

The intelligent pursuit of *excellence* in aged care

eldercare

# matters

autumn 2010

## With open alms

Eldercare answers a call  
for help in South Africa

## Irrepressible

Our oldest resident proves  
laughter's still the best medicine

**Eldercare**  
enriching lives & communities

 **UnitingCare**

A Community Service of the Uniting Church



from the **Chief Executive**

Welcome to the first edition of our newsletter for 2010.

As you may have noticed, we've completely revamped the newsletter's presentation in an effort to provide you with the highest quality information possible on both developments within Eldercare and the aged care industry in general.

We hope you'll find the new look and format of *Eldercare Matters* pleasing, interesting and informative, and would welcome your feedback. To let us know your thoughts, drop an e-mail to: [admin@cgv.eldercare.net.au](mailto:admin@cgv.eldercare.net.au). And now to our news...

**Allambi Redevelopment**

Early in 2010, stage 2 of the redevelopment of our Allambi residential care site at Glengowrie was completed and a further 24 residents moved into their new home (see story opposite). The final stage then promptly commenced and is scheduled for completion in the first quarter of 2011.

This will then see all 117 Allambi residents in their new home adjacent to the current facility. Any remaining old buildings at that stage will be completely demolished. However, the Eldercare board has not yet determined how it will utilise the resulting vacant land. We'll keep you posted.

**South African relationship**

Eldercare has recently forged a strong relationship with an underfunded aged care facility in Kokstad, South Africa called Elonwabeni Aged Care Home.

There are many needs they're unable to fulfill alone - simple things we take for granted, including mattresses and blankets - so we're stepping up to help. Later this year we'll also

*“Our new Allambi facility combines everything we would hope to provide for our residents; ample space, a sense of peace, natural beauty and comfort”*

be sending a group of our own staff to Elonwabeni for four weeks to assist with care delivery and management of the facility.

See the feature on page 4 for the full story.

**Fair Work Act now in operation**

On January 1, 2010 “The Fair Work Act” came into operation, causing much change within Eldercare and, indeed, in most workplaces across Australia.

Affected staff have, of course, been made aware of the changes, many of which are causing concern for individual employees and Eldercare as a whole.

Unfortunately, whenever new laws like this come into operation the theory doesn't always translate well on the ground, despite the best of intentions. This is particularly so in service industries such as our own.

Consequently, we will continue to call for commonsense and effective changes.

**Lobbying for greater funding**

As many of you would be aware, the Labor Government has commissioned many reports into aged care in Australia, revealing it to be an overregulated, underfunded industry in need of a complete overhaul.

Yet, despite the government having had many of these reports for a considerable time, we're still anxiously awaiting any response.

On behalf of Eldercare and the aged care industry we will continue to lobby strongly for higher levels of operational funding, greater access to capital and more university places for nurses.

**Two new Eldercare sites**

Late in 2009 Eldercare purchased 2 more retirement villages, one in Hove and the other in Felixtow, taking our total number of retirement homes nationally to 205.

We welcome the residents of Hove and Felixtow to Eldercare.

**Klaus Zimmermann CEO**



Vision realised

The meandering garden at Allambi, Glengowrie.

Stage 2 of the Allambi Redevelopment now complete

We're delighted to announce that Stage 2 of the rebuilding of our Glengowrie site, known as “Allambi”, was completed earlier this year. Handover of keys to the Stage 2 building occurred on February 1 and the relocation of residents commenced immediately. Complete vacation of the old buildings, including all four wings, the shop, hairdressing salon and main kitchen, took just two days.

The site now seems much larger, and the first stage - finished early 2009 - is now looking very “lived in”. The meandering garden, for example, featuring different textural finishes and sensory plantings, is now fully established and looking absolutely beautiful.

**Rewarding changes a long time coming**

As is the case with most sites, the full redevelopment of Allambi was many years in the making. The property was initially an estate homestead, built by the Hamilton Family.

Eldercare then acquired it and turned it into a 117-bed Residential Aged Care Facility.

