

Care & Connect

WESLEY'S AGED CARE SERVICES NEWSLETTER
AUTUMN 2017

Keeping the spark alive

In a little town in remote Western Australia, Melburnians Christina and Graeme met more than 65 years ago.

Christina had just been posted rurally at Mount Barker in her first job as a primary school teacher, as chance brought a young and gregarious Graeme to the small town as he and a mate embarked on a round-the-world trip. They didn't get very far.

"I saw her walking down the street and thought to myself, she's for me," Graeme said with a sparkle in his eye.

Christina says that at first she was devastated about being posted in Mount Barker and a lot of tears were shed.

"But I look back now and those were the freest and most social days of our lives... and it worked out alright," she joked.

The couple's time in Western Australia sparked their love of travel – Norway is one of their favourite destinations – but they have a special place in their hearts for the Australian bush, taking many trips with tour groups and caravanning around Australia when they retired.

"There's not much of Australia we haven't seen," Graeme said.

A few years ago Graeme was diagnosed with dementia, and he began to withdraw from friends. He and Christina were feeling a bit isolated.

But this was all to change when Graeme was referred to Wesley's social support programs to help him get back to the things he loves doing. Participating in the regular planned activity group at Wesley St Mark's has helped him add more structure to his days and revive his social life.

"It's been great for renewing friendships," Graeme said.

"I especially like the outings with the men's group on a Monday when we go to places like the Dandenongs, out to lunch or to listen to music along the same lines as Deanna Durbin. St Mark's also puts on concerts."

With Graeme off doing exciting things three days a week, it's also given Christina some time to catch up on the things she needs and enjoys doing.

She says that attending St Mark's has made a huge difference to her husband's zest for life.

"He has always been active, social and had a love of animals – I call him the dog whisperer," Christina said.

"On St Mark's days, Graeme always greets me with a smile and has never once said he doesn't want to go.

"It's just so great to see that he has energy in the morning, and he always remembers to tell me things he's heard that might be useful, and he rarely forgets to dry the dishes at night!"

Photograph: Wesley client Graeme and his wife Christina

St Mark's ready to get jazzy

Award winning jazz vocalist **Michelle Nicolle** and musicians **Sam and Frank** are set to enchant clients at St Mark's in Chadstone.

Thanks to a partnership between Melbourne Recital Centre and Wesley, St Mark's invites you to attend a free performance on Wednesday 17 May. Be sure to prepare your song requests from the 1920s to the 1970s!

There will be two 45-minute sessions, the first starting at 11am and the second at 2pm. If you'd like to join us for morning or afternoon tea beforehand, please arrive 20 minutes before your chosen performance. Transport is available for the eastern region and there is free parking at St Mark's.

Make sure you RSVP to stmarks@wesley.org.au or call 9807 3634 by Thursday 11 May.



Jazz vocalist Michelle Nicolle



Giving hope has no age limit

Going above and beyond to make a positive difference to the lives of older people, Kate McClelland has even trained her golden Great Dane, Saffron, to bring joy to people living in aged care homes.

A Wesley volunteer and Healesville resident, for the past 11 years Kate has been dedicated to supporting older people to stay engaged and socially active in the community.

Through Wesley's Melba Club, she has loyally visited three clients on a weekly basis for more than 10 years.

She has played a key role in her clients' wishes to continue to live independently at home despite them managing health challenges such as Alzheimer's disease and vision impairment.

At 82 years old herself, Kate's youthful vitality and passion for healthy living gives energy and inspiration to the people she visits.

Kate says that she has been inspired by people she has met and befriended over the years.

"If the clients I visit can stay living independently with all that they go through, then so can I," Kate said.

Wesley Team Leader Kathleen Holton said Kate really embraces her role as a volunteer to respond to client needs.

"She has a wonderful ability to inspire people with hope, talking about future plans and taking clients to social lunch outings and functions with our Melba Club," Kathleen said.

Kate's dedication has been recognised with the Wesley Mission Victoria Kevin Green Award, which is awarded annually to a Wesley volunteer who has made a positive difference in the community.

Exploring the world from the living room

Volunteer Johnson's fresh face and energy has been a wonderful injection of happiness into the lives of Wesley client Jerome, and his wife and fulltime carer Veronica.

For the bubbly and gregarious couple who come from Sri Lanka and India, life completely changed in 2003 when Jerome's health began to decline resulting in reduced mobility and significant visual impairment.

They went from being an extremely social couple to feeling lonely, spending most of their time in between the hospital and home with limited visits from family and friends.

But since Johnson began stopping by on a weekly basis, the loneliness has quickly faded.

