

# Building better lives together



Brotherhood  
of St Laurence

Working for an Australia free of poverty

*Building better lives since 1930*

## You're never too old... to learn the recorder!

**Life hasn't been easy for Alison in recent years, but music and Brotherhood Aged Care have broadened her world in ways she couldn't have imagined.**

Alison is carer to her husband of 60 years, Tom, in their home in Rosebud, Victoria. Tom has a deteriorating neurological condition, meaning he is declining both physically and cognitively. He receives a level 4 package as he requires care, similar to that provided in a nursing home, so that he can keep living independently in his own home.

Alison has her own health challenges and caring for her beloved partner has taken its toll.

She also receives an Aged Care Package from the Brotherhood and the support from her Client Advisor, Alice Hodges, has seen her begin to thrive again.

As part of her package, Alison first joined a singing group, Singing for Wellness. And then, surprising even herself, she began learning the recorder.

The Singing for Wellness classes are an initiative which encourages everyone to sing, regardless of their ability. Offering easy access

to singing and music, classes both stimulate the mind and enhance physical health.

'When Alice first suggested joining the group, I said no. I always say no at first,' Alison says.

'But I thought on it and realised she was right. I needed a break. I'm a juggler, you see. I juggle caring for Tom, the garden and my family. These lessons made me appreciate my spare time.'

Alice says she has seen Alison bloom.

'When she first started, she just mouthed the words as she was so uncomfortable