

connected

Vol 1 | Spring 2021

In this issue

New aged care
precinct for Noosa

Carina resident turns
110 year old

A life of devotion to
Blue Care

A day with a Personal Carer

Retirement in all its fullness



Welcome to Connected

Hello everyone. I'm so proud to launch our first issue of Connected, Blue Care's newest publication, where we share stories about our incredible aged care residents, staff and volunteers, as well as news that matters to residential and home care clients and their loved ones.

As one of Queensland's largest and most trusted providers of in-home care, residential aged care, disability services and retirement living, Blue Care sees so many examples everyday of how our residents, clients and staff 'live life in all its fullness' (John 10:10) – we're excited to share this with you.

Inside this issue we have many wonderful stories; including residents who have found friendship and purpose in retirement, advances in caring for dementia patients, an update on our new aged care precinct in Noosa and a special 110th birthday for one of Queensland's oldest residents.

If you have a special Blue Care story you would love to share, please reach out to us. We'd love to hear from you.

Warm regards

Cathy

Cathy

*Cathy Thomas, Group Executive,
Aged Care and Community Services
and Executive Director, ARRCs*

Contents

- 1 Welcome to Connected; Acknowledgement of country
- 2 Creativity on show for Spring
- 3 Sisters living retirement in all its fullness
- 5 New aged care precinct a game changer for Noosa
- 7 Beaked therapist brings joy to Masters Lodge
- 8 Celebrating 110 years
- 9 Finding purpose in retirement
- 10 A cooler future for aged care residents
- 11 A life of devotion to Blue Care
- 13 Recipe for a long life
- 15 Making lifelong friends in retirement
- 17 Dementia care expertise on show; Marriage milestone
- 19 Caring as a calling
- 20 Festival in the Islands
- 21 A graceful life
- 23 A day on the road with a Personal Carer
- 24 Connected in Care
- 25 Lifting your spirit though volunteering
- 26 New volunteering portal & Blue Care's values

Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation, Blue Care and ARRCs as part of the wider UnitingCare business, pays respect to Elders past, present and emerging and the unique role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People play in the communities we serve.

We acknowledge our gratitude that we share this land today, our sorrow for the costs of that sharing, and our hope to move to a place of justice and partnership together.



RAP artwork by Tarni O'Shea – South Sea Islander and Butchulla artist and designer. Commissioned in 2020.

Get in touch...

Submit your story to UnitingCare's Corporate Communication's Team - media@ucareqld.com.au



Residents of the Blue Care Garden Settlement Aged Care Facility lived up to the name of their home when they entered their spectacular 'Calvin the COVID Caterpillar' bus into this year's Toowoomba Carnival of Flowers parade.

The Blue Care minibus was decorated with bright flowers and buds made from sustainable materials, and real flowers, with the centerpieces of their design a large caterpillar and butterfly.

With so much work to do in the months leading up, staff project managed the craft workload, allocating each




resident who wanted to be involved a special creative task.

Residents were happily occupied for many weeks, making the colourful decorations every spare moment they had.

All the materials for the project were donated by family and staff, who were proudly there on the day of the parade to wave at the bus as it drove through the main streets of Toowoomba.





Sisters living retirement in all its fullness

Sister Mary Randle and Sister Ellen Randle are enjoying the gift of 'togetherness' that retirement has given them.

Sister Mary Randle, 77.
Carina, Good Samaritan Sister

Until five years ago, Ellen and I hadn't lived together since we were children. Now we share a two-bedroom apartment.

We grew up in Bulimba, on the bend of the Brisbane River, in a family with seven children – our sister Veronica (who died in 1997 aged 59) and our

brother Tom (who died in a car accident outside Mount Isa in 1979, aged 37) are in heaven.

Veronica was a Good Samaritan Sister too. Our brother Charlie, 80, is a Marist Brother and he also lives in our same complex (at Azure Blue Carina retirement village). Ann, 71, has a unit in this complex too with her husband Jack but he is now in the nursing home part. Our sister Carmel, 72, and her husband live at Morningside.

So four of us – Charlie, Veronica, Ellen and I – followed a religious life. Growing up, we said the rosary every night and went to Mass every Sunday. Mum had qualifications as a secretary but, with all the children, she didn't work. Dad was

a clerk at TC Beirne in the Valley. People were always welcomed at our home.

I knew I wanted to be a nun when I was very young and I was 19 when I entered the convent. Over my life, I have taught at schools in Sydney, Melbourne, Whyalla in South Australia and in Kiribati in the central Pacific – I was there in 1994 for six months and again in 1997 for five years. I did overseas study with a year in Ireland and a sabbatical in Rome and America. I lived away from Queensland for 31 years so it is lovely to be living with Ellen now.

I'm more hot headed than Ellen and I'm the one who gets things done and annoys the hell out of

**“It’s a gift that we are
here together and we can
look after each other.”**

poor old El. We wouldn’t be human if we didn’t get a bit shirty with each other but we are not a family who get into long silences. Ellen’s got a wonderful sense of humour and if she thinks I’m getting too serious, she goes on with a lot of nonsense until I laugh.

You don’t retire from being a nun. Ellen and I pray together every morning and once a week we have Lectio spiritual reading and reflecting on the Gospel.

I’ve learnt gratitude from my time with Ellen.

“It’s a gift that we are here together and we can look after each other.”

At this stage in our lives, what more can you do than be kind to each other and love each other.

Sister Ellen Randle, 74.
Carina, Good Samaritan Sister

Growing up, I looked up to Mary. She was practical, she would help Mum and organise things, even when she was quite small. She was a good organiser but a worker too.

Mary’s decision to become a Sister could have influenced me to do the same but I think that’s where my heart was set.

