

Volume 9 | Issue 3

Summer 2009/10 Edition

*A seasonal publication of
Manningham Centre
Association Inc.*



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MCAnews

What's happening around MCA?

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

MCA's annual general meeting was held on 14th October 2009 in Cassia House Plaza. Nominations were received from Joy Fletcher, Peter Johnstone, Ray Lewis, Barry Mernagh, Lyn Sowersby and Darrell Treloar for the six vacancies on the Board, with all six having previously served. All were declared to be re-elected for a further 12-month term.

As well as these six elected positions, MCA's Rules allow for Manningham Council to appoint up to six community representatives to the Board.

Three new representatives were appointed in October—Cr Geoff Gough, Cr Stephen Mayne and Celia Haddock, Director Community Services at Council. They join existing representatives Ron Bunn, Ron Kitchingman and Bill Larkin.

After the annual general meeting, Bill Larkin was re-elected as Chairman, Barry Mernagh as Vice Chairman and Ron Bunn as Treasurer.

NEW OFFICE ON THE HILL

Regulars and visitors at the Centre would be aware of the new building (pictured right) that 'appeared' on the grassed area in front of Cassia House in July.

This building was constructed in a factory, transported on two semi-trailers and then lowered into place by crane.

Despite being portable, it is solidly built and cocooned by insulation to make it a more energy efficient building. In that vein, we've also attached a large water tank to supply the toilet and surrounding plants with rain water.

This building now houses MCA's Aged Care Packages service, Payroll, the Quality Systems Coordinator and the CEO, and room to accommodate further services as we grow.



DONATIONS

The Centre is always thrilled at receiving donations and grants to improve services for residents. In recent months we've received two, and, as always, we're very grateful.

These have been an \$11,000 grant from the Joe White Bequest to purchase an Arjo lifting hoist and Voyager portable hoist (pictured below with Sue Jones) to use in Cassia House, plus a \$12,000 grant from the Marian and EH Flack Trust to acquire various pressure relieving mattresses for the Lodge and Cassia House.

Additionally, a recent appeal to residents, relatives and friends of MCA raised nearly \$5,000 to buy various items to help in providing care and to improve amenities. Our thanks go to these philanthropic organisations and individuals for their support.



MCA's trusty, 16-seat bus has undergone modifications to make it more accessible for residents and clients with mobility issues to go on outings. We've removed several fixed seats to make more room available for people in wheelchairs, which has also given some extra storage.

Moving the CEO into the new office building freed up space to create a new exercise and therapy area for Doncaster Rehabilitation Services. We removed a wall, then built a new wall in the adjacent foyer. This bright and airy room (pictured below) is a welcome addition; it's enabled some existing programs to be run more privately, and new programs to be offered.



Two courtyard gardens in Cassia House have been transformed in the capable hands of Simon Lake (pictured top right) Landscaping and Garden Design. These areas were previously presentable, but were 'rather tired'. Residents, visitors and staff now have an added incentive to get outside and enjoy their surroundings.

CAPITAL WORKS

We've completed various capital works items around the Centre in the past few months.

To give residents and staff a far more comfortable environment in extreme weather, we've installed air conditioning in two more passageways in the Lodge (at a cost of \$20,000), plus completely upgraded the old air conditioning in the lounge and dining area of Cassia House's Banksia unit (at a cost of \$8,400).

To enhance the usability and security of the pathway and adjoining shelters at the back of Grevillea House and Cassia House (pictured top right) we've installed a key-padded electric latch on the second gate, and completed a remaining small section of the concrete path. The new path gives us a smooth, all-weather surface around the building.

SENIOR STAFF MOVEMENTS

Cassia House's Assistant Manager, Susan Jones, has been appointed to replace Cheryl Lyon as the Manager of Residential Services, effective from September 2009. Susan has worked for MCA since early 2006, and originally trained as a nurse in Great Britain.

Other changes at the senior level in residential services include the appointments of: Kim Greenham (pictured below) as the Acting Manager of Doncaster Melaleuca Lodge (after Anita Carter resigned), Joanne O'Reilly as the Residential Care Coordinator of Cassia House, Eileen Maguire as the Clinical Care Coordinator of the Lodge, and Diane Watson as Environmental Services Coordinator across both facilities.



In the community services area, the inaugural Manager of our Aged Care Packages service, Val Lamevski resigned in October to take on a different role with another not-for-profit aged care provider. Jenny Thompson has replaced her, and on page 4 we introduce you to Jenny, her wonderful background and not-for-everyone-road-trip holiday in Bhutan!

Profiling our people

**DALE GIBSON
ADMINISTRATION/VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR**



Everybody sang 'Happy Birthday' to Dale on her wedding day—which is not surprising considering it was her 20th birthday. And, 38 years later, she still smiles at the memory. 'My husband and I are the best of friends,' she asserts in her bubbly manner, 'he's just the love of my life.'

Dale and Gary became childhood sweethearts, at 13 and 14, when Gary moved into Dale's street. It's a bond that's remained unshaken—despite serious health challenges. Dale developed cancer—at just 27 and pregnant—and 15 years ago, Gary faced his own health issues.