In subsequent years, wings were added and various areas reconfigured or redecorated. But unfortunately the end result was a mix of facilities that was difficult to operate and maintain, so a partial re-build was initiated. When current Eldercare CEO Klaus Zimmermann joined us in 2001, the rebuild was on-hold and he called for a comprehensive review of the proposal. This proved to be a wise move.

The review found Allambi's underground services and building infrastructure had suffered greatly from the ravages of time and could not support any further modification. Not surprisingly, the Eldercare Board determined to commence the long process of planning the full re-development of the entire facility.

A strategy was developed to design and build Stage 1 of the new building to the east of

the existing facility, then gradually move residents from the old to the new as work progressed on two additional stages. Once the design was complete and all planning issues dealt with, work finally commenced on-site in January 2008.

**Incredible effort from staff and volunteers**

The assistance we received on the day of the Stage 2 relocation was outstanding, especially that provided by our maintenance workers, who completed the mammoth task of clearing all vacated areas for demolition. Indeed, all staff at Allambi continue to be incredibly supportive throughout the long, but necessary, rebuilding process.

We're equally grateful to our volunteers and the Friends of Allambi for their support throughout 2009.

The pool table for our new games room, book shelves and bed chairs were all provided by the group and greatly enhance the lives of residents.

Individually, Chairperson of Friends of Allambi Nan Sharpe deserves special recognition for the great effort she's put into organising garage sales to fundraise and relieve us of surplus goods. And Jean Farmer, recently retired from the Friends of Allambi committee, contributed a vast amount of her time and energy to the project. Happily, though, Jean is not leaving Allambi itself. She remains here as a resident, so we look forward to enjoying her company for many years to come.

For more information on the Allambi Redevelopment, call Residential Site Manager June Merkel on (08) 8295 3733.



# Springbok

*“They were squeezing three beds or more into each room, the kitchen was sub-standard, they desperately needed mattresses, waterproof covers, bed linen... We’re helping with it all”*

Please note that the woman shown has no connection to Elonwabeni. Photo for illustrative purposes only.

As the spectre of another cold, harsh winter looms, Eldercare is reaching out to ensure that, for one drastically underfunded aged care facility in South Africa, the sun keeps shining.

# sunrise



Lunchtime at Elonwabeni.

Like many enterprises, aged care providers must walk a very fine line between the satisfaction of our human concerns - the desire to provide a safe, secure and enriching home for as many people as possible - and commercial viability.

It can be difficult at the best of times, but occasionally, as had become the case for the Elonwabeni facility in South Africa, circumstances can conspire to render the two competing needs unreconcilable.

By mid-2009, staff at this remarkable institution, located in the picturesque town of Kokstad on the south-eastern fringe of the Drakensberg Mountains, found themselves no longer able to provide even the basic daily living requirements of food, shelter and clothing to their 42 residents.

Understandably, Site Manager Caroline Mnyaiza, an incredible 79-year-old dynamo with seemingly boundless energy and passion, was extremely concerned and reached out for assistance.

Through our network of international connections, Eldercare Australia soon became aware of Elonwabeni’s dire situation and,

finding ourselves in the fortunate position of being able to help, immediately extended our hand.

“We’re absolutely delighted to be involved with Caroline and her team,” said Eldercare CEO Klaus Zimmermann.

“They really were substantially underfunded. They were having to squeeze three beds or more into each room, the kitchen was sub-standard and they were in desperate need of mattresses, waterproof covers, bed linen and other equipment.

“They also had a particularly pressing need for winter provisions, such as blankets, warm sheets and pillow cases, winter pyjamas and nighties for the residents, as the Kokstad winters are bitterly cold.

“We’re helping them with all that and are committed to keep doing so for the long-term, or at least until Caroline feels they’re able to once again stand alone.”

While the vast bulk of financial assistance for Elonwabeni is being provided by the corporate entity of Eldercare, our hundreds of

dedicated staff are also being encouraged to do what they can. A salary deduction scheme has already been implemented to facilitate this.