For Veronica, it's been music to her ears to hear her husband engaged in worldly discussions, just like when their worlds first collided in Australia more than 20 years ago.

"Johnson has really helped reignite Jerome's interest in worldwide affairs, bringing him back to the things he loves," Veronica said.

"Jerome was the president of the International Lions Club and he was, and still is, passionate about social issues.

"It makes me so happy to see the two on the internet together sharing a love of history, exploring cultures and discussing politics.

"After years together we can go for long periods without talking, but since Jerome was introduced to Johnson, I hear my husband chatting and laughing!"



Two peas in a pod, Johnson and Jerome having a laugh.

For Johnson, who came to Wesley wanting to make a difference to the lives of older people in the community, the joy is mutual.

"It's great having lively discussion and being in the company of such lovely people," Johnson said.

"My grandparents are in China so visiting Jerome and Veronica is a wonderful opportunity for me," Johnson said.

"I feel like I'm having an informative history lesson with Jerome!

"I think Wesley's social support program has achieved an amazing thing – bringing us together to explore cultures and world events from Veronica and Jerome's living room!"

If you, or someone you know, would like to make a difference to the lives of older people and help someone get back to the things they love, contact us on **13 93 75** or email **agedcare@wesley.org.au**.

When to worry about memory loss



We all forget things from time to time, whether we are in our 30s or 70s. But as we get older, it can often be hard to tell the difference between memory loss as part of normal aging, or memory loss as a symptom of dementia.

Normal memory loss might mean we walk into the bedroom and forget what we had to fetch, or forget what was just on the tip of our tongue. This kind of memory loss does not interfere with everyday life.

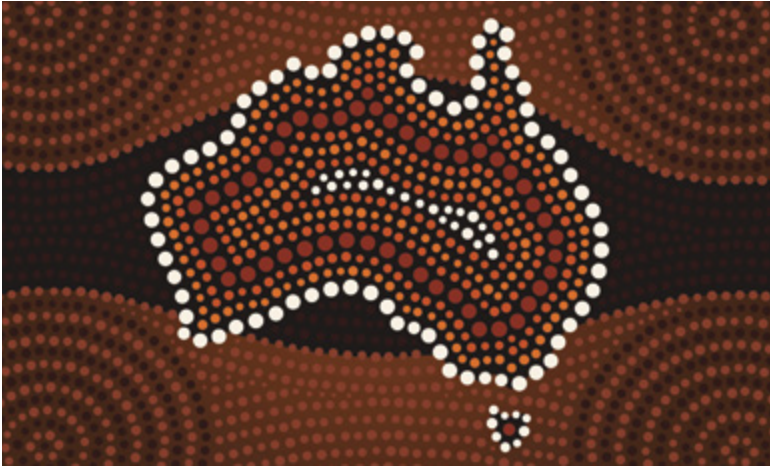
Loss of memory with dementia is very different.

- > It is persistent and progressive, whereas normal memory loss is occasional
- > It can affect ability to continue to work or do familiar things that you are used to
- > It may mean you find it hard to find the way home.

If you or a loved one is concerned about dementia, there are a number of resources at **fightdementia.org.au**.

Our stories in other languages

We know our clients come from diverse backgrounds and appreciate that, for many of you, English isn't your first language. So we're looking forward to translating a story in every edition of Care & Connect into Mandarin, Italian or Greek. Please enjoy this article on National Reconciliation Week in Italian.



National Reconciliation Week

Did you know that it has only been 50 years since Australians voted to amend the constitution to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the census and allow the Commonwealth to create laws for them? This year also marks 25 years since the historic Mabo decision, which legally recognised the special relationship that traditional owners have with the land.

This year we will celebrate National Reconciliation Week from 27 May – 3 June. The theme is 'Let's take the next steps' with the aim for all Australians to focus on how we can continue on the path to reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Wesley will be celebrating this week with some activities so stay tuned. Visit reconciliation.org.au if you'd like to learn more.

Settimana della Riconciliazione Nazionale

Lo sapevate che sono passati soltanto cinquanta anni da quando gli australiani hanno votato per modificare la Costituzione affinché riconosca le persone aborigene e delle isole di Torres Strait nel censimento e affinché il Commonwealth possa creare delle leggi per loro? Quest'anno ricorre anche il venticinquesimo anniversario della storica decisione Mabo, che riconosceva legalmente la relazione speciale che i proprietari tradizionali hanno con la terra.

Quest'anno celebreremo la Settimana della Riconciliazione Nazionale dal 27 maggio al 3 giugno. Il tema è "Prendiamo le prossime decisioni" e l'obiettivo è che tutti gli australiani continuino sul cammino della riconciliazione con le persone aborigene e delle isole di Torres Strait. Wesley celebrerà questa settimana con varie attività, perciò sintonizzatevi. Visitate reconciliation.org.au se volete saperne di più.

