



Summer 2021-22

VASEY RSL CARE NEWS

The Quarterly Newsletter of Vasey RSL Care

A New Strategic Plan for Vasey RSL Care

A lot of thought and work has gone into our vision for the future of Vasey RSL Care. In September last year, we presented our white paper, 'Continuing the Mission: understanding and responding to the changing needs of the veteran community', which was welcomed by the Victorian ex-service community. With this enthusiastic reception for our general proposals, we have continued this work throughout the year and are now very pleased to present our 2021 to 2025 Strategic Plan.

Along with our Mission to 'Serve Those Who Served' and to continue to focus our support and accommodation services towards veterans, war widows and their close family, the new Strategic Plan has four ambitious objectives:

1. **Reduce homelessness**
2. **Provide aged care services**
3. **Offer long-term affordable accommodation**
4. **Build and provide support services to meet the needs of the younger generation**

"There are a few important points to note", says Janna Voloshin, CEO. "Firstly, that expanding our services – whether that is opening new services or extending existing services into new geographic areas – does not take away from our commitment to older veterans and war widows. Our residential and home care services for older people will continue, and grow.

"Secondly, we are not going to be working alone. These are substantial objectives and there are already many good organisations supporting and assisting the ex-service community. We are looking forward to strengthening our relationships with these service providers for the benefit of the ex-service community in our state."

Vasey RSL Care has already made some important steps towards the vision for the future.

The closing of Vasey RSL Care Ivanhoe earlier this year was a difficult step towards 'laying the foundations' for the forthcoming V Centre: this is for veterans experiencing homelessness or marginal homelessness as a result of issues in their lives.

The V Centre will offer transitional accommodation and 'wraparound' support services to help them get back onto a track towards a fulfilling life.

The exchange of our existing units in Ivanhoe for 27 brand new apartments is on course for early 2023 and interest has already been strong.

The purchase of our first regional ex-service accommodation units at Wodonga took place earlier this year and they are due to receive their first tenants in the new year.

These are evidence of our commitment to the 2021 to 2025 Strategic Plan, which gives firm timelines for the actions and projects that will be delivered in order to meet our objectives and goals.

The Strategic Plan is available for download on the Vasey RSL Care website: www.vaseyrslcare.org.au.



From Our CEO

As soon as the AFL season finishes, we only have time to blink and it's Christmas. There has been a lot happening in our community and I hope you enjoy reading about it in this issue.

Pandemic Update

We continue to defend our community from COVID-19 and our Bundoora home has had two situations over the last few months, where a staff member has tested positive for the virus. Thanks to the great work of the staff, residents and contractors, both cases were contained with no spread of the virus. Both staff are fully recovered.

Between these two situations, government regulations changed, and while the first was officially an 'outbreak', the second was an 'exposure site'. The requirements differ somewhat, especially around the length of time that the lockdown is in place and thankfully, in the second case, it only lasted a few days.

At one of our ex-service accommodation sites, we also had a close call, with a visiting carer testing positive, but no residents affected.

These are reminders to us all that the virus is alive and well. As I write, we are still seeing over a thousand new cases each day, and there are more than 9,000 active cases in Victoria.

COVID-19 Boosters

Booster vaccinations have been made available to all our aged care residents. For older people, boosters are an important measure to maximise their immunity and help reduce the severity of an infection if the individual does catch COVID-19.

All our staff are fully vaccinated and the boosters have also been offered to them. We are once again strongly encouraging staff to take up this offer as soon as possible.

If **you** qualify for a booster, please do have one!

Annual General Meeting & Annual Report

The Vasey RSL Care AGM took place on 17 November with no changes to the current Board membership: please see the back page for details.

The Annual Report is available via the website at www.vaseyrslcare.org.au



Strategic Plan

As you may have read on the front page, our new 2021-2025 Strategic Plan is now available and presents some very exciting prospects for our organisation over the next few years.

"Serving Those Who Served" has been our guiding principle in the past and as we venture into new territory, these four words keep us 'on mission'.

Regular readers will know about our three ex-service units in Wodonga, to be ready early in the new year, and our unit/apartment exchange in Ivanhoe, scheduled for early 2023.

