

Spring 2021

VASEY RSL CARE NEWS

The Quarterly Newsletter of Vasey RSL Care

Continuing the Mission in Regional Victoria

We have made an important step forward on our 10-year Strategic Plan with the purchase of three units for veterans or war widows at Wodonga. This area has a large community of veterans due to the Australian Army bases nearby and has been identified as one of the regional areas where Vasey RSL Care's accommodation services are needed.

The three single-storey two-bedroom units are around 60m² with private back yards. They are located approximately 2km from the centre of Wodonga.

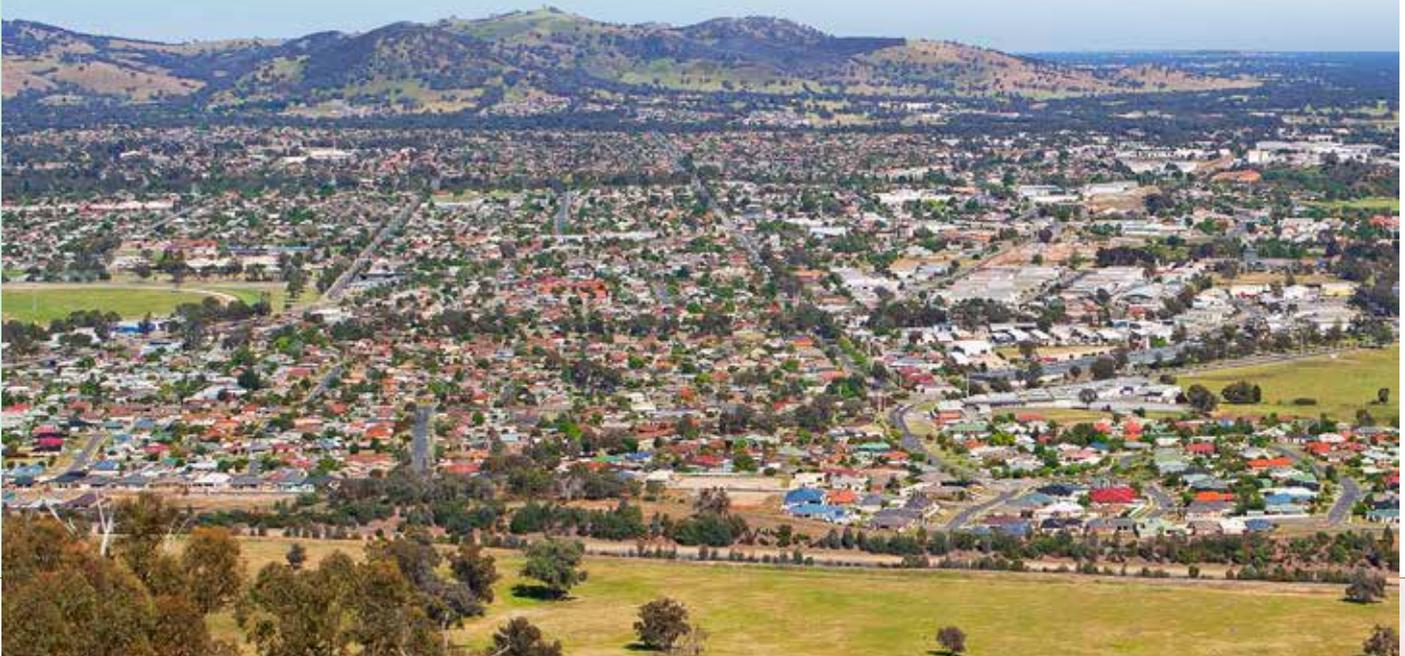
"A year ago, we released our White Paper, '*Continuing the Mission: Understanding and responding to the needs of the veteran community*,'" said Janna Voloshin, Vasey RSL Care CEO. "That document set out our Vision for ways in which our organisation could extend its services to support veterans in need. Our lack of accommodation in regional Victoria is one area we are working to address, with this purchase being our first step."

Wodonga is home to three Australian Army Bases, Wadsworth Barracks and Gaza Ridge Barracks, both at Bandiana, and Latchford Barracks at Bonegilla. Many veterans remain in the area after they leave the forces

and while the majority have a smooth transition to civilian life, some experience difficulties in transferring their skills into the civilian workforce, or experience mental health issues, family breakdown or other issues. This can result in homelessness, or marginal homelessness, where they are staying with mates indefinitely or living in temporary accommodation.

