

MCAnews



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Grevillea Overnight Respite Cottage

Following a competitive application process, MCA received Commonwealth Government approval to operate an overnight respite cottage funded under the National Respite for Carers Program.

To get the service up and running as quickly as possible, two offices and a storeroom in Grevillea House were temporarily converted into bedrooms and staff were relocated to a portable office. Since April up to three people with dementia have been accommodated each night in what they affectionately refer to as "the motel".

Planning advanced quickly for the design and construction of a new cottage to be attached to the rear of Grevillea House. The project went to tender in July and construction commenced in early September. The building is due to be completed in December and will feature five bedrooms, each with a full private ensuite and individual reverse cycle air-conditioning. The cottage will also have a solar hot water system, a small private lounge, a laundry/storeroom and direct access to the Banksia secure garden. The existing kitchen, dining and lounge in Grevillea House will be utilised by the cottage residents and staff. The new cottage will now cater for up to five people each night.

This new service is already having a very positive impact on the quality of life of carers of people with dementia:

"This is the only time I can relax as I know he is happy and safe" (carer).

"It made it much easier for me knowing that my husband could stay with you. He is always happy there and staff know him so well" (carer who required hospital care).

"The motel is great. I slept like a log and the service is very good" (care recipient).

MCA has received \$55,000 to date in grants towards the cost of constructing and fitting out the respite cottage and warmly acknowledges the financial support of these philanthropic entities in making the project a reality: The Baker Foundation (\$20,000); The RE Ross Trust (\$10,000); The Collier Foundation (\$15,000); and the Estate of the Late George Adams (\$10,000).



Above and right: Respite cottage under construction



What's happening around MCA?

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

MCA held its 22nd annual general meeting on 4 October in the Plaza of Cassia House. Four board members, whose terms had expired, were re-nominated and subsequently re-elected to the Board for a further 12 month term. These Members were Cath Culbard, Joy Fletcher, Barry Mernagh and Bill Whiticker. They were joined by two new Members, Julie Eisenbise (pictured below) and Bob Beynon.



Julie is the Director of Business Development, Marketing and Engineering for Science Engineering and Technology at RMIT University. She leads a team of business development and

marketing staff who create opportunities to deliver education to local industry and international education institutes. Julie served as a Local Councillor at Manningham City Council from 1997 to 2005 and as Mayor in 2001/02, representing the community on a wide range of committees and consultative groups. She is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and has served on a number of Boards.

Bob Beynon has business experience spanning more than 20 years in senior management positions with both small and large companies. He has lived in Manningham for more than 20 years with his wife and four children. Bob served as a Councillor in the former City of Doncaster and Templestowe from 1991-1994, Manningham Council from 1997-2005 and holds the honour of being the first Mayor of Manningham in 1997.

CARE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

Working in aged care is very demanding, so any measures that can be taken to ease the stress on staff as well as increase the time available for quality care provision should be a priority of all residential care organisations. One option

being adopted by a growing number of aged care providers is to computerise the large amounts of paperwork associated with providing residential care.

As a result, senior staff from MCA have been exploring a range of specialised computer software available on the market. One package called Maximum Advantage stood out because of its user friendliness, features, solid and growing customer base and technical support from its local head office.

The package will be rolled out slowly and carefully, with the first largely administrative modules planned for implementation in the Lodge and Cassia House before Christmas. The other modules will be introduced progressively in the New Year, following staff training and the purchase of additional computers for every nurse's station.

PLAYGROUP INITIATIVE

Cassia House Leisure and Lifestyle staff member and final year university student, Sharon Gammon, organised a local community playgroup to meet in Cassia House in September as part of a pilot community development project. The purpose of the meeting was to test the possibility of a mutually beneficial relationship between two groups servicing different ends of the age spectrum. Several Cassia residents were involved with the mothers and children who attended. Feedback from the session indicated it was a great success and plans are now progressing for a regular playgroup to commence in February 2007.



MCA Community Aged Care Packages

MCA received approval from the Commonwealth Government in December 2005 to operate 30 Community Aged Care Packages.

These packages provide support to people to enable them to remain living in their own homes. Val Lamevski is the Coordinator of MCA's packages. With the permission of the client, the following is a typical case study for the service.



Francis was born in the UK but emigrated to Australia, living in Sydney before moving to Warrandyte. He is 91 years of age and has lived in the same home, a place he loves, since 1965. After a long stay in hospital due to ill health, his family was concerned about how he would manage on his own at home. With his driver's license having been suspended and with family not living close by, they were considering the option of a residential aged care placement for him. However, Francis is fiercely independent and was reluctant to receive assistance.