### **Life-changing secondment to Elonwabeni on offer**

As part of the support we’re providing to Elonwabeni, we’re offering one lucky member of our team in Australia the incredible opportunity to take up a short-term, all-expenses-paid posting at the South African facility in September this year.

The selected staff member will spend four weeks personally working with and supporting Caroline Mnyaiza as she manages and cares for her residents. The benefits of this unique experience, of course, will flow both ways.

“Our lucky representative will pass on as much knowledge and insight to the Elonwabeni team as possible,” said Klaus. “Caroline is as dedicated to her residents as any Site Manager I’ve ever known and has told me

that she’s keen to learn as much as she can.

“But at the same time we’ll be very excited to hear our representative’s firsthand observations of life at Elonwabeni upon his or her return.

“For Caroline, her team and her residents to have maintained a positive outlook in such distressing times, they obviously know a thing or two about building and maintaining a healthy culture and atmosphere.

“That’s something you can never learn too much about.”

*For further information on the assistance provided to Elonwabeni by Eldercare, or details on how to get involved or donate through employee deductions, please contact your Residential Site Manager.*

*Employee deductions can be managed through Eldercare’s payroll office at staff request - just \$2 per pay can help Caroline improve her residents’ care and quality of life.*

# Leading light set to shine

## Pioneering Eldercare physio recognised with Awards role

Eldercare Corporate Physiotherapy Coordinator Michael Filsell has recently been selected as a presenter at the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency's prestigious Better Practice in Aged Care Awards, to be held in Adelaide, May 2010.

The honour comes in recognition of Michael's groundbreaking remote resident function analysis program, launched in 2009. In an industry first, Michael pioneered the use of mobile phone video technology to allow real-time analysis of residents' physical function at regional sites.

This has enabled more effective and clinically accurate protocols to be developed for restricted-mobility residents in areas that have historically had poor access to allied health professionals.

Consequently residents are able to continue living in their own communities, rather than having to uproot their lives in search of specialist care, and in greater comfort. Staff safety is also improved.

With a rapidly aging population spread right across the country, the importance of this program cannot be overstated.



# Making the grade

## Senior Eldercare staff undergo Accreditation Assessment training

Several Eldercare Residential Site Managers, Continuous Improvement Coordinators and senior staff from all sites recently attended a 4-day course on Accreditation Assessment, conducted by the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency.

The course provided attendees with the skills and knowledge required to accurately assess their sites for compliance with the Australian Government's Accreditation Standards.

The accreditation system is designed to ensure that all residential aged care facilities provide care and services to a benchmark level of quality.

All residential aged care homes must be accredited in order to receive funding from the Australian Government through residential care subsidies.

However, becoming accredited is not a one-off event. Once a residential aged care home achieves accreditation, the approved provider is required to maintain ongoing compliance with the legislated standards of care and to undertake continuous improvement.

Consequently, each home receives at least one unannounced inspection per year.

# Aged care deficits a concern

## But consistent surpluses place Eldercare in upper echelon

A recent survey conducted by Chartered Accountants Stewart Brown & Co has uncovered some worrying data on the financial health of Australia's aged care industry. Their June 2009 Aged Care Financial Performance Survey found that 22% of all high care facilities were operating at a net deficit.

Fortunately, however, no Eldercare facility was among them. On the contrary, Eldercare's performance was shown to be within the top 25% of aged care providers in the country, consistently achieving operating surpluses.

This is the result of a deliberate strategy to:

- Maximize income through effective planning and billing processes
- Maximise the Aged Care Funding Instrument (ACFI) model
- Implement efficient care-staff rostering to reflect changing resident mixes
- Effectively manage all other costs, particularly in administration and catering.

Achieving surpluses has allowed us to consistently reinvest in the business, constantly improving standards of care for residents and allowing us to increase staffing levels as and when necessary.

# Our kingdom for a Nurse

## National shortage set to worsen

The future of nursing in Australia is looking anything but healthy. In 2006 it was projected that we would effectively lose almost 60% of our nursing workforce by 2026. Four years on, that trend shows no signs of abating.