I would like to highlight a few other key components of the plan:

- Developing a new model of care in line with the findings of the Royal Commission
- Continuing to expand our Home Care Program and developing in-house services
- Working towards continuing the expansion of our ESA portfolio in areas of greatest demand across Victoria
- Further developing our capability to provide support services to our community and developing business relationships to achieve better outcomes for veterans in need

I will be arranging online meetings to present more information and answer questions about our strategic plan and details will be available soon.

I wish you a very happy and healthy festive season and a safe and virus-free new year!

**Janna Voloshin,
Chief Executive Officer**





Advance Care Planning Changes

According to the Department of Health, Advance Care Planning allows a person to express their preferences to inform future medical treatment if they become unable to participate; Advance care planning puts the person at the centre of care; Advance care planning has been shown to improve the quality of care people receive at the end of their lives.

There has been a recent change to Advance Care Planning in Australia with the publication of an Advance Care Plan that can be used in all states and territories. It has the long title, *'The advance care plan for a person with insufficient decision-making capacity form'*.

Residential Aged Care: Many of those in our residential care will already have completed a 'Goals of Care – Medical Treatment Order' form, which provides instructions about medical treatment.

However, this does not provide us with information on what matters to you.

Our Facility Care Coordinators have experience in supporting people to develop their plans and if you

need assistance, or more information, or you have questions, please contact the Facility Care Coordinator at your or your loved one's home.

Home Care & Ex-Service Accommodation: it is a good idea for all of us to think ahead to the day when we may need care but are unable to participate in decisions: now is the time to do our own Advance Care Directive so that our choices and decisions will be known, understood and respected in case of need.

Find out more about Advance Care Planning: <https://www.advancecareplanning.org.au/understand-advance-care-planning/advance-care-planning-explained>

Will 'La Niña' be Here All Summer?

This year has been declared a 'La Niña' event in many parts of Australia, meaning cooler and wetter conditions than normal. Even though more rain is predicted, as we know so well, Melbourne can suddenly turn it on, so it's a good idea to be ready for sudden hot weather.

Being Prepared

- Stock up on packaged food and medications so you don't have to go out in the heat for essentials.
- Be prepared for a power outage – have a torch and spare batteries ready where you can easily find them.
- Be as healthy as you can be – have medical conditions under control and make sure you maintain your fitness and maintain a healthy weight.
- Prepare your home: make sure your cooling system, fans, awnings etc are all working and ready to go.

On Hot Days

- Dress in loose-fitting clothing made from natural fabrics such as cotton or linen.
- Stay hydrated with water rather than coffee, tea or alcohol. Keep a jug of cold water in your fridge.

- Keep your house cool by closing curtains/awnings etc to prevent the house heating up. Use your cooling system if you have one, or fans (with adequate ventilation).
- Eat smaller lighter meals and put food back into the fridge as soon as you've finished using it.
- Stay in the coolest place in your home and use wet towels to cool yourself if needed. Avoid activity, postpone outings and stay out of the sun and heat.
- If you absolutely have to go out, wear a wide brimmed hat, sun screen or long sleeves and take water with you.

Monitor Yourself

If you feel unwell, call for help.

Heatstroke is a life-threatening emergency and you should call an ambulance. Symptoms include rapid heart rate, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, headache, muscle cramps and sweating.

Below: Bundoora marked Remembrance Day while in lockdown. The piper, bugler and speakers were outdoors, with residents watching and listening from indoors.

Remembrance Day at



Left and below: Brighton's service was held in the Day Centre and (below, from left) resident Betty read *The Ode*, resident Sandra lead the Lord's Prayer and our first Vietnam Veteran, Peter, read the poem, 'Sound the Last Post'.





Vasey RSL Care

Below: Frankston South held their service in Paxino Courtyard with Commander Cameron Eastman OAM giving the address, pictured below with his father, Trevor.



Left/below left: at Brighton East, Flight Lieutenant Esh gave a commemorative address and chatted with residents after the service, including Peg, herself a veteran and one of the first WAAAFs to join up.



