with an acquired brain injury can take a long time, but the changes can be significant."

Louise Reed is one such resident. Following a stroke in her late 40s, Louise moved into Austin Street in 2013.

"It was hard for me at first, but I was relieved to be out of hospital," says Louise. "I have achieved a lot since coming here and appreciate that they treat us like real people and encourage us to be independent.

"We go out a lot and we do rehabilitation. Recently, I have practised standing again and I can now sit up by myself ... I go up to the local primary school once a week, where the students read their readers to me and it keeps me in touch with my teacher's aide training. I have learnt that being in a wheelchair doesn't stop you from doing what you want to do."

SUPPORT

You can support Austin Street by volunteering some of your time or making a donation. Visit www.vmch.com.au/get-involved/volunteer-services/ or www.vmch.com.au/donate-now

A PLACE OF FRIENDSHIP AND FUN

Don't let the tools fool you – this Men's Shed is more than just a workshop, it's a place of friendship and fun.

The VMCH Men's Shed in Wantirna has provided a safe-haven for men for more than a decade.

Each Tuesday and Friday, around 18 men aged over 65 pop into the shed to have a chat, a cuppa and work on some woodwork projects for their family members and friends. The seniors – who may have dementia, a physical disability, or are carers – are usually referred to the shed by local support agencies.

June 13–19 was Men's Health Week; aimed at raising awareness and prevention of men's health issues and to celebrate men's roles within the community.

Men's Shed supervisor Nicola Guida said the social aspect of the shed had a positive impact on the men's mental wellbeing.

"To put it simply, it's very important. It gives them an opportunity to be with other like-minded blokes to interact and bond. They actually share some pretty personal stuff sometimes which is helpful to them. They support and look out for one another and are good friends," Nic said.

"One of our newest members said he was fighting boredom at home, and now looks forward to his day at the centre."

Creating woodwork pieces including bird baths, pencil boxes and toys for their grandchildren also give the men a sense of purpose and accomplishment, Nic said.

Ferntree Gully resident Peter Hall, aged 86, has been attending the VMCH Men's Shed twice a week for the past three years.

A road accident some years back has left Peter with mobility issues. Without the Shed, Peter says he wouldn't have the opportunity to pursue his passion for woodwork.

"I enjoy it," Peter said. "Over the years I've made many things and I'm currently working on a placemat for hot pots made out of pegs."

The social side of the Shed is important to Peter, who admits his wife is "probably happy to see him out of the house!"

"All the fellas are very sociable. We don't talk (as) much as women – we're happy to sit for five minutes and enjoy the quiet – but we talk about all sorts of things; what we're up to and current affairs."

"TO PUT IT SIMPLY, IT'S VERY IMPORTANT. IT GIVES THEM AN OPPORTUNITY TO BE WITH OTHER LIKE-MINDED BLOKES TO INTERACT AND BOND. THEY ACTUALLY SHARE SOME PRETTY PERSONAL STUFF SOMETIMES WHICH IS HELPFUL TO THEM. THEY SUPPORT AND LOOK OUT FOR ONE ANOTHER AND ARE GOOD FRIENDS." – NICOLA GUIDA, MEN'S SHED SUPERVISOR

INTERESTED?

For more information about the VMCH Men's Shed visit www.vmch.com.au





PLANNING FOR A HAPPY FUTURE WITH HELP FROM THE NDIS

Carla wants her son Orlando to enjoy a happy life and have as much independence as possible.

For 11-year-old Orlando and his family, there are many challenges in front of them to achieve this because he has autism.

They hope the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) will help them face these challenges and achieve their goals.

“I would love to see him feel fulfilled. I don’t want him just to be looked after his whole life without

him having some sort of purpose. I’d love to see him doing something where he feels valued,” she said.

Essentially, the NDIS is the new way the Australian government funds and provides support for people with a permanent and severe disability. The scheme injects significant new money into disability services and will support a lot more people.

But it’s not just about more money. It’s a new mindset for disability services that puts choice and control in the hands of the person receiving the support.

It does this by giving eligible individuals with a disability funded plans to buy supports that most effectively meet their needs and goals.