"Doing more to help these younger veterans is one of our key objectives," said Janna. "There are many groups in the Wodonga region offering a range of veterans' services and we look forward to building strong relationships with them so together we can help get these younger veterans back on their feet."

Wodonga has around 43,000 inhabitants and is home to a large number of veterans due to the three army bases just outside the city. (Photo by Michael Bell.)



From Our CEO

The Ongoing Pandemic

I hope you are all continuing to maintain your physical and mental health during this extended period of uncertainty and worry.

Our thoughts are with our NSW neighbours and all those with loved ones in parts of the world only just beginning to roll out the vaccines – that affects many of our staff and is a grave concern. Although over 40% of the global population has now received at least one vaccine dose and around 30 million doses are being administered daily, just 1.9% of people in low-income countries have received their first dose.

Here, vaccination becomes mandatory for aged care staff from 17 September: we are on target to have a fully vaccinated work force with just a handful of people declining and a few exemptions on medical grounds. We do not anticipate any impact to our staffing rosters but will be very sorry to lose those staff who are declining to have the vaccination without a medical exemption.

It is disappointing that media coverage has been so negative around COVID-19 vaccination: the aged care sector as a whole has worked extremely hard to achieve vaccination of their staff in difficult circumstances.

Living in Lockdown

Life has become somewhat monotonous for us all as some of the most locked-down people in the world! But I want to assure you that our staff are showing great initiative to bring fun and enjoyment into the lives of our residents in aged care (see page 4), and our Veteran Services Team are continuing to check in on our Ex-Service Accommodation tenants. If you have a loved one in the Vasey RSL Care community and are concerned about them, please do let us know.

Ivanhoe's Doors Close for Now

With all our Ivanhoe residents moved to their new homes by early July, the doors closed: it is the end of an era and a sad time for those who called this home.

We are grateful to the residents and their families for their understanding of the need for this upheaval. I hear that they are settling in well and getting to make new friends and take part in the regular activities.



We have also retained some of our Ivanhoe staff who have moved to our other sites: however, we were unable to offer suitable roles to all and some took the redundancy packages available: making decisions for the organisation that affect the lives of our residents and staff is one of the most difficult aspects of this role and I wish the very best to those staff who have moved to new roles – I know their new employers are lucky to have them.

I sincerely appreciate the support everyone has shown for the longer-term goals of our organisation.

Continuing the Mission

Our Board has been developing the Strategic Plan for the next four years and are now finalising it with the aim to have it published by the end of October.

As we define our action plans for the new 'V' Centre, we are undertaking a comprehensive research project to engage those with first-hand knowledge and experience – veterans and war widows. The research project is well under way with the full results expected before the end of the calendar year (see page 7 for more).

As you may have read on the front page, planning is also turning into action for another part of our strategy, with the purchase of three units at Wodonga: this is our first step in providing accommodation to the veteran community in areas with higher veteran populations outside of Metropolitan Melbourne. Our expertise in accommodation will integrate with other veteran-specific services to help veterans in need right across our state.

Janna Voloshin
Chief Executive Officer





Vietnam Veterans' Day Commemorated

At Vasey RSL Care Frankston South, wreaths were laid in memory of those lost in Australia's participation in the Vietnam War between 1962 and 1973.

Over 50,000 Australians fought in Vietnam, 521 were killed and 3,129 were wounded.

One of the most controversial aspects of Australia's participation was the 'conscription lottery' instigated in 1964 with 20-year old men drawn at random to serve 2 years full time in the Army: many of these young men went to Vietnam.

Vietnam Veterans Daryl and Ted are pictured laying wreaths with Acting Residential Manager Rachel and Lifestyle Coordinator, Ruwan.



Co-designing for Greater Satisfaction

Co-design is an important concept that goes beyond consultation, and further even than collaboration, to a point where the individuals using services are fully involved with their design and development: co-designing - designing together - is about achieving the optimum outcome.

When the new Australian Aged Care Standards came into practice on 1 July 2019, the most important aspect, applying both to home care and residential aged care, was 'person-centred care' that would ensure that the individual's dignity and choice were paramount.

Beginning this year across our residential aged care community, regular Consumer Engagement Forums have been instigated, each one on a topic of importance in our provision of high quality aged care. The Forums are presented by residents to representatives of the Board of Directors and the Executive Management Team, ensuring that the messages get straight to our decision-makers.