Both our parents had a deep faith. I can remember my father saying his prayers morning and night. As a girl, it

showed me the importance of nurturing the faith we had.

We attended Lourdes Hill College – Mary was ahead of me by a few classes – and I saw the nuns working and teaching, it just attracted me.

At 19, I went to Sydney and studied to be a primary school teacher. My first teaching position was at Manly Vale in NSW. I also went to Mitchelton in Brisbane, Wyalla in South Australia (Mary was there at a different time), and in Queensland at Innisfail, Hughenden, Ayr and Charters Towers. For 20 years, I had principal roles and I enjoyed that too.

You do have doubts along the way, even when you get to your 70s you wonder sometimes, “Could I have done something different with my life?” But any doubts haven’t stayed with me long.

At the end of 2015, I was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease. It was a shock but my neurosurgeon told me no two cases are the same and if you’ve got to have something this probably isn’t a bad thing to have. So I’m just living with it.

“After all the years of living apart, I do cherish the chance to have this time with Mary and I’m thankful for it.”

We have our moments but you have just got to let it go. There’s no point holding on to any arguments.

We live in a lovely community. I do the exercise classes, I go to the gym and work on the equipment. On Thursday afternoons, Mary and I go up to the local school (Saints Peter and Paul’s, Bulimba) to listen to the children read and help them along. We also take Holy Communion to some parishioners in the nursing home part of the complex.

Mary and I play cards together, a game called Skip Bo. I also love crosswords and I do them most days. My other sister Ann does them too and we do the competitions in the Lovatts magazine. It’s really good and sometimes you might win something. Last year I won a \$25 prize voucher. That was really wonderful.

If you’re ready to make the move, Azure Blue in Brisbane’s Carina offers a resort lifestyle, and a community of like-minded people. Find out more about our village.

This article first appeared in QWeekend on June 12, 2021 and is reproduced here with permission. Interview by Elissa Lawrence; picture by Mark Cranitch.

These two sisters became nuns and travelled for their work, now they enjoy living together for the first time since they were children.



New aged care precinct a game changer for Noosa

Blue Care's plan to develop an integrated aged care and retirement living precinct at Sunrise Beach is on track with approval from Noosa Shire Council and the State and Commonwealth Governments to commence construction later this year.

The \$100M precinct, once complete, will provide opportunities for 260 residents to access unique care and lifestyle opportunities in the area they already call home,

addressing Noosa's critical shortage of aged care and retirement living housing options.

"We're laying the foundations for better care, greater choice, and community connection," Blue Care Group Executive Cathy Thomas said.

"As a not-for-profit, mission-based provider of services across Queensland, Blue Care is drawing on our 68-year history of care to create a home and lifestyle offering that is truly unique for the Noosa community."

The design of the 102-bed aged care home component of the precinct by leading architecture and interior design firm ThomsonAdsett is a first for Blue Care, having been

updated to respond to latest nationwide feedback from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, and to incorporate public health advice to support the management of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases.

"The aged care home is designed to reflect the small household model of care," Principal of ThomsonAdsett Pino Gentile said.

"Eight and nine bed households are located around a central living area, providing improved functionality and amenity for residents whilst also offering greater access controls, sanitisation points, and designated paths of travel throughout the greater care home."



**"We're laying the foundations
for better care, greater choice,
and community connection."**

The co-located retirement village, that is being developed on behalf of Blue Care by retirement village specialist Lendlease, completes the precinct vision for a place to call home that integrates quality

care, choice and community connection in later life.

"Research shows that integrated independent living and aged care homes provide the best care outcomes for residents and their families," Ms Thomas said.

For more information
about Blue Care Sunrise
Beach aged care
home and village visit
bluecaresunrisebeach.com



Beaked therapist brings joy to Masters Lodge residents

A cheeky sulphur-crested cockatoo named Callahan and his band of furry and feathered friends is giving Blue Care Masters Lodge aged care home residents at Hervey Bay a new lease on life.

The winged sensation is one of several therapy animals that visit Masters Lodge each month thanks to the leadership of Blue Care Diversional Therapist Tracey Beach and Pet & Engagement Therapies Team leader Debbie Cork, who delivers the animal-assisted therapy to residents in care with the support of local volunteers and the Hervey Bay Animal Refuge.

Numerous studies have reported that animals exert favourable effects on psychological, physiological and social aspects of human wellbeing, and Callahan and his friends Harvey the Eclectus Parrot, Sooty the Poodle, Ebony the Shih Tzu, Dotti the French Bulldog, and Bently and Gizmo the Chihuahuas, certainly bring

smiles to residents' faces during their regular visits.

"The pet therapy team really helps our residents to recall memories and spark connections when they see them. Suddenly they start remembering the names of old pets, so you have all these wonderful conversations with them about their animals that we've never had before," Tracey says.

Debbie, a former nurse, agrees: "People who are usually silent will see the animals and then go into a big, long conversation about their pets."

She said she recognised the need for this kind of support for people in care five years ago and has been visiting Masters Lodge with husband Simon ever since. Tracey, who has been working at Masters Lodge for nearly nine years now, said she can still remember the residents' reaction to that very first visit.

"It was this spark - the residents just came alive. To see the smiles appear on their faces

and engage in meaningful conversation when they typically wouldn't, it really was amazing.

"Being able to pick up an animal, and bring it close to you and cuddle it, it really is magical to witness that. The animals just have this way of making our residents feel loved and special," Tracey says.

And it's not just the residents who benefit from making friends with the animals. Debbie says facilitating the animal-assisted therapy sessions at Blue Care brings her and fellow volunteers personal joy and fulfilment.

"The best way to make yourself whole is by helping other people. On the days we come here we go home and feel like we've done something, more than if we went to a job and got a big wage; this really goes to the heart. It has helped both my husband and I amazingly, and we're very grateful to be able to do it."