Before the NDIS the Australian and state governments generally funded organisations directly to run disability services. The old system

“I WOULD LOVE TO SEE HIM FEEL FULFILLED. I DON’T WANT HIM JUST TO BE LOOKED AFTER HIS WHOLE LIFE WITHOUT HIM HAVING SOME SORT OF PURPOSE. I’D LOVE TO SEE HIM DOING SOMETHING WHERE HE FEELS VALUED.”
– ORLANDO’S MUM, CARLA

was criticised for being underfunded, disjointed, inequitable and burdened with long waiting lists.

Orlando’s family live in Melbourne’s north-east, an area which is the first in the state to enter the NDIS as it begins fully rolling out in July.

Carla likes the principles behind the NDIS.

“If it’s done well, it’s a fabulous idea,” she said.

“It’s about treating each person as an individual and giving them what they need.”

Orlando is a student at Villa Maria Catholic Homes’ (VMCH) specialist school St Paul’s College and he also accessed its early childhood intervention program from when he was four-years-old.

VMCH supports more than 500 children and adults with a disability throughout Victoria and is going on the NDIS journey with them.

VMCH Acting General Manager for Specialist Education and Disability Services David Williamson says the organisation is optimistic about the future of disability services under the NDIS.

“The NDIS will reduce barriers and make everyday life more accessible to Australians with a disability and this is the most exciting part of this significant reform,” he said.

“At last life choices and control will be in the hands of people with disabilities.

“People may expand their social circles within the community or choose to be an active member of the workforce. Access to increased supports, equipment or technology could assist a person to develop life skills and independence they never thought possible.”

You only need to look at some statistics to get a picture of the reality of life for many people with a disability in Australia.

An alarming 45 per cent of Australians with a disability live in or near poverty and their carers have been found to have among the lowest levels of wellbeing of any groups.

Only 36 per cent of Australians with a disability have completed year 12, compared to 60 per cent of people without a disability.

They are also almost twice as likely to be unemployed – 9.4 per cent of people with a disability compared to 4.9 per cent of people without a disability.

For VMCH these realities reinforce why its work in disability services is so important. The organisation aims to be the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne’s leading provider of high quality disability services and specialist education.

“The NDIS will enable VMCH to deliver on its mission to build inclusive, compassionate and sustainable communities,” Mr Williamson said.

“We are committed to people who are marginalised and disadvantaged, as everyone should get the opportunity to have an enriching and ordinary life. All people should live a life with the simple joys and opportunities many Australians take for granted.”

“THE NDIS WILL REDUCE BARRIERS AND MAKE EVERYDAY LIFE MORE ACCESSIBLE TO AUSTRALIANS WITH A DISABILITY AND THIS IS THE MOST EXCITING PART OF THIS SIGNIFICANT REFORM. AT LAST LIFE CHOICES AND CONTROL WILL BE IN THE HANDS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES.”
– DAVID WILLIAMSON, VMCH ACTING GENERAL MANAGER FOR SPECIALIST EDUCATION AND DISABILITY SERVICES

VMCH currently provides innovative and flexible services for babies right through to adults with a disability. It is also allocating resources to design new services specifically around the wants and needs of individuals.

“We are planning with our clients to support them to understand and navigate the NDIS. We want everyone to dream big and set life goals that they may not have considered before,” Mr Williamson.



'ENCORE' EVOKES MEMORIES

When Romany Flanderka created a playlist of her mother's favourite Jazz music she suspected it would have a powerful impact on her.

"Mum has always been involved with music – it's been a large part of her life," Romany says. "She grew up in a musical family and was a music teacher. When mum first popped on the headphones to hear her individual playlist, I thought of her saying *I'm home*."

Just like 91 year-old Edna Piera, music is bringing joy to many aged care residents at Villa Maria Catholic Homes and evoking memories in a way that only music can do.

Earlier this year, VMCH teamed up with the Music and the Brain Foundation to launch the 'Encore' personalised music program across 10 VMCH aged care residences. The Melbourne-based foundation is a community-based charity which promotes music as a therapy in the prevention, treatment and control of brain related disorders.

"Music is an extremely powerful tool," says the Foundation's Monica Cashin. "It can enhance creativity, learning, aid healing, decrease pain levels and increase optimism. For people living with dementia, it can also help to connect them to the present and to recover fond memories."

With support from their families and VMCH staff, aged care residents can create a playlist on an MP3 player, iPod, iPad or tablet device, and listen to it via headphones at their leisure. Bespoke all-in-one headsets are currently in production and will soon be available to residents, making the process of listening to their music even easier.