The problem is the changing age-balance of our population. Although the number of new nursing graduates completing their studies each year, around 4,800, still roughly corresponds to the average annual number of registered nurse retirements, 4,000-5,000, the number of people likely to need nursing care is rising.

The portion of the Australian population aged 65-84 is projected to increase from 2.6 million in 2010 to 4.8 million in 2030. In the same period,

numbers aged 85 and over are expected to double from 400,000 to 800,000. By 2050, these portions will leap to 6.3 million and 1.8 million respectively.

Compounding the issue, an unknown number of nurses annually will also choose to leave their profession for reasons other than retirement. For example to become full time parents, commence a new career, return to study - the list goes on.

This gives rise to the obvious question, who will care for our ageing population?

At Eldercare we're continuously reviewing our employment strategies to ensure we position ourselves as a preferred employer for nursing and care staff by ensuring the right people are

*“Although the number of graduates each year still roughly corresponds to the average annual retirements, the number of people likely to need nursing care is rising”*

recruited into the right positions and provided with industry leading training and development opportunities.

It should be noted, however, that this is an Australia-wide issue, requiring broad government policy and support to overcome.

Rest assured, we will continue to lend our voice to the calls for this policy and support to eventuate.

Eldercare staff are working hard to manage the transition.

# IR ire

## New Modern Awards reducing workplace flexibility

On 1 January 2010, in line with the commencement of the Fair Work Act 2009, the new Modern Awards and National Employment Standard (NES) came into effect.

Implementation of the Modern Awards has resulted in some significant changes to work practices for Eldercare employees, with the new Award providing individual staff, and our company for that matter, with less flexibility than was previously available. This is in direct conflict with the professed intention for the Modern Awards, which was to better support the worker, leading many to question how well researched it was and whether widespread industry consultation took place.

Implementation of the Modern Awards is also predicted to have a significant impact on the cost of employment for Eldercare, with additional annual leave provisions and changes to allowances contributing most significantly.

Behind the scenes, each site's management and payroll teams have been doing a fantastic job interpreting and implementing the changes by maintaining open lines of communication and working cooperatively to manage the transition.



# “I’m alright”

At 104 years old, Sylvia Halbert is the oldest Eldercare resident in Australia. It takes but a few short seconds to realise, however, that she’s also quite possibly our most devilish wit.

Pleasantries dispensed with cordially, we all sit down: Sylvia, Eldercare Kirkholme Residential Site Manager Anne St John, and myself, Eldercare Matters staff writer Matt Hardy. Sylvia peers at her mug on the coffee table.

“I asked for a *weak* tea,” she says to Anne matter-of-factly. “Have a look at it.” Dutifully, Anne does so. “That *is* weak,” she responds with an expectant grin, knowing from experience where this might be going.

Sylvia holds her gaze briefly, eyes widening as if to indicate she cannot believe what she’s heard, then glances away disparagingly. “So are you,” she quips.

Then quickly to me, with the proverbial sparkle in her eye, “I like a bit of fun.”

So began our afternoon chat; and, I’m delighted to say, so it continued. Born in Broken Hill the eldest of eight children,

including no fewer than six brothers, Sylvia learned early how to stand her ground. “Oh yes,” she says. “I certainly learnt how to look after myself...[short pause]...and those boys soon learnt to do what they were told.”

Sylvia and her family moved to Adelaide in 1918, taking up residence with her Grandmother in a modest dwelling on

At this point there’s a knock on the door and we’re joined by Kirkholme Personal Care Worker Louise. Having cared for Sylvia on and off ever since her arrival at Kirkholme in 2005, Louise knows her better than most and is keen to contribute her thoughts to this article.

They greet each other with obvious affection and respect.

The ceremony took place at the Goodwood Presbyterian Church which, Sylvia notes proudly, still stands today.

Parenthood came almost immediately. Their first child, Malcolm, was born after just 12 months and a second, Heather, after three years. A third, Natalie, then followed some 13 years later. “I gave up after that,”

“Oh yes,” she says, “they all still hang around. They think I’ve got a lot of money now.” She leans ever-so-slightly forward. “But I don’t.”