Watch the pet therapy team in action.



Celebrating 110 years

Blue Care Carina resident Jessie Prowse has celebrated more birthdays than most, and at 110 years old she's now the fourth oldest person in Australia.

Born in a sandstone house in the Blue Mountains on 7 July 1911, she's the proud matriarch of five generations, with her youngest great-great-grandchild aged two.

Up until seven years ago, Jessie lived with her daughter Jennifer until she was 104, and only decided to move into the Brisbane southside aged care facility when they decided extra care was needed.

"Other than using the walking frame, I'm doing very well," said Jessie.

"I'm a very lucky lady that I have such freedom to walk. This is a wonderful home."

Jessie credits her long and happy life to being active every day, with a particular interest in competitive sport earlier in life.

For decades she enjoyed playing tennis, then later in life she developed a love for competition lawn bowls, where she became President of the Bondi Bowling Club.

While raising her three children, Rodney 80, Jennifer 77 and Lindsay 76, she worked as a seamstress and decorator. One of her favourite projects was blinds and curtains for the Luna Park amusement park in Sydney. Her late husband Alfred worked for the General Post Office his whole working life.

When reflecting on her more than a century of living, she says raising her family is her proudest achievement. With visits from her children, two

grandchildren, three great-grandchildren and five great-great-grandchildren, something she looks forward to.

"The most important thing in life is family," said Jessie.

"I've got a good life, a good family and I'm well looked after. What more do I want?"



Reminiscing about good times with her husband at during a day at the races.

Top: Jessie Prowse, proudly showing off her knitting skills.

"The most important thing in life is family."

Finding purpose in retirement

Former residential builder Tony Stokes can't stop smiling following the unveiling of a special project that has not only transformed an outdoor area at Yurana Aged Care Facility in Springwood, but also his mental health.

Over three months the 69-year-old swapped puzzles for power tools during a project that has converted a dated barbeque area into a modern outdoor entertaining area for residents to enjoy.

Prior to retiring, Tony was a busy builder for 41 years. He found it challenging adjusting to his new quieter life, spending most of his time by himself.

"I wanted to build it because I thought it would be a wonderful place to get together. I know for a fact that people sit in their rooms all day," said Tony.

"The idea was for people to get out and chat to each other."

In a shed on the property Tony found an unused DIY kitchen kit. From there the idea was born to create a full outdoor kitchen with cupboards, benches and a built-in barbeque.

Tony pitched his idea to management and then went to work drawing up plans, and enlisting the help of the facility's maintenance officer.

Residential Services Manager Ellen Gorrington describes Tony as a visionary, bringing everything he had dreamed to life for the benefit of others in the retirement community.

"He feels he has a purpose now. This project has changed his life and the way he thinks and feels," said Ellen.

The retirement village officially opened the new entertaining area with a special

"I just feel happy. I feel very contented now, like I've achieved something."

Personal Carer Sue Vadasz said everything used in the project was found on the property, supplied second-hand or gifted from resident's families.

"They begged, borrowed and were donated everything needed for this absolutely fantastic outdoor barbecue, coffee and entertaining area," said Sue.

celebration to thank Tony for his efforts and unveil its special name 'Tony's Place'.

For Tony though, watching fellow residents enjoy the new space is all the thanks he needs. "I just feel happy. I feel very contented now, like I've achieved something," said Tony.

Watch the video below created by the clever team at Blue Care Yurana.



A cooler future for residential aged care homes

Residential aged care homes on the Sunshine Coast are part of an exciting new project that partners Blue Care with University of the Sunshine Coast (USC) and Griffith University to develop the first evidence-based heat adaptation plan for Queensland's aged care sector.

The new 'Green Infrastructure for Mitigating Heat Stress in Aged Care Facilities' research project taking place at Blue Care's Bli Bli and Caloundra residential aged care homes will investigate the extent to which planting heat load reducing shrubs and trees can benefit the health of aged care home residents and workers.

The information gathered in the project will support the aged care sector to better respond to extreme heat events.

The project is supported by a \$127,493 Strategic Adaptation Priorities Program grant from the Queensland Department of Environment and Science and will involve deploying smart technology at the pilot sites to record baseline heat loads, target areas for heat reduction and track improvements in greenery and heat stress over time.

The project team will also conduct sector-wide workshops across the state to determine whether heat adaptation plans could benefit other aged care facilities.

Co-lead investigator Dr Tony Matthews of Griffith University said the study aims to reduce cases of heat related illness and deaths in aged care.

"Heatwaves have killed more Australians than fires, floods and all other natural disasters combined," Dr Matthews said.

"Remarkably, very little attention has been paid to the role of urban greenery in reducing heat stress for seniors. This innovative new research with directly benefit some of our most vulnerable populations."

Lead researcher and Professor of Urban Design and Town Planning at USC Claudia Baldwin said the project will help to prove and quantify the health benefits of planting more trees and green walls in residential aged care homes.

"If the world is becoming hotter because of climate change, we need to start planning now to figure out how to cool things down cost-effectively. And we need the evidence base to justify the investment in green infrastructure for the future."

Judene Andrews, UnitingCare Queensland Manager Environmental Sustainability said the new research aligns with Blue Care's mission to better the health and wellbeing of people across Queensland.

"Blue Care has a long and proud history of supporting the elderly in residential aged

care, so it makes sense for us to partner in research that will support us and the sector to better respond to the threat of extreme heat events.

"We are hopeful this project will demonstrate return on investment for health that greening infrastructure provides so that our residential aged care facilities and others can prioritise more green space in future."



Bli Bli Aged Care Facility's beautiful green space and heat sensors.



A life of devotion to Blue Care

Retirement village manager, Valmai Dennis has just retired after dedicating 40 years of her working life to Blue Care's clients and residents.