Interested residents take an active part in researching a particular topic among their peers, collating the research and presenting it to the meeting.

Thanks to COVID, forums have been held via Zoom. This has proved beneficial in removing transport

requirements and allowing all residents to watch the forum via the big screens in their lounges.

The inaugural Forum in March, researched residents' views on the qualities they value in the staff caring for them, the criteria for selecting new staff and the questions they would like to see asked.

The second Forum in June focused on the service environment in aged care, and residents at each site researched the aspects that overall were most and least liked, providing videos demonstrating some of the issues they raised, and offering recommendations.



Life at Our Residential Care Homes

Below: Rose leads the Brighton East Balladeers in a practice of the highly appropriate 'Don't Fence Me In'.

Right & below right: Beryl from Bundoora celebrates 100 years with many cakes (and why not?) and Pat from Brighton also celebrates turning 100, with a lovely cake and the chef who made it. Congratulations to both ladies!



Below: Bundoora residents had their own Olympic Games complete with a Torch Relay, opening ceremony, bean bag toss, quoits and the most popular, nerf gun shooting. Medal ceremonies (as seen below) and a closing ceremony completed the Bundoora Olympics. Congratulations to all our athletes both here and those other ones in Tokyo.

Above & right: Frankston South residents Beryl, Louis, Barbara and Bill take part in 'Show & Tell' with crafts, medals, a souvenir snake and a lot of jigsaws.



Below: staff and residents at Bundoora create a colourful and vibrant celebration of Indian Independence Day with national costumes, dancing and of course, food.





Our Commitment to Veterans' Employment

Supporting veterans is at the core of the work we do and Vasey RSL Care carries this mission into its employment practices as well. We know that veterans are motivated, resilient and proven problem solvers who have skills to add value far beyond their service experience.

In 2020, the Prime Minister's Veterans' Employment Program was set up to raise awareness of the skills, values and experience that veterans bring to the civilian workplace. This financial year, the program has been strengthened with additional initiatives and now offers the Prime Minister's Veterans' Employment Awards, the program website which offers advice and resources, their enhanced employment support, and the Veterans' Employment Commitment.

This last initiative offers organisations and businesses the opportunity to publicly commit to supporting greater opportunities for veterans.

Vasey RSL Care has signed the Veterans' Employment Commitment to demonstrate our support for employing ex-service men and women. We already have ex-service men and women in a range of roles across all areas, including Personal Care Workers, Lifestyle Assistants, Veteran Support staff and Human

Resources. These employees have *lived experience* that they can share with those around them. Their knowledge helps broaden our organisation's understanding of what it means to serve and what that might mean for those in our care.

Our aged care residents, home care clients and ex-service accommodation residents value the mutual experiences and understanding that these staff members offer.

Through our job advertisements, we encourage those with service experience to apply and we are actively working to increase the number of ex-service people in our workforce.

Additionally, we have joined forces with other veteran-focused care providers in other states to encourage introduction of ex-service staff or defence partners in instances where employees move interstate: we go a step further to provide support and feedback with ex-service candidates for roles.



Above: Anne Warden joined the Veteran Services Team earlier this year, supporting residents in our ex-service units.

"My previous service in the Army gives me a level of insight and understanding that is critical in a support role with veterans."



Above: Wayne Urand is Team Leader Enrolled Nurse at our Bundoora aged care home and previously worked at our Frankston South home.

"I have achieved a feeling of continued service to my community through caring for fellow veterans and their families. I love the interactions I am able to have with the older veterans and the different stories that we can share about our time in the forces."



If you know an ex-service man or woman who may be a good match for our team, please encourage them to reach out to us at recruitment@vaseyrslcare.org.au

Researching the Needs of Our Community

'Continuing the Mission' requires us to have a full understanding of the changing needs of the veteran community so we can respond by developing the services they require. We have contracted Ellis Jones to carry out a comprehensive research project to give us the data we need.

The initial phase of the research project was in-depth interviews with experts in veterans' services across support, accommodation and employment.

From this, an online survey was developed to engage with veterans, partners, ex-partners and war widows/widowers in Victoria. Participation has been above expectations with nearly 500 people responding: this will give weight to the findings and confidence in our future plans.

