

Strong traditions, strong future



Uniting AgeWell Board Chair Rev Allan Thompson with Carnsworth Community resident Norma Bell

OCTOBER is a time the broader community focusses on seniors and the valuable contributions they have made, and continue to make, to our community. Not only is Seniors Week celebrated in Victoria and Tasmania in the first two weeks of the month, but Uniting AgeWell recognises the organisation's rich history of caring for older people through its Foundation Day events. These events include our annual Employee of the Year awards for outstanding staff achievement, as well as celebrations across our communities, from garden parties to art and craft exhibitions.

At Uniting AgeWell, our focus is on supporting older people to age well and live the life they want. Our aim is for all seniors to experience a sense of wellbeing, choice and independence at every age and stage of their lives, to feel they are valued members of their community and to have easy access to the services they need. This requires us to continuously improve our services to older people through innovation and development. Over the past 12 months we have implemented numerous initiatives to ensure we do just that. We introduced the innovative AgeWell Community Advisory Committee (ACAC) to advise the Uniting AgeWell Board on

future directions for the organisation from a customer's perspective. A formal committee of the Board, we believe this is the first community advisory committee in the aged care sector. This initiative enables the organisation to engage with its clients and the broader community on how it delivers and improves its services and plans for the future. The members of this Committee have made an enthusiastic start

Last month the Governor of Tasmania opened the Uniting AgeWell Community Hub in Hobart. This one-stop-shop connects older people in southern Tasmania to the services they need to age well. It enables seniors to learn about our community services, independent living options and residential aged care, while also helping them to navigate the often complex federal government referral system.

As an expression of the Church at work, we have a responsibility to meet the needs of our seniors and ensure all people can live to their potential.

to their work.

Early next year we will begin construction of two state-of-the-art residential aged care facilities at Preston and Hawthorn. Contemporary retirement living will also be co-located at Hawthorn. These significant facilities will be models for Uniting AgeWell into the future. This year we opened a new wing at Manor Lakes in Wyndham Vale, and we have also undertaken a major refurbishment at Condare Court in Camberwell.

Following the resignation of Valerie Lyons as Executive Director/CEO in July this year, the Board appointed Andrew Kinnersly as the organisation's new CEO. Andrew comes to us from Ballarat Health Services, where he was Chief Financial Officer and has been acting CEO for most of the past 12 months. Andrew begins in the role on 3 October and I welcome him to UA.

I was delighted the Synod Standing Committee this year passed a resolution

affirming the importance of Uniting AgeWell's work within the Church. This was reaffirmed at the Victoria and Tasmania Synod 2016 meeting in June. This resolution acknowledges the growing need for quality senior services in our community. We have an ageing population, including ageing congregations, which will require ongoing high quality services to assist and enable them to age well.

As an expression of the Church at work, we have a responsibility to meet the needs of our seniors and ensure all people can live to their potential. Pastoral and spiritual care is fundamental to Uniting AgeWell's philosophy to enable people to age well, and we see each and every day how a caring and supportive community has far-reaching benefits.

Please take the time to read about the many wonderful achievements of Uniting AgeWell clients and staff in our special Foundation Day feature. These stories show that ageing is a positive stage of life where people remain connected, active, and lead meaningful lives.

**Rev Allan Thompson
Uniting AgeWell Board Chair**

1437

**AGED CARE
BEDS**



2500

**STAFF IN 152
DIFFERENT ROLES**



4290

**COMMUNITY
CLIENTS**



437

**INDEPENDENT
RETIREMENT LIVING
UNITS**



683

VOLUNTEERS



4329

**MEALS SERVED EACH
DAY TO AGED CARE
RESIDENTS**





Finding relief in music

A UNITING AgeWell music therapy program is bringing comfort and relief to people living at home with dementia, as well as providing a much needed break for their carers. Music For David uses specially selected music on an iPod to soothe yet gently stimulate people agitated or withdrawn due to the effects of dementia and mental health issues. Not only does it provide a meaningful, relevant and enjoyable activity for the person with dementia, the program also supports

carers by offering short-term respite from the demands of their loved ones. For one client and their carer, it has meant they can enjoy trips to their beach house again. The hour-long drive had become a nightmare for Dawn, who would get extremely anxious as her husband yelled at her from the back seat. "He is the worst backseat driver but now, with the program, he puts on the headphones and sits in the car humming peacefully to himself," she said. Music For David has also made a huge

difference to Uniting AgeWell Girrawheen Centre client, Ray McSweeney (pictured). He was able to access the program thanks to a fundraising campaign by Brighton café Tuccibrown and the Brighton Lions Club. Music For David was established in memory of Rev David Hodges, the minister at Toorak Uniting Church until his retirement in 1983. Uniting AgeWell supported David and his partner, musician David Ross-Smith, from 2011 until his death the following year, and music played a significant role in David's care.