I'm very proud of my Blue Star. It is an award given by Blue Care in recognition of extraordinary commitment and dedication to Blue Care, its clients and residents. I got it on my anniversary of 40 years with the organisation. A lot of people say it's unusual for someone to stay in one workplace for such a long time but I haven't done the same job for 40 years – I've had a variety of roles, in

a variety of places, so it's like having lots of different jobs with the same employer.

I was always going to be a teacher – I just hadn't decided if it was in home economics or accounting. I was born in Brisbane, due to possible complications, but grew up on a mixed dairy farm at Quinalow, 73km north of Toowoomba, with my late Mum Gladys, late Dad Charlie, older brothers Barry, 71, and (late) Jeff, younger sister Elva, 59, and younger brother Kel, 57. I had a great life growing up on the farm.

I applied for the position of junior office assistant with Toowoomba Garden Settlement, as it was called then, before I graduated from Oakey State High School and I got it, but they were good enough to let me

finish my exams before I started. The plan was to work 12 months to earn money to go to teachers' college. My first jobs were delivering mail to residents and collecting their fortnightly rent. It was all done in cash those days.

"I loved working with the residents so much, I never left"

When I fell pregnant with my twin boys, Matthew and Simon, 32, I did resign but after six months, the general manager asked if I would come back on a part-time basis. They set up a home office for me, which was fantastic, and gradually the hours went back to full time in the office. In 2001, I transferred from Blue Care Toowoomba to the southeast regional office where I looked after accounts receivable and government funding acquittal for the region.



The Blue Star awarded for extraordinary commitment to Blue Care.

Retirement Village Manager Valmai Dennis dedicated 40 years to Blue Care.

Since September 2009, I have managed four retirement villages across Toowoomba, Stanthorpe and Ipswich.

Growing up without grandparents, I guess when I first started that was part of the connection, knowing that something had been missing. Now they're more like my mothers, than grandmothers! But I think I have an affinity with the residents. I'm a very hands-on manager. I like being able to play a small part in their lives, trying to improve their quality of life.

I don't regret not going into teaching at all; working with the elderly has made me more caring and compassionate. I get as much from the residents as they might get from me. It's a feeling that's hard to

put into words. They're all like family to me. I had tears writing my resignation letter. I'll miss them so much.

My husband Russell (60, retired Toowoomba Mail Centre manager) and I met in 1978, driving up the main street of Toowoomba. I had a green Mini minor and he had a white Datsun. That's what young people did in those days: they got together of a night-time in their cars in the main street. Some of the girls I lived with knew some of the boys Russell was in a group with. He was cute, active and we were both interested in sports. He's played

time together. We love to travel; to just get in the car and take off. Wherever we go Russell will play golf, while I just want to relax and read books. Apart from my gardening, I haven't taken up any other hobbies yet. I can knit, sew and crochet but they're not passions. We've also talked about volunteering together down the track.

Our grandson Liam – Simon and wife Reegan's son – has just turned two. Russell – he's Pop and I'm Nan – has been doing a bit of babysitting since he retired earlier this year, and I miss out. I'm looking forward to being part of Liam's growing up,

"I loved working with the residents so much, I never left."

everything but mainly cricket and golf, and we played night tennis together. I wasn't to his standard but, anyway, he put up with it!

Retirement is really going to be about doing things together. Russell worked shift work, I had long hours and we used to just pass like ships in the night, so it will be nice to spend some

to taking him to the park. He's a very active little boy, who's just starting to speak in sentences. It's amazing how clever he is. Liam's such a delight.

This article first appeared in QWeekend on August 7, 2021 and is reproduced here with permission. Interview by Leanne Edmestone; picture by Mark Cranitch.

Recipe for a long life

91-year-old Colin Morwood OAM is living an extraordinary life that's been dedicated to family, gymnastics and the community.

I suspect I really am the only genuine one-eyed judge in Olympic history. I lost my eye in a motor accident just weeks before I went to the 1960 Rome Olympics to judge gymnastics. I healed very quickly, had a good artificial eye installed and duly turned up to judge. Having started gymnastics as a boarder at Toowoomba Grammar School, aged 13, the pinnacle of my competitive career was being named Queensland Horizontal Bar Champion 1953. When I moved into administration and judging my involvement really took off. I've judged at many an Australian Championship, two Olympic Games – Melbourne 1956 as well as Rome – and been inducted into the Australian Gymnastics Judging Hall of Fame.

Growing up in Brisbane with my brothers Ken, Alan (late) and his twin sister Audrey, our father James "Eric" Morwood was the chief engineer and manager of Brisbane City Council's electricity department and my mother Myrtle was a secondary school English/ French teacher. Dad used to take me with him on power station breakdown visits and I never wanted to do anything but engineering. I became the first City Electric Light engineering cadet in 1948, which involved a year's apprenticeship before going to University of Queensland to complete my Bachelor of Engineering (Electrical). My first job was with the City Electric Light Company in 1953.

Five years later, I was sailing to England on the Dominion Monarch, having won a two year industry scholarship to work overseas, when I met my late wife Helen, a New Zealand journalist, while playing deck quoits. We didn't get together straight away – I had my scholarship to complete and she had to accompany her parents home. After about a year, I got

a postcard from Helen to say she was working in London. I was based in Manchester and Newcastle, and burnt many miles commuting to see her. On our way home from a motoring tour of Wales with friends, I took Helen walking on the moors in the Peak District and asked her to marry me. She didn't give me an answer straight away because a naval lieutenant had asked her to go to Malta. She'd never been and was quite keen to go!