Photograph: istock/sara_winter

Mates Mel and Eric

If you were to be at the Manhattan Hotel in Heathmont every second Monday, you'd be guaranteed to see Wesley volunteers Mel and Eric. They've been going there with the Men's Fortnighters Lunch Group since 1995!

The group has 10 participants who enjoy getting together every fortnight, as the group's name suggests, and having a yarn over some good food. Recently, group member Alan has secured a gig playing the accordion during lunch, much to everyone's delight.

Wesley congratulates and thanks Mel and Eric for their unwavering enthusiasm and commitment to this group. New members and new volunteers who would like to be involved can **contact us on 13 93 75**.



Mel and Eric, loyal volunteers and patrons at the Manhattan Hotel.

A recipe for happiness

Wesley client Travis and social support volunteer Rebecca have shared a friendship for almost four years, spending a day together every month.

Their regular outing usually includes a delicious lunch and catching a movie at the cinema, but recently they 'mixed it' up and headed to the kitchen, which is where Rebecca really shines.

Travis, 41, has cerebral palsy and lives with his family in Warrandyte. He came to Wesley in 2012 as he was feeling isolated from his friends.

"I don't get to see my friends that much anymore," Travis said.

"I really enjoy Rebecca's company and one of my favourite things is that we go to the movies.

"But I knew Rebecca is a chef so I wanted her to teach me to cook."



There's no such thing as too much lasagne! Travis with his culinary masterpiece.

The question of what ingredients to put in the shopping basket at the supermarket was an easy one.

"My favourite food is pasta," Travis said.

The duo shared an afternoon in the kitchen, whipping up a storm with Travis's culinary skills going from strength to strength as Rebecca schooled him on how to make the perfect lasagne.

"I took the lasagne home and my mum really enjoyed it, I froze some and ate it later," Travis said.

For Rebecca and Travis, the real secret ingredients are happiness and companionship, which is what Wesley's social support programs offer. It's about getting back to the things you love and building connections over shared interests – in this case, food!

Mental health awareness training for volunteers

Wesley Aged Care and MIND Australia have come together to design a mental health awareness training for Wesley volunteers to gain a general understanding of mental health illnesses and how to navigate situations you may encounter in everyday life.

The training will be delivered by MIND Australia staff and the first training date is **Thursday 20 April from 1pm-4pm at St Mark's**. Afternoon refreshments will be provided.

If you are interested in attending, please RSVP by **Monday 10 April to Samantha Begley on 9794 3000 or samantha.begley@wesley.org.au**.

If you can't attend this opportunity, there will be another training offered for volunteers in the northwest region in October.





Thanks from Food for Families

We are so thrilled that in its 25th year, Food for Families was one of our most successful appeals ever. Thousands of generous Melburnians donated 47 tonnes of food and toiletry items - that's the equivalent of eight African elephants!

Through 485 registrations, more than 3,000 red boxes and bags were filled to the brim with goodies. This means that our Crisis and Homelessness Services can continue to provide crucial food relief to local families and individuals who turn to us for support this year.

A special shout out to Wesley Linlithgow and Wesley St Mark's, which were drop-off points for donations this year. Congratulations to Wesley Linlithgow, which was one of the top three donation locations! Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for participating in our 25th appeal.

Help with My Aged Care and Carer Gateway

Helping clients to continue living independently is one of our top priorities. Often, it's difficult to know how to access services and find out more, but we're here to help you!

If you are a potential or existing client, carer, or provide support for adults with disability, Wesley is hosting a series of free forums to help you understand how to access aged care services through the government's My Aged Care and Carer Gateway websites.

The forum will:

- > Give an overview of the My Aged Care and Carer Gateway websites, including practical assistance on finding these sites on a computer
- > Explain the aged care referral process

- > Offer practical demonstrations to help you find a service and support you through the referral process
- > Answer questions you may have about the aged care reform process.

Northern and western regions

Thursday 27 April, 1pm - 4pm
 Wesley Linlithgow, 325 Lower Heidelberg Road, Ivanhoe
RSVP by Thursday 20 April to jennie.holdom@wesley.org.au or call 9794 3000.
 Parking is available behind the Church hall.

Eastern and southern regions

Monday 1 May, 10am - 12.30pm
 Wesley St Mark's, 7 Edward Street, Chadstone
RSVP by Thursday 27 April to jennie.holdom@wesley.org.au or call 9794 3000.
 Parking is available in Edward Street.