'I want to keep him with me, so I said, 'Let's give this Mr Mum business a go!'. It works so well, and I couldn't do the hours I do here without his support at home.' The pragmatism and optimism that allow Dale to serve the MCA community so well, have seen her thrive beyond the challenges.

'You look at life differently with such a big shock, but it's a good thing in a way. At the end of the day, you either want to live or die... so I'm putting my hand up to live!' Her voice quieter with the topic's seriousness, Dale adds, 'I believe you have to be the best person you can while on this earth.' It's a sentiment she lives at work as well as home.

When Dale joined MCA seven years ago, it was a 60-bed nursing home that had just begun ageing in place with 15 low-care beds. It was a job the mother of two sons (now 30 and 32) accepted with delight.

Unexpectedly redundant after 16 years in telecommunications, Dale found herself temping. But it wasn't her cup of tea.

'I had some good jobs, including one at a care training facility, but I was doing a lot of documentation and wasn't with people. I'm a people person. Here, I love the contact with people and the teamwork. I also love assisting the relatives and residents. From volunteers to working with the board, it's very varied and very interesting.'

Dale's 'jill of all trades' experience is valued in her MCA role. 'I am happy to come to work. It's a lovely place. It's a great team effort—a real community effort from the volunteers, too, it's just amazing. MCA has great ethics. It's really good to come in and see MCA doing as well as it is, and then where it's going.'

A grandmother to five (the sixth due in May), Dale unwinds in her garden, which she and Gary began from scratch 25 years ago.

JENNY THOMPSON
COORDINATOR, MCA AGED CARE PACKAGES



A desire to learn more about the Manningham community and the homely, friendly atmosphere at MCA attracted Jenny Thompson to her new role in aged care.

The mother of two joined MCA in November as the Manningham Community Aged Care Packages Coordinator, after seven years as a case manager at Plenty Valley Community Health.

A registered Division 2 nurse, Jenny also has extensive experience in various health services.

'I bring a good understanding of disability and rehabilitation to MCA and I think we see a lot more people in aged care who have children with disabilities as well, so that's an advantage I can bring to the role — patience, caring and understanding,' she says.

'I've lost both of my parents. My dad suffered dementia for nine years. We kept him home for five or six of those; the rest he was with a service provider in Ballarat. The fact that we can keep people in their homes is wonderful. If they are still in their own homes and changes are happening to them they've got more control. That's what I'd like to see, and I thought this would be a very interesting role for me, as being able to contribute to keeping those people in their own homes a little bit longer would be great.'

Jenny says she is a country girl at heart, having left Ararat 12 years ago with her family to live in Melbourne.

'My husband, Ian, is a mad-keen motorbike rider, so I have an interest in that. We go to lots of vintage-motorcycle rallies. He is doing up two motorcycles at the moment. Our garage is very full! The rallies are lovely.

'We have had several holidays in Europe on a motorbike. Last year we did Bhutan and India on a Royal Enfield; that was an experience! Bhutan is still a bit isolated and the roads weren't the best on old bikes. India was fascinating, but Bhutan ... they are very special people there,' Jenny says.

When she's not zipping around on a motorcycle, Jenny loves to read, although studying has kept her busy for the past few years.

'I love being with my husband and the kids. I have a son and a daughter, both in their early 20s. My son is a nurse and my daughter was studying to be a nurse but deferred this semester to decide what she wants to do,' Jenny says.

Did you know?

A MATURE APPROACH TO AGEING – HEALTHY AND POSITIVE AGEING

Staying active, eating well, removing hazards from around the home and staying in contact with family and friends are the key ingredients to a mature approach to ageing.

Federal Minister for Ageing, Justine Elliot, and the Government's Ambassador for Ageing, Noeline Brown, have launched a series of informative brochures; these give older people sensible tips on how to maintain and protect their health, wellbeing and independence.

Copies of posters and brochures can be ordered, at no cost, from National Mail and Marketing on (02) 6269 1000.

They are also available on the Ambassador's website at www.health.gov.au/ambassadorforageing

HEART FOUNDATION: GUIDE TO MANAGING HYPERTENSION

The Heart Foundation has recently released its new 'Guide to management of hypertension' (2008). The publication provides clear guidelines to better address diagnosing and managing patients with raised blood pressure. There is also an information sheet for patients and carers, based on the booklet 'Living well with chronic heart failure'.

Available in English and 16 other languages (including Polish, Chinese, Arabic, Greek and Maltese), the sheet includes information on minimising symptoms of heart failure plus how to manage it.

These valuable resources are available on the Heart Foundation website at www.heartfoundation.org.au by going to 'Professional Information' then 'Clinical Practice'.

Copies can also be ordered by calling 1300 36 27 87 or emailing: heartline@heartfoundation.org.au

Human beings, who are almost unique in having the ability to learn from the experience of others, are also remarkable for their apparent disinclination to do so.
 Douglas Adams (1952 – 2001), English author.

Thousands of years ago, cats were worshipped as gods. Cats have never forgotten this.

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MCA gratefully acknowledges the financial support provided by the Doncaster East Community Bank towards the cost of this publication.

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