Left/below: Cheltenham Ex-Service Accommodation residents and Captain Boxer from the 5/6 Victorian Regiment Pipes & Drums and the Catafalque party from 5/6 Royal Victorian Regiment Charlie Company at the Cheltenham service.



Residents at Frankston South Ex-Service Accommodation held their service outdoors.



Care Packs for Ex-Service Accommodation

We'd like to thank Bostik and RSL Victoria for donations of a range of sanitising products for residents at all our ESA sites - that's nearly 300 packs - and CPGLuing for donating the packing boxes.

A working bee was held at Cheltenham and it was a great team effort with volunteers making up boxes, packing them (right) and then delivering them to their site, while volunteers at Frankston and Geelong helped deliver theirs.

General Manager Veteran Services, Chris Gray (wearing the blue cap) and his wife Alison, drove around Croydon, Ivanhoe, Reservoir, Beaumaris and Brighton to deliver the others.

Below (from left): Geelong residents; Chris delivers to Croydon; the Frankston South delivery team; residents at Reservoir.



A New Look for Frankston South ESA Library

Residents Rick and Jan at the Frankston South Ex-Service Accommodation have been busy using their skills to build new shelving for their library.

Rick can be seen below and was responsible for the carpentry work while Jan helped with vacuuuming, holding things and taking photos.

Thanks to Rick and Jan - what a great result.





Ivanhoe Veteran takes on New Challenge

Paul is pictured here with his dog, Mil (being a good boy) and his new puppy, Frazer (still in training). Paul is a contemporary veteran and achieved the rank of Warrant Officer Second Class in the Australian Army, and he is a resident at our Ivanhoe Ex-Service Accommodation. Paul recently began a Certificate III in Dog Training, thanks to support from Hero's Wish.

This is Paul's Story (with his permission)

I have struggled to deal with life and its curved balls for a long time now. About 5 years ago, it was suggested to me to go to a place called 'Mates for Mates' on a Tuesday night and meet the veterans from 'Hounds for Healing'. They provide assistance dogs to veterans in Townsville.

I was very unsure about going as at that point I wasn't coping well at all. A friend took me down and I met a few of the veterans and their dogs and was told I should join the group and train a service dog for myself. After six weeks they still were unable to locate a dog for me.

I was close to the edge so I went to the RSPCA and asked if they had any pups. They showed me a couple of puppies one of which was Mil.

As soon as I left in the car with Mil, I felt a sense of responsibility and purpose. I attended training with Mil consistently over the following 2 years. During this time, I began to feel comfortable being around other people and outdoors with Mil by my side as we were both learning to work together.

I still struggle, I still have bad times, however with Mil to assist me I can function when things are tough. Simple things that for a long time were difficult to achieve have become easier for me over time and Mil has changed my life.

I look back over the past 5 years from homelessness to suicide attempts to now. I have a stable home and I have Mil to look after (or he looks after me, not sure!).

As a result of my own personal experience being supported and encouraged by fellow veterans through mine and Mil's training, I see how much difference a service dog makes to your general day to day life.

I would love to do this course so that I am in a position to give back to the veteran community. I have always

loved and trained dogs in the past and now I feel even more strongly about the connection with a dog and its handler. This is

an area of veteran support that desperately needs work. For



example, DVA now provide service dogs; however, there are hoops to jump through and it takes up to 2 years to receive a dog.

As soon as I left in the car with Mil, I felt a sense of responsibility and purpose.

Doing it the way I did, you conduct the training together and grow together as a team. So, while your dog may not yet be qualified, the training and community itself provides healing and purpose.

I have had dogs since I was a child, have always trained my dog in basic obedience. Until I conducted my service dog training with Mil over a 2 year period I had never received any formal training on dogs, but feel I am in a good position to further my knowledge.

The dream/purpose of undertaking this course is I would like to help set up a Vasey RSL Care service dog training school as part of the V Centre in the future. This course will be a good starting point for me to better able myself to help other veterans train their dogs to support them as a service dog.

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To undertake the course, Paul is training his new puppy, Frazer, while Mil continues as his assistance dog.