As time went by, Sylvia lived through the Great Depression, World War II and no-doubt countless other trying times, including the death of her husband in 1971 after 47 years of marriage. Yet, with the dignity and stoicism so admirably typical of her generation, she refuses to focus on any difficulties she’s faced, stating instead that she’s been nothing but fortunate. “I’ve had quite an easy life,” she reflects. “I’ve been spoilt really.”

Time to wrap it up now. Our agreed hour for the interview has elapsed, Sylvia has a Maeve Binchy to read - “I like a good romance, but not those rude ones [Mills & Boon]...I’m too young for those now” - and Louise has some other pressing tasks she needs to get to. She’s the first to say goodbye.

“Bye bye dear,” she says warmly. “Now don’t forget that it won’t be me who sees you tomorrow.”

Sylvia can’t resist one last tête-à-tête. “But you’ve got to come in.”

“Well, no I don’t.”

“Goodbye.”

If we need any more proof that a positive attitude and active mind contributes to a long and healthy life, it can surely be found in Sylvia Halbert.



Goodwood Road in a suburb known as Cottonville (now Westbourne Park). She remembers fondly the horse-drawn trams regularly trundling down the busy street.

With her mother, Isabelle, staying home to look after the children, her father, Samuel Horace - “Horry” to his friends - found work as a Turncock with the “local waterworks”.

“We didn’t have much,” says Sylvia. “Money was always scarce. But we wanted for nothing. We never went without food, we always had a warm bed and a roof over our heads, and we just learned to make our own fun.”

“She’s just amazing,” Louise whispers to me. “She won’t hesitate to give you a hard time if she thinks you deserve it, mind you. But she has a very kind heart and a wicked sense of humour.”

I pick up the interview where we’d left off, asking Sylvia about her upbringing. “My father was a very strict man,” she says. Then, as if to underline Louise’s aside, she nods in her carer’s direction and adds with deadpan delivery, “Like her.”

On the 1st of June 1929, at the age of 23, Sylvia married Ross, a young Costing Clerk for carriage, buggy and sulky builders T.J. Richards.

Sylvia laughs. “That was enough.” Still with little money to spare, life was very much centred around family and, more particularly, the family home. Holidays were taken in the backyard, and the only travel indulged in was a trip to Glenelg beach. Not surprisingly, however, Sylvia sees this solely as a positive, remarking that it taught her children to value all they had and take nothing for granted. It also formed extremely strong bonds between them. Malcolm, Heather and Natalie all still visit Sylvia regularly, as do her “too-many-to-count” grandchildren and great grandchildren.



<insert caption>

## Eldercare volunteers put their hands up

### National summit leads to new action plan

On Wednesday 10th February, representative volunteers from all 12 Eldercare residential care sites took part in the 3rd annual Eldercare Volunteer Summit.

The gathering, unique in the Australian aged care industry, provides the opportunity for stimulating and exciting discussion between participants from all levels of the organisation.

Priority areas that were identified by the volunteers at the inaugural 2008 Summit were re-introduced and explained by members of the executive team and Eldercare Board with expertise and responsibility. Areas identified and prioritised were then the subject of brainstorming and action plan development.

The value of this exercise is that the ideas raised are implemented in ongoing programmes delivered at the sites. The current youth engagement focus, for example, for which Eldercare has been awarded a "Community Voices" development grant through the Office for Volunteers, is a direct result of a past Summit.

*For more information or to become involved, call Jennie Gunther on (08) 8291 1000 or e-mail: [jg@way.eldercare.net.au](mailto:jg@way.eldercare.net.au)*

## Fruitful gathering of minds

### Tri-State Conference addresses changing face of aged care in Australia

The 19th annual Tri-State Conference on aged care was recently attended by 14 residential care and corporate services staff from Eldercare sites across the country.

Held in Mt Gambier, South Australia, during March 2010, the conference addressed a broad variety of residential and community aged care topics under the theme "The Changing Face of Aged Care".