The 'Encore' program can also connect families and offer intergenerational benefits. "All generations have the opportunity to be involved in the collation of music for their loved one," says Monica. "This shared experience can help members of the younger generation learn more about their elders and, in so doing, act as a conversation point for everyone involved."

**"MUM SEEMS HAPPIER AND MORE RELAXED WHEN SHE LISTENS TO HER MUSIC. IT'S GIVEN HER A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE. I WOULD DEFINITELY ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO DO THIS FOR THEIR LOVED ONES IN CARE OR WITH DEMENTIA."
– ROMANY FLANDERKA**

The benefits of the 'Encore' music program on Edna are very apparent to her daughter. "Mum seems happier and more relaxed when she listens to her music. It's given her a better quality of life. I would definitely encourage others to do this for their loved ones in care or with dementia."

VMCH's Manager of Pastoral Care Services, Bridget O'Shannassy, agrees in the positive power of the program.

"Seeing the difference personalised music can make to someone is amazing. Music can help to brighten the soul and to see a smile or tap of a foot means it's working."

LEARN

For more information on the 'Encore' program at VMCH, please contact Bridget O'Shannassy on **0437 715 795**

POOL DREAM HITS MILESTONE

Villa Maria Catholic Homes wanted to Make a Splash for our warm-water pool and the people that use it. And we are excited to say we are on our way to doing that.

The Make a Splash campaign has raised over \$270,000 since it was launched earlier this year. That means we are more than halfway towards our target of \$400,000 to transform the pool used every day by adults and children with a disability.

VMCH Acting CEO Michael Dillon said people's generosity and support for the campaign has been heartwarming.

"Our warm-water pool is a place where people of all abilities can experience the joy and therapeutic benefits of water," Mr Dillon said.

"We are so grateful to everyone who has made a donation. Their donations will help us transform the pool which is in need of major repairs and a facelift to make it a truly special place for the people we support."

Several fundraising events have helped us achieve this outstanding total, including the Dinner & Art with Heart fundraising evening in June.

Many people have also responded to the co-campaign with the Progress Leader newspaper, which has generously highlighted the fundraising appeal with several stories in its newspaper.

The pool, located at St Paul's College in Kew, is special because it is accessible to people of all abilities, thanks to the dedicated VMCH staff who run the water-therapy programs, and the special equipment like hoists that assist people with even the highest needs to get into the pool.

The sad truth is that a lot of these children and adults would miss out on the joy of water if they did not have this swimming pool.

Gateway Services Kew, a day activity service for adults with a disability, uses the pool daily for water therapy activities.

Gateway Services Kew manager Kath Hill said the pool was a wonderful resource.

"Some people spend a significant amount of time in wheelchairs, their movement is often minimal, when they get in the water the water assists them with movements they usually would not encounter,

swaying, bending, even standing, the water relaxes that muscles and provides a wonderful experience for people," she said.

"The pool is a wonderful resource, but sadly it has aged significantly over the past 10 years.

"To have an environment that is new and state-of-the-art would be beneficial to everyone, it is such an amazing experience for people and we want to make it even more special with the new development."



VISION

Our dream is to transform our swimming pool from this (top image) into something vibrant, colourful and amazing like this architect's impression.

The people we support are so excited about this campaign. You can view a video on our website about our swimming pool fundraising campaign. <http://vmch.com.au/get-involved/fundraising/make-a-splash/>

We still need more than \$100,000 to make this vision a reality and your help can get us there. You can donate by calling **1800 036 377** or visit our website **www.vmch.com.au**

DONOR PROFILE: SUE CARRICK

People give for many reasons: because they believe in a particular cause; because they wish to 'give back' to their community; because they want to improve the lives of others less fortunate than themselves.

Essentially to give is an act of the heart. And, 83 year-old Sue Carrick has plenty of 'heart.'

Sue has been consistently donating to Villa Maria (now Villa Maria Catholic Homes) for almost 40 years. Her connection to Villa Maria goes back to the 1970s, through her local parish Saint Roch's in Glen Iris.

"I met Sister Donovan, a retired Presentation nun, at my parish in the late '70s. At that time, Sister Donovan was raising funds for a new Villa Maria facility in Wantirna for vision-impaired people," recalls Sue.