Ray tests out his new iPod with Girrawheen Centre Coordinator Rossella Frezza, left, and Music Therapist Winifred Beevers

The Friends of Music For David, headed by David Ross-Smith, organise a number of concerts each year to raise funds for the Music For David Program. David said the money raised would allow more people with dementia to access music therapy. "Music is not only beneficial for people with dementia, it also has therapeutic effects on healthy people as well," he said.

To find out more about Music For David and upcoming fundraising concerts, visit: unitingagewell.org



Connecting people through spiritual care

SPIRITUAL and pastoral care within a supportive community is fundamental to Uniting AgeWell's philosophy to enable people to age well. Last year, UA's pastoral care outreach reached a significant milestone, with dedicated chaplains at all of its residential communities across Victoria and Tasmania. Rev John Clarke, Uniting AgeWell Director of Mission, said UA's focus was

on supporting older people to experience a sense of wellbeing, choice and independence at every age and stage of their lives. "The role of chaplaincy is more important than ever, as we not only support people transitioning into aged care, but their families as well," John said. "We support residents and their families through the challenges of ageing and dying well by offering the opportunity to genuinely connect and get in touch with a

sense of meaning and purpose. "This is the essence of spiritual care." It is just one part of Uniting AgeWell's spiritual focus. In 2014 UA introduced ListenWell, a pastoral care program that aims to increase pastoral care and community connections within aged care residences. ListenWell involves training volunteer pastoral visitors to provide pastoral care for residents under the oversight of UA chaplains. Volunteers are matched with

Chaplain Robyn Tomkins shares many laughs through connecting with residents

suitable residents for regular visits. "Research has found older people have spiritual needs regardless of faith or religion, and unmet spiritual needs may result in depression, anxiety, hopelessness, challenging behaviours and ongoing dissatisfaction," John said. "At UA, everyone plays a role in offering spiritual care that is complementary to the role provided by chaplains and pastoral care workers."

Working towards a Rainbow Tick



Strathdevon Manager Integrated Services, Vicki Pollock, right, accepts The Dorothies Award on UA's behalf from Working It Out Tasmania Executive Officer, Susan Ditter

UNITING AgeWell has a long history of providing services for older people irrespective of their faith, cultural background, gender or sexual identity. Two years ago, the organisation made caring for people from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) community a priority.

About 11 per cent of the Australian population – approximately 2.6 million people – identify as LGBTI. A La Trobe University study last year found many older LGBTI people fear discrimination from aged care and health service providers and avoid accessing vital services.

Uniting AgeWell General Manager Victoria North West and co-chair of Uniting AgeWell's LGBTI Working Group, Vicki Jacques, said LGBTI ageing is a unique and

important experience requiring a considered, consultative and systemic approach. "Uniting AgeWell shares the Uniting Church in Australia's spirit of embracing diversity, respecting differences, being open to discuss controversial issues and what it means to be inclusive of all people," she said. Vicki said the organisation established a senior executive LGBTI Working Group and a special interest group to develop their strategy and practice standards. Staff training sessions have been conducted with Transgender Victoria, Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria and Working It Out in Tasmania. Standard administration forms and procedures, including admissions forms, have been updated to ensure they are LGBTI inclusive.

A recent survey found more than two thirds of staff believed it was important Uniting AgeWell was an LGBTI inclusive service. In May this year, the organisation won a prestigious Dorothies Award. The annual Tasmanian award, from Working It Out Tasmania, acknowledged Inclusive Practice for LGBTI elders in a faith-based care service. Uniting AgeWell is now working towards Rainbow Tick accreditation, which recognises an organisation's commitment to safe and inclusive service delivery for people from the LGBTI community.

"This signifies that we have worked to make our services welcoming of the LGBTI community and able to meet their needs," Vicki said.

"We still have much work to do, but we are well on our way."

An incredible life told through My Story

BEHIND the beaming smile of 94-year-old Stan Bryar lies an amazing story of hardship and love. The Kingsville resident's story of growing up through the Great Depression was captured through Uniting AgeWell's My Story project, which celebrates the life stories of clients using interviews and photos. My Story aims to reconnect clients with their life histories and passions, build community between clients and 'story catchers', and foster a sense of wellbeing.

Stan's daughter, Lynette Elg, said the My Story project was an amazing initiative offered by Uniting AgeWell.

"Dad has lived a very full life and has been through many hardships," she said.

"Dad also has dementia so it is lovely to capture his story and have this book about his life. It means a lot to our family."

PAT Muskett has a busy social life, is heavily involved in her church and is always helping out her large family. But due to ill health and the increased risk of falling, the 81-year-old isn't as mobile or active as she used to be. And getting around the large home she shares with her husband has become more difficult. Pat is one of hundreds of people living in the community who receive a Home Care

Package (HCP) from Uniting AgeWell to help them remain independent and active in their communities.

Each week, the Hobart resident receives help with cleaning, ironing, personal care and gardening.