Included among these was a presentation from federal Minister for Health Nicola Roxon on the government's Health Reform Agenda, and a highly entertaining talk by Ita Buttrose entitled "Living Life - What's Age Got to do with It?", considered by many to be the highlight of the program.

Ita closed with a strong call for attendees to lobby their politicians for better wages for aged care nurses and care workers.

Also of note, federal Minister for Ageing Justine Elliot announced that \$9.5 million in nursing scholarships would be made available that month.



*Eldercare attendees (from left) : Seaford CN Cathy McPhee, Oxford RSM Pat Grantham, Evanston Park RSM Sue Krake, Kirkholme RSM Anne St John, Mt Barker RSM Heather Englehardt and IT Manager Anne-Marie Cream.*

Minister Elliot said the scholarships would be worth up to \$30,000 each over three years, and could be used to train or upskill up to 680 people.

The funding was designed to support undergraduate and postgraduate nurses living predominantly in rural, regional and remote areas, she said.

The conference was widely considered a great success and provided a valuable opportunity for Eldercare staff to network with their industry peers.

*"Ita closed with a strong call for attendees to lobby their politicians for better wages for aged care nurses and care workers"*

## Flu-Free and Fit

### Complimentary flu vaccinations returning at Eldercare

With another life-threatening flu season just weeks away, Eldercare is again offering complimentary vaccinations for all staff and residents (over the age of 65).

Due to the serious threat posed by the disease - around 2,000 Australians die each year from influenza complications - and its rapid rate of mutation, even those who were vaccinated last year will be encouraged to take up the offer. The vaccine will cover all known strains of influenza, including Swine Flu.

#### Integrated fitness push - participating staff to receive free pedometers

In an effort to encourage staff fitness, all Eldercare team members who take up a free flu vaccination will also receive a bonus high-quality pedometer. This ingenious device will allow staff to track the number of steps they take each day, the amount of calories and fat they burn, and the physical distance they cover. It also has a 7-day memory, allowing easy daily comparisons and progress checks.

Experts agree that walking is the best, most natural way to improve fitness, reduce stress, stay trim and maintain good health.

The commonly recommended target is around 10,000 steps a day, with at least 6,500 of those at a higher or varied intensity at least four days a week.

#### Cottage Grove site going one step further

In conjunction with the free offers outlined above, management at Eldercare's Cottage Grove, Woodcroft site will be offering further incentives to really amplify the fitness message.

Daily pedometer records will be kept for all participating staff for a total of 12 weeks, with weekly and monthly prizes on offer.

The staff member with the greatest improvement in number of steps taken each week will receive a \$50 Westfield voucher, and the person with the highest number of recorded steps each month will pick up a \$100 Westfield voucher.

It's hoped that well over 100 staff will "step up" to the challenge.

*"Due to the serious threat posed by the disease and its rapid rate of mutation, even those vaccinated last year will be encouraged to take up the offer"*

## Maitland moving up

### Additional creature comforts to be made available at Eldercare site

The Village, Eldercare's site located in Maitland, NSW, has recently been granted "extra service" status for its 15-bed Weetulta wing by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing.

Extra-service homes are able to offer residents higher levels of accommodation, services and catering - such as bigger rooms, more varied menus and wine served with meals - for a higher fee. In Eldercare's case, this means a bond can be levied for high-care residents.

It's important to note, however, that the change in status does not in any way indicate a change

in the quality of nursing care, as this is provided at the same level of excellence to all residents.

A management team will meet shortly to discuss the direction for extra services at the Village and develop policies and procedures to support their provision. It's hoped delivery of extra services will commence by the middle of the year.

Similarly, work is progressing well on the construction of a new Gazebo at the Village adjacent the main lounge. Incorporating a spacious barbeque area, the facility will be available for use by all residents, their families and staff.



*More varied menus and wine with meals will soon be available to residents of Maitland's Weetulta wing.*

Memorial pavers purchased from the Village's 30th Birthday proceeds will be laid in this area to commemorate 30 years of service.

Existing residents will not be affected by these changes.



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