"I visited the facility when it opened in 1979 and it was a wonderful place. Of course, it's expanded so much over the years and now encompasses aged care, disability and community services."

From that point on, Sue made regular donations to Villa Maria and is now one of our longest-standing and most passionate supporters.

In 2007, the year of Villa Maria's centenary celebrations, Sue visited St Paul's College, our specialist school in Kew, with a group of other donors.

"I couldn't believe the marvellous work the staff were doing with the children and adults there, many with severe physical and mental disabilities," Sue recalls. "It really touched me and also opened my eyes to the challenges some people have in their lives."

This experience strengthened Sue's commitment to Villa Maria and the work the organisation was doing in the community.

Sue has never specified how her donations should be used.

"I believe whatever I give will be used in the best way," she says. "I've also gotten a lot back from Villa Maria. I've made many friends and, one day, if need to go into care, I'd like to go to one of your aged care residences. It will feel like home."

"I BELIEVE WHATEVER I GIVE WILL BE USED IN THE BEST WAY. I'VE ALSO GOTTEN A LOT BACK FROM VILLA MARIA. I'VE MADE MANY FRIENDS AND, ONE DAY, IF NEED TO GO INTO CARE, I'D LIKE TO GO TO ONE OF YOUR AGED CARE RESIDENCES. IT WILL FEEL LIKE HOME." – SUE CARRICK



GIVE

If you'd like to make a donation to VMCH please visit

www.vmch.com.au/donate-now



GOLF LOVERS SAVE THE DATE

The **Make a Splash** campaign hits the golf course to raise more money for the Villa Maria Catholic Homes warm-water pool.

Our annual Charity Golf Day will be held on Friday October 14 and all money raised on the day will go towards this worthy cause.

The Ambrose competition will be held at the Southern Golf Club in Keysborough.

There are lots of great ways to support this event.

Corporate sponsorships are available as well as individual player spots.

If golf is not your thing you can support the day by donating items to a raffle being drawn on the day.

The day is also a great networking opportunity, while raising money for this very exciting cause.

If you want to donate to the raffle or join in on the day please call Narrelle Paige on 9926 2412 or email Narrelle.paige@vmch.com.au

SAVE THE DATE!
VILLA MARIA
CATHOLIC HOMES
CHARITY GOLF DAY

OCT
14

ENJOY

For more information about this fun day of fundraising call Narrelle Paige on **9926 2412** or email Narrelle.paige@vmch.com.au

YOU CAN MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE TO THE LIVES OF OTHERS BY SUPPORTING VILLA MARIA CATHOLIC HOMES.

Whether through a one-off contribution or ongoing donation, your generosity will help put a smile on the faces of some of the most vulnerable people in our community.

Thank you for your support.



YES! I WOULD LOVE TO SUPPORT VMCH AND GIVE MONTHLY.

\$10 \$15 \$20 \$30 Other \$

I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A ONE-OFF DONATION

to the 'Make a Splash' appeal to help raise funds for the transformation of the Villa Maria Catholic Homes warm-water pool that provides life-changing health benefits and joy to adults and children with disabilities.

\$25 \$50
 \$73 \$125



\$ amount of choice

DEBIT / CREDIT CARD

I authorise VMCH to charge the amount selected by me to my credit card.

Cardholder's Name:

Credit Card Number:

Expiry: / Visa Mastercard

Cardholder's Signature:

YOUR DETAILS

Mr / Mrs / Miss / Dr / other

Name:

Address:

Suburb:

State: Postcode:

Phone:

Email:

DONATIONS OF \$2 AND OVER ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE.

- Please find enclosed my cheque made payable to Villa Maria Catholic Homes
- I am considering leaving a bequest and would like more information
- I wish to find out more about making a monthly gift
- If you do not wish to receive further communication from VMCH, please tick this box

Villa Maria Catholic Homes is committed to protecting your privacy. If you prefer not to receive mail from VMCH, please let us know by writing 'do not mail' on this coupon and return it to PO Box 134, East Melbourne 8002.

Postal Address PO Box 134, East Melbourne VIC 8002
 T: 03 9926 2000 Freecall: 1800 036 377 F: 03 9287 5575
 W: vmch.com.au/donate-now

Join the conversation