About a week later, I was driving to visit Essex's Bradwell Nuclear Power Station when I collided with a fully laden sand truck. I ended up in hospital with a lost eye, broken nose, broken jaw, and 40 stitches in my face, but was most worried about not being able to make it to Helen's that night, where I'd planned to put on a slide show of my photos from the Gymnastics World Cup in Moscow. I had a message sent to her apologising. Next thing, there was Helen at the hospital, saying, yes, she'd marry me. We were married 57 years and have four children – Sue, 59, an architect, John, a

"My recipe for longevity is very simple – eat well, don't stint on the red wine and keep busy."



town planner, who died aged 55 six months after Helen, 85, in 2018, Bruce, 54, an arborist, and Alastair, 50, an airline pilot – and eight grandchildren, aged 15 to 23 years.

My career took us from Brisbane to Townsville, Gatton to Port Moresby, PNG, for four years, and then back to Brisbane. I also spent 40 years volunteering with the Institution of Electrical Engineers. Rotary has also been a huge part of my life since 1973. My Order of Australia nomination came from the Rotary Club of Brisbane Mid-City and it

was awarded for service to gymnastics and the community.

“My recipe for longevity is very simple – eat well, don’t stint on the red wine and keep busy.”

I drink my green smoothie every morning; have a high-protein, lowcarb diet – organic where possible; and always have wine with my main meal.

I’m still very busy. I was president of the Blue Care Iona Village (where I live) Independent Residents’ Association (Kenmore Hills) for seven years, as well as a continuing member

of the IET (successor to the IEE) committee.

I’ve prepared all the photos for my funeral and Sue asked me to write my eulogy, so I’m halfway through that. I’m about to start compiling a world timeline, starting with my birth year 1930 and recording, year by year, what happened to me, in Queensland, in Australia and the world. I’m hoping to get that finished by my 100th birthday.

This article first appeared in QWeekend on August 28, 2021 and is reproduced here with permission. Interview by Leanne Edmestone; picture by Mark Cranitch.



Making lifelong friends in retirement

Brian Molyneaux and Lionel Baker met in a retirement village and have forged a friendship based on a mutual desire to help people.

Brian Molyneaux

Retired printer, 80, Deagon

What was your career before retirement? I was in the printing industry. I started work as an apprentice compositor in 1958 and that's where I met my wife Dawn, 79. We'll celebrate our 60th wedding anniversary next year. We've got two

daughters, four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

How did you come to be living in Blue Care's Ibis Court retirement village?

Dawn and I downsized from our large Bracken Ridge home about seven years ago and moved in here to be close to my mother, Kate, who died last year aged 106. It's also small, there are only 30 villas, very quiet, central and close to the beachfront.

What do you like about living here?

It's nicely set out and the people are very nice. I'm chairman of the social committee and we organise little get-togethers. We have a newsletter, bingo, barbecues,

an annual Christmas lunch and the like. One of the residents is involved with the neighbouring Uniting Church and organises bus trips occasionally. About 30 of us have just come back from a five-day tour to Warwick and Stanthorpe for the Jumpers and Jazz Festival. It was great.

How did you meet Lionel?

Lionel and his wife Sue moved into the villa opposite us, so we introduced ourselves. They're probably the youngest residents in the village. We've given each other a hand around the place.

What did you two bond over?

If you get down to brass tacks, it's probably just a community bond. He likes to do things for

**"The motto I go by is,
it's not what you can get,
it's what you can give."**

people, and so do I. We do various things for other residents and if there's any big projects going, we give each other a hand. We seem to be able to chat about anything. He's an old Sandgate guy and so am I, so there are a lot of people we both know and we reminisce about the Sandgate area.

Why is a sense of community so important? My parents were always involved in the community, and so it's in the genes. I've always been on committees, we're life members of Brighton Junior Rugby League Club, members of Probus and have volunteered at the Prince Charles Hospital twice a week for the past 15 years. Every Friday we take one of the residents, who's 93, shopping with us.

What is your philosophy for life?

"The motto I go by is, it's not what you can get, it's what you can give."

When you're retired, every day is a holiday and it's good for your mind and body to keep active.

Lionel Baker

Retired bus driver, 69, Deagon

How did you meet your wife, Sue? A mate and I were at a school dance and saw a blonde and a brunette across the hall. We both wanted to ask the blonde to dance, so we flipped a

coin. I won the toss and 51 years later, we're still together. We were both born on August 11, two years apart, but she initially thought I was using that as a line to chat her up! We've got three children and six grandchildren.

What was your career before retiring four years ago?

Oh, so varied. I had 23 years with Telecom before taking a redundancy, then I drove my own cab. After being diagnosed with a kidney disease, I took a few years off to go sailing and fishing, then I drove council buses for 11 years. I finished up working as a tour bus driver, while Sue was the hostess. That was a fantastic job, travelling the country together like the Leyland Brothers.

Why did you move into Ibis Court retirement village?

We came to look at the place with my mother-in-law Dorothy Gaskell, 92, who lives here and knows a lot of the residents through church, and thought, aye, we could easily retire here too, then shut the door and take off in our caravan. We've been here about 20 months and absolutely love it. I don't think there's one person living here I don't get on with and I'm pretty hard to get on with!

Have you made a lot of friends in the village? Yes, yes, well and truly. Every person in here, I wouldn't hesitate to

do something for. My mum lived in a retirement village up the coast and there was conflict; I see no conflict in here whatsoever. We have functions every now and again, with people coming from 25 of the 30 units, and gosh, we have a lot of laughing. It is fantastic. It's the best thing I ever did.

What do you like about Brian?

"We're two peas in a pod when it comes to liking helping people."

We do things like take the childproof tops off medicine bottles, help when their TV remote stuffs up, and mow and edge the gardens. We just hired a cherry picker and lopped a tree in the neighbouring church grounds that was causing some problems.