Uniting AgeWell also organised the renovation of Pat's bathroom to make it wheelchair accessible, along with the installation of a ramp in her home to make getting around easier.

"Without the support (of Uniting AgeWell) I don't think we'd be able to stay at home," Pat said.

"They are just great. They're just here and help me in whatever way I want."

"Who would want to move from a place like this? And because I have as much help as I do, there's no need for me to go anywhere else."

"They can carry me out in a box!"

Uniting AgeWell offers a range of tailored support and programs to enable seniors in Victoria and Tasmania to live independently at home for as long as possible.

These include Home Care Packages, social support such as day outings and activity groups, allied health and therapy services, and respite programs.

To find out more about how Uniting AgeWell supports people at home, visit unitingagewell.org



Pat Muskett and Uniting AgeWell Care Worker Jill Gluskie

Taking control of health and wellbeing

REMAINING physically well is vitally important for older people. Tai Chi, walking groups, weight classes – there are many ways people can remain active and restore their physical independence and wellbeing as they age.

Uniting AgeWell's allied health and therapy services offer a range of programs and activities to assist older people to regain or maintain their abilities.

Glenda Plavin is Uniting AgeWell's Community Programs Coordinator at Hawthorn and Oakleigh Allied Health and Therapy Services. She said for many people, regaining their abilities gave them a renewed sense of purpose and empowerment.

"Restorative care is about maintaining a person's capabilities so they can continue to function in their own environment," Glenda said.

"It may also be about teaching a person different ways of achieving tasks after a setback or injury. Therefore, instead of feeling 'useless', a person can continue to function within their community."

An important part of Uniting AgeWell's programs is co-design. A focus on designing

programs with clients gives them ownership over their health and wellbeing, leading to greater engagement and enjoyment. Uniting AgeWell has developed a number of co-design programs with the Council on the Ageing (COTA) in Victoria and Tasmania, including at Strathdon Allied Health and Therapy Centre's unique HUR gym designed just for seniors.

"Encouraging a person to take control of their health condition and learning how to manage it day-by-day increases their self-confidence," Glenda said.

Older people living in the community can access Uniting AgeWell's allied health and therapy services such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech pathology, podiatry and nursing services.

Uniting AgeWell centres also offer specialised programs for people with specific health problems.

Hawthorn runs a low-intensity physical activity program called Heartmoves for people with stable, long-term chronic health conditions.

At Strathdon in Forest Hill, a Parkinson's Support Group enables people to share concerns and experiences about the disease and help maintain physical and cognitive function in a supportive environment.

To find out more about Uniting AgeWell's allied health and therapy programs, call the team on T: 1300 783 435.



Myotherapist Karen Ferguson co-designs a HUR Gym program with Mima Mitchell

Café culture complements Uniting AgeWell's communities

TWICE a week, Marie Johnston can be found enjoying a catch up over coffee at the Strath-Haven Café.

The 90-year-old doesn't have to go very far for her skinny latte – the café is part of Uniting AgeWell's Strath-Haven Community aged care residence in Bendigo, where Marie and her husband Jim have lived for almost four years.

"When the family comes in I love to go to the café and enjoy a coffee and cake with them," she said.

"It feels like you're going out – I can take Jim (who lives in the memory support area) with me and it's like an outing for him."

Located at the front of the building, the café has also become a welcome place for community catch ups, with local walking groups using it as a destination point. Marie's story is not uncommon in UA.

Over the past few years, many Uniting AgeWell communities have introduced on-site cafés.

Uniting AgeWell Infrastructure Project Officer Angelina Penaluna said the cafés enhance the community of UA's residential sites, acting as communal hubs for residents and, in some cases, the public.

"It provides residents and their families and friends a sense of a 'going out experience' without needing to go far," she said.

"Many of our cafés also sell a variety of everyday items such as toiletries, stamps, postcards and baby clothes our clients can purchase for newborn grand and great grandchildren."

The newly redeveloped Manor Lakes Community in Wyndham Vale is the latest site to include a café, which it is hoped will become a regular place for locals to catch up.



On-site cafes offer a welcome meeting place for residents and families



Melbourne | Geelong | Bendigo | Gippsland
Southern Tasmania | Northern Tasmania

Uniting AgeWell **A different approach to ageing**

At Uniting AgeWell, our focus is on supporting older people to experience a sense of wellbeing, choice and independence at every age and stage of their lives, to feel valued members of their community, and to have easy access to the services they need to live the life they want.

It's what we call ageing well.

We offer a range of options to support the health and wellbeing of seniors, including:

- ▶ residential care
- ▶ home care
- ▶ independent living
- ▶ respite
- ▶ social support
- ▶ therapy programs

Call the Uniting AgeWell team today to find out how we can support you to live well with choice, independence and peace of mind.

T: 1300 783 435 or visit unitingagewell.org