The third phase was a series of Focus Groups via Zoom, with people with lived experience and/or close working experience. Some were metro-based and some regional with participants from the ex-service community including the Vietnam Veterans Association Australia (VIC) members, RSL sub-branch members, residents from our ex-service accommodation and representatives from ex-service organisations that offer welfare and support.

Our four Key Objectives are long-term objectives which we don't expect to achieve alone: our goal is now to identify where we can work with existing organisations

Vasey RSL Care's four Key Objectives:

1. To work towards ending veteran homelessness
2. To adapt our aged care services to support the changing needs of older veterans/war widows
3. To offer long-term affordable accommodation
4. To build support services around the needs of younger ex-service people

and groups offering complementary services towards a better outcome for all veterans.

Once the results of this work are known, we will continue to work with Ellis Jones on service solutions.



Behaviour Support Plans Make Life Better

We all behave according to a whole range of influences, and for the most part, we are able to manage our behaviour and the way we respond to what is going on around us. However, when we experience illness, cognitive impairment or mental health problems, our ability to control our responses to our environment is affected. This is difficult for the individual and for those around them.

When we can express our needs, asking for what we want is straightforward – we're cold, we ask for a blanket; we're thirsty, we ask for a drink.

For those unable to communicate their needs, that difficulty can lead to frustration or withdrawal. This type of behaviour change indicates distress for the individual themselves and is upsetting for those around them, whether it's their loved ones or care workers. This type of behaviour can sometimes be classed as 'disruptive' or 'inappropriate': however, it is a sign that the individual is not having their needs met, that something is causing them distress, or there is a changed medical condition, pain or discomfort.

The Federal Department of Health has legislated that all aged care providers must have Behaviour Support Plans (BSPs) in place from 1 September. Guidelines released on 27 August provide support for aged care providers to understand the different things that can impact a person's behaviour and how to provide care and support in response to changes in behaviours.

Behaviour Support Plans help the individual and those around them by identifying potential causes of distress and strategies to support the individual if they do become distressed. They make life better for all.

We are establishing a process for including BSPs as part of their Care Plan for any resident who would benefit.



A Call Answered

It began with an email from Cheryl Myers OAM, Secretary and welfare advocate for the Frankston Vietnam Veterans Association Australia.

The request was to WVAA members for urgent donations of a bed, mattress, lounge chair and book case for a young veteran she had been helping. It was Thursday morning.

By Thursday evening, a single bed, mattress, pillows and bedding had all been donated and delivered to the veteran's new unit at Vasey RSL Care Frankston South. Tony Grice, Frankston RSL welfare advocate did not have a lounge chair, but he had two recliners and a coffee table.

Not wishing to provide second-hand kitchen items, Cheryl put a call out to Frankston RSL, Frankston Vietnam Veterans, the President of Langwarrin Navy Club and a Frankston Veterans Coffee Group: \$1,100 came in, enough for all the items needed, along with \$100 in food vouchers from Frankston RSL to stock the pantry.

"I don't mind telling you I was impressed at how quickly the members of these groups came together to help a fellow veteran that most of them did not know," says Kelvin Park, Secretary and Welfare Officer. "It just goes to show what a group of like-minded ex-service organisations will do when the call comes out."

Vaccination Compulsory for Aged Care Staff

All staff working in aged care in Victoria must be COVID-19 vaccinated, with few allowable exemptions.

On 28 June, the National Cabinet agreed that COVID-19 vaccination of residential aged care workers would become mandatory by mid-September 2021.

The Victorian Government stated that aged care workers must have the first vaccination by 16 September and cannot work in aged care from 17 September onwards if not. Staff must have had the second vaccination by 15 November 2021.

This applies to anyone employed or engaged by a residential aged care facility who works on-site in a facility, such as:

- direct care workforce (nurses, personal care workers, allied health professionals, and allied health assistants)
- administration staff (reception, management, administration)
- ancillary staff (food preparation, cleaning, laundry, garden, maintenance)
- lifestyle/social care (music/art therapy)
- transport drivers collecting residents from residential aged care facilities for outings
- volunteers engaged by the residential aged care facility
- students on placement
- medical practitioners, such as general practitioners and consulting specialists, who attend and provide care to residents.

'A Life Changing Life' Featuring Our People

You may have seen the new 'A Life Changing Life' commercials promoting careers in the care and support sector – look closely and you may see some familiar faces, as two of our aged care homes were featured in the final TV commercial. Look out for residents Geoff and Margaret, with Lifestyle Coordinators Ruwan and Siobhan!