Why is it important to foster a sense of community? It doesn't matter whether we live in this village or the city or the state, everybody's got to have some thought for those around them. I'm not a churchgoer but I live by the values live and let live, but do unto others as you would have them do unto you. A smile and a thank you costs nothing and, by gee, you get a lot in return.

This article first appeared in QWeekend on September 4, 2021 and is reproduced here with permission. Interview by Leanne Edmestone; picture by David Kelly.



Dementia care expertise on show

For Nerida Pankhurst caring for people living with dementia has turned out to be a lifelong calling.

"I have been working for Blue Care for almost 23 years," says Nerida, explaining her first position as a Day Respite Care Coordinator has led to years of supporting clients living with dementia in a variety of roles, mostly recently as a Dementia Services Australia (DSA) qualified Dementia Care Consultant and Care Coordinator of our Memory Support Centre at Coopers Plains.

Speaking at the national Future of Aged Care Summit on the topic of service innovation, she said undertaking the pilot Intensive Industry Partner Consultant Program run by DSA in partnership with HammondCare in 2018 had improved her understanding of and skills in dementia care, empowering her to deliver

improved outcomes for people accessing Blue Care's services.

"I am one of only five aged care staff across Australia invited to undertake the training so far," she says, explaining the DSA program involved six months of intensive training with qualified dementia care consultants, geriatricians, and pain management, environmental and delirium experts to learn strategies to best support people living with aged-related cognitive decline.

"In addition to classroom learning, I shadowed qualified consultants on home care visits with clients," she said. "When the consultants believed I was ready for it, I then led the visits."

Nerida says the critical skills she has learned in report writing, reflection, and the peer review process has equipped her with the skills needed to identify, document and understand dementia response behaviours and make recommendations to Blue Care staff about what they can do to make people

with dementia in residential aged care more comfortable.

"There are so many factors that can affect people with dementia," she said. "Often it is the effect of what is happening around them, so it is important to consider their environment and to learn from the individuals themselves as they are the ultimate experts on their own lived experience."

She says the training has also highlighted the importance of supporting the care network of the person with dementia.

"If we have a person in our service, we are also supporting their carer, which is often their family. It is important to ask them how their life is going and support them to care for themselves, to build resilience, so they can continue to help the person they are caring for in turn."

Nerida says she is grateful to Blue Care for supporting her to undertake the training and is confident the investment has led

Marriage Milestone

Residents of Blue Care Brassall have had something extra special to celebrate this Spring – 71 years of wedded bliss for Heather and Keith McKeand.

More than seven decades of marriage is not something that many people get to experience. In all that's 25,915 days of love and family for the Ipswich born couple.

After their wedding in September 1950, Heather and Keith moved into their family home in Redbank where they lived for 66 years before moving into the Blue Care Brassall Village Aged Care Facility five years ago.

Family has always been the most important part of Keith and Heather's lives with the pair treasuring time spent

with their three children, three granddaughters, two great-grandsons and extended family.

Before retiring, Keith worked in the local coal mines and Heather worked at the Redbank woollen mills.

In their free time the family enjoyed sports, with Keith and his son both playing soccer and many of the family involved in netball.

The Gold Coast was one of their favourite holiday destinations with countless holidays enjoyed with family at Rainbow Bay.

These days life may be quieter, but the couple like to keep their minds busy. Keith spends many happy hours doing his word search books, while Heather reads western themed novels.

Nerida Pankhurst, Blue Care Dementia Consultant and Care Coordinator.

to and will continue to facilitate improvements in client care.


"The number of people diagnosed living with dementia is set to double by 2050 and Dementia care is a key priority identified in the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.

"The more investment we can put into training programs to boost Dementia Care Consultant numbers so aged care staff have someone to go to for advice, the better."

When working with clients, Nerida and the Blue Care team create individualised approaches for each client and carer, with tailored interventions according to client interests. "We teach carers to create a story box about their loved one's life, so they can chat about long-term memories—like their profession, or travels—which are easier to recall than short-term memories."



Heather and Keith McKeand celebrate 71-years of marriage.



Caring as a calling

ARRCS aged care and disability support worker Lyn Talbot truly believes there are angels walking the earth in human form. The people she visits in their homes might say she's one of them.

As an Aboriginal woman, family is very important to Lyn, and that extends to the people she visits to help with personal care, social support, cleaning and shopping, in and around Darwin.

"They're all my family, no matter who they are," Lyn says. "And I'm part of their family."

Caring comes naturally to Lyn, who supported her father in his final days, and is the primary caregiver for her granddaughter, who has a disability. She has

also worked as a personal care assistant in aged care homes, a hospital dialysis unit, and in palliative care at a hospice.

She considers caring her calling, and describes her current role providing home care services as having "boundless possibilities".

"It's very interesting, because our clients are all different personalities, and have different needs," Lyn says.

"Every day is different and that's another beauty of the job – every day is different, it's not monotonous," she says.

"It's very rewarding. When you walk into someone's place and

they're feeling down or had a bad day and, you know, once you've left their home and they're in a happy place, it just gives you a really good feeling.

"You get lonely people, vulnerable people out in society and I just love making a difference to their lives."

Those people make a difference to Lyn's life, too. "If I have a hard night, I just get up and go to work, because I know I'm going to have another lovely day."

ARRCS provides home care services across the Northern Territory.

**"Every day is different
and that's another
beauty of the job."**

Festival in the Islands

For the first time in three years the community of the Torres Strait joined together for the 'Winds of Zenadth Kes', a four-day festival on Thursday Island, where people from all over the region celebrate in a spectacular display of traditional cultural heritage.

Thirteen residents from Blue Care's Star of the Sea and Ny-Ku Byun Elders Village facilities, joined elders from across the islands to support the practice,

preservation, maintenance and revitalisation of traditional dance, song, art and ceremony.