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He wanted to maintain his lifestyle and living arrangements with minimal fuss or drama in a community he knows and in which he has many friends who can drop in.

Francis was determined to go home and his family, knowing how important it was to him, called on a Community Aged Care Package to provide them with the assistance needed. The social worker at the inpatient unit organised to have an assessment performed by the Aged Care Assessment Service who then referred him to Manningham Centre.

Given Francis' reluctance it was vital that the services he received be coordinated and well planned to ensure continuity and familiarity. Apart from case management, he now receives practical support around the home, assistance with meals, shopping, transport to and from medical appointments and specialist services such as physiotherapy and wound management from the Royal District Nursing Service. The MCA Case Manager (Val Lamevski) visits regularly and if he needs additional assistance or if there is an emergency, he has access to after hours telephone support.

The socialisation aspect of this package of services reduces his isolation and provides him with safe companionship. Francis says, "I look forward to my carers visiting during the week. They are both good company and clean my house too. I also have Val who organises things for me because I can't remember. This helps me look after myself."

For the family there is a sense of relief and their quality of life has improved. In their own words, "it has taken the pressure off so that we can enjoy our time with him".

You can't do anything about the length of your life, but you can do something about its width and depth.

Evan Esar (1899-1995) US humorist

Art as Therapy

An important part of the service provided to residents in Doncaster Melaleuca Lodge and Cassia House is encouraging and facilitating recreational and leisure interests.

A variety of activities are organised every day by specially trained and enthusiastic staff. Jill McKenzie works in the Leisure and Lifestyle Department at Cassia House and has written the following about a new program that is having a very interesting impact on some residents:



Alan Read assisted by Jill McKenzie

Recently I introduced a program in art which has proven to be very successful and rewarding for all those involved. Careful matching of appropriate activities to the abilities of a person with dementia requires flexibility and also recognition that the process is more important than the end product.

The experiences I've had working with people who have dementia have been truly rewarding. Dementia eventually robs the individual of self expression through the normal channels of speaking and writing. The possibility that visual arts may provide a person with their own form of expressing themselves and may slow the process of being cut off from the world is very appealing as a form of dementia lifestyle therapy.

Creative expression may also help a person to find meaning in their own confused world that cannot be accessed by others. In the context of dementia care, expressive arts such as painting, sculpture, mosaics, poetry and music provide opportunities for self expression that is beyond the normal realm of expectation.

Some examples of this within Cassia House are residents who normally find it difficult to participate in the regular programs but who have successfully maintained their focus in an art group. One gentleman, who paces constantly, will hold a paint brush and paint sculptural pieces for up to 20 minutes. One lady chose not to socialise with others but thoroughly enjoys working on mosaics. She now smiles at Lifestyle staff, greets others in the group and looks forward to her regular art sessions.

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Art as Therapy

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Another lady who was often calling out "oh dear where do I go" and often anxious, becomes totally absorbed in painting and stays in with us for up to two hours remaining totally relaxed the whole time.

Running these art programs at Cassia House has given many people the opportunity to witness the therapeutic benefits for all those involved.



Ken Wines and Elsie Parkinson at work



Elsie Parkinson with finished project

Of course we're winning. That is why our games are so tough. The other teams sense we are going to win, so they are beating us.

Art Buchwald (1925 -) US author, columnist, dramatist, & journalist

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CHECK THESE OUT...

THE VICTORIAN SENIORS TRAVEL PACKAGE

The Department of Infrastructure has introduced the Victorian Seniors Travel Package and invites applications for the Seniors Sunday Pass. This pass provides Victorian Seniors with free travel within zones one, two and three on Sundays.

Seniors are also now eligible to receive concession fares on all V/Line services as well as two off-peak travel vouchers per year. Applications for the Seniors Sunday Pass can be made online at www.metlinkmelbourne.com.au or by calling 131 638.

[Source: *Aged and Community Care Victoria Bulletin, Volume 1, Issue 4*]

SURVIVING THE MAZE FOR CARERS

"Surviving the Maze" is a new series of information sheets for family carers of older people. It has been tailor made for each State and Territory and provides information about:

- Caring for an older person at home
- Dealing with hospitals
- Considering residential care
- Having a family member in residential care.

The information sheets were written by carers, for carers, and include hints, tips and information about caring strategies, dealing with the service system, handling difficult situations and ways for carers to look after themselves.

The full range of information sheets are available online at www.survivingthemaze.org.au or by calling the Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre on 1800 242 636.

[Source: *Aged and Community Services Australia, The National Report, Issue 140*]