The festival's name 'Winds of Zenadth Kes' is an amalgamation of the Torres Strait language names for the four winds that pass through the region.

The local council built traditional huts next to the sea, allowing the community and residents to participate in activities to help connect to their cultural identities and ancestral homelands.





A graceful life

Mary Heath 83, is former principal ballerina and teacher enjoying her retirement in inner city Brisbane.

I was born at the end of World War II and times were tough. Dad (Arthur) worked on our family fruit farm in Port Macquarie, where I grew up, and together my mum (Elsie) and siblings (William, Joan and Margaret), we helped where we could. Tragedy hit our family early when my baby sister,

Frances, died when she was about six months old. I was about two or three at the time. Mum never liked to talk about it much but she did want to be closer to her family who were living in Queensland.

We moved to Queensland when I was about six.

Dad got a job bricklaying and did what he could but we never had much money.

We could never afford to do anything like ballet or music lessons. We also never had a television but I remember my friend, Lynette Craig, was

learning ballet and I was so jealous of her. I used to watch her do classes and thought I'd love to try it one day.

Growing up, I'd help the local fruiter deliver fruit and vegies to households to get pocket money. I spent that money buying tickets to see my first ballet.

It was the Scheherazade by the Borovansky Ballet (now known as the Queensland Ballet Company) and Martin Rubinstein was the principal dancer. I'd go on to become great friends with Martin. He was wonderful.

When I saw that ballet, I was about 13 or 14, I was mesmerised by it all; the sets, scenery and music. It was all incredible. It was the first time I'd seen live theatre and it was magic.

I was 14 when I left school to work. I wanted to bring in money for the family and got a job at a newsagent kiosk in Albert St in Brisbane.

A couple of years later, I saw an advertisement in the newspaper that Charles Lisner (founder of Queensland Ballet) was taking ballet classes in Fortitude Valley. I had to go. I was hooked. I went to class practically every afternoon after work and practised incredibly hard. I loved it. Charles was a wonderful teacher.

Most dancers start when they're very young but I was passionate and hardworking so I quickly made up for lost time.

I went to Melbourne when I was 19 and worked part time as a costing clerk while doing ballet classes at the Borovansky Ballet School. I auditioned to perform with the Ballet Guild which the late Lauren Martyn was running at the time, and I did my first performance with them. Of course, at that time, it wasn't paid but it was exciting.

I was about 19 when I came back to Queensland for a holiday and I caught up with Charles. He was thinking about starting the Queensland Ballet Company

and wanted me to join the group. I became the company's first principal ballerina in 1961. It was an incredible time.

We toured regionally taking ballet to country towns and performed on television for Channel 9 and the ABC.

I will never forget one particular performance. I was doing a solo to Valse Triste with music by (Jean) Sibelius and had a lilac costume on. The spotlight was on me and when the curtain went up, the audience erupted in applause. They loved me. That was one of the highlights of my time performing. To know people loved me and my dancing was something special.

Times were very different back then. I wasn't paid for a long time. I had to buy my own shoes, make my own costumes and tutus but it was a wonderful time.

I stayed dancing with the company for about 12 years before I stopped at 34 to become a teacher and an examiner.

Valerie, Charles' wife, and I ran the Queensland Ballet

School together. I was a very good teacher and remained teaching until the beginning of COVID-19 last year.

I taught people dance but also how to be wonderful people with discipline and values. Ballet was my life.

"I never married or had any children but I'm lucky I've had the fulfilling life I've had."

I still love going to watch the ballet as often as I can. I moved to Blue Care Tangara in West End about four years ago and loved it because of its proximity to art galleries and theatre.

It's a beautiful place to be and I have million-dollar views.

I will keep going to watch performances for as long as I can. I miss dancing but I'm grateful to run into past students of mine, who still call me 'Miss Heath'. They remind me of what I've contributed to dance and the magic of ballet.

This article first appeared in QWeekend on May 29, 2021 and is reproduced here with permission. Interview by Jane Armitstead; picture by Mark Cranitch.

"I never married or had any children but I'm lucky I've had the fulfilling life I've had."

A day on the road with a Personal Carer

Shanais Plaster, a Blue Care Resource Management Team (RMT) Workforce Coordinator from Caloundra recently spent a day on the road with Patrice, to meet our clients and experience a day in the life of a Personal Carer (PC) as part of their 'Meet Our Customers' program.

"My day on the road was a big eye opener for me," explained Shanais. "I have so much respect for our PCs and what their work entails. The amount of love and dedication

that Patrice showed our clients was lovely to see. I could tell the clients really appreciated it. Even a simple gesture like offering to make them a coffee before we left was awesome."

"From the scheduling side of things, I think we can consider simple improvements like extending PC travel time by five minutes, or taking the time to call the client when changes are made to their services. It makes a big difference to how the day rolls out for both the client and the PC."

"I am so proud of how Shanais and all our staff approach this experience. It's given us so much insight from the client and staff points of view," said Lisa Stewart, Manager Resource Management Team.

"It's such a pleasure to be part of something so important to a client's life, like a visit from Blue Care staff. It's important scheduling staff take a moment to realise the impact small changes make to a client's life and wellbeing."



Shanais Plaster with Blue Care community client, Pauline, at Pauline's home.

Connected in Care



There is a saying that is often attributed to a Chinese curse that says: 'May you live in interesting times'.

We are certainly living in 'interesting times' at the moment! There is a great deal of volatility, uncertainty and complexity in our world. For many of us, it feels like that a lot of what we thought was solid, predictable and certain in our life and world has now melted into the air. This can leave many of us feeling insecure, to experience heightened anxiety, a loss of connection with others and seeking meaning.

In this experience, we are again reminded of the importance of what we ground our life in; how we anchor ourselves to weather these stormy times.

As I reflect on this, I find it helpful to differentiate between the controllable and uncontrollable in my life. There are things that we simply do not

have control of. These include a lot of what is happening in our world during these tumultuous times. But there are also things in our life that we can control and influence.

Many of you would admire Ash Barty and the way she conducts herself on and off the tennis court. I recently heard an interview with Ash Barty's mentor and performance coach Ben Crowe. He was talking about how to manage expectations and how not to take the pressure onto the tennis court. Crowe says that the two greatest distractions in performance, if not the world at the moment, are expectations of outcome and expectations of others. Both of these we cannot control. He says:

"The big lesson is focus on the 'human-being', and less so on the 'human-doing' and the power of acceptance and gratitude are incredible superpowers to enable you to let go of FOPO (Fear of Other People's Opinions) and own your story. And if you can

focus on that, and avoid these distractions, it doesn't mean you'll win — it just means you'll bring the best version of you to the dance floor each day."

I find this very insightful. Regardless of the circumstances we face in life, we can control where we ground our sense of self, what gives us worth and value, and how we respond in the way we live. We can focus on simply bringing our best selves into whatever we do; and live in peace with the uncontrollable parts of our life.

The big challenge, I think, is to discern what is a controllable and what is an uncontrollable situation. I find the serenity prayer is a good daily reminder of this as I repeat it every night before I sleep, and to help me sleep on some nights!

Grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change; courage to change the things we can; and wisdom to know the difference.

Adam McIntosh, Associate Director of Mission.



Lifting your spirit through volunteering

Tracey Beach

Diversional Therapist / Volunteer Coordinator at Masters Lodge, Hervey Bay

Seiarne has been volunteering at Masters Lodge for 12 years. Through her warm and contagious smile, she forms bonds with our residents that are truly remarkable.

Seiarne has Williams Syndrome, which is a developmental disorder that affects many parts of the body. Over the past 10 years, I've watched Seiarne grow and develop as a member of the team. Her confidence has grown so much and having an active role in the community

has helped Seiarne feel socially accepted and appreciated.

I think Seiarne serves as an ongoing reminder to all of us that the most important things in life are love and compassion. She is constantly thankful for the little things, and her excitement and enthusiasm lifts everyone's spirits!

Seiarne Ransley

Volunteer, Masters Lodge Hervey Bay

My job is to keep everyone company. I'm a good listener and give the best cuddles. I also fold the serviettes, and I teach other residents

how to fold them as well.

I feel good doing craft activities for others who need help. My heart feels all fuzzy inside whenever I cheer someone up. There are so many fun activities at Masters Lodge. Zumba is one of my favourites and I love to sing aloud!

I decided to volunteer because I always make everyone laugh and smile. Also, contributing to my community gives me great satisfaction and provides me with a sense of purpose. I tell everyone that they should volunteer at Masters Lodge. I love it so much.

**"My heart feels all fuzzy
inside whenever I cheer
someone up."**

Tracey Beach, Masters Lodge volunteer.

Seiarne Ransley, Masters Lodge volunteer.

New UnitingCare Volunteering

Connecting interested volunteers with volunteer activities in UnitingCare.

Are you looking for volunteering activities that make a difference in your community?

With local services throughout Queensland there is a good chance we have a volunteer activity near you that matches your interests and availability. The **easy 3-step sign up on the UnitingCare Volunteering Portal** will connect you to a local volunteer supervisor to begin volunteering with us. From individuals, to groups

and businesses, we have opportunities for you.

All the volunteering activities that we are currently recruiting for are listed on the UnitingCare Volunteering Portal. When we are not actively recruiting, you can sign up to our waitlist to be notified when an opening is available.

If there's a volunteering activity you don't see listed, sign up to 'Volunteer my way!' to share your interests, skills and availability and we will use this information to develop new activities in the future.

We look forward to helping you find a position that's a perfect fit.

bluecare.org.au/working-with-us/volunteer-with-blue-care



Have a story to share...

Connected is proudly supported by UnitingCare's Corporate Communication's Team. Please get in contact if you have a story you'd love featured - media@ucareqld.com.au

Blue Care's Values

As an agency of UnitingCare, the health and community arm of the Uniting Church of Queensland, Blue Care is committed to assisting people who require care and support to be all they can be by putting their needs first.

Blue Care's mission is to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities as we reach out to people in need; speak out for fairness and justice; and care with compassion, innovation and wisdom.

We Value

Compassion: We bring holistic care, hope and inspiration through our understanding and empathy for others.

Respect: We accept and honour diversity, uniqueness and contribution of others.

Justice: We commit to focus on the needs of the people we serve and to work for a fair, just and sustainable society.

Working together: We value and appreciate the richness of individual contributions, partnerships and teamwork.

Leading through learning: Our culture encourages innovation.

Independence, freedom and maintaining relationships we cherish the most are important to all of us. That's why at Blue Care everything we do is focused on empowering you to **live life your way**.

As one of Queensland's leading care providers, our dedicated and compassionate team have been working in local communities for more than 65 years. Our local services include:



In Home Care

Help at Home services, from transport to cleaning to nursing care.



Allied Health

Therapeutic, preventative and rehabilitation support services.



Respite Care

Respite services to support carers – in your home, at a centre or in residential care.



Residential Care

Forty-seven purpose-built homes across the state providing specialist residential care for you or your loved one.



Dementia Care

Specialist care and memory support in our community care and respite centres, and residential care.



Disability

Tailored support when you need it, from activities to help at home to therapies.

For more information about our services, visit **bluecare.org.au** or call **1300 BLUECARE (1300 258 322)**

 **BlueCare®**
Live life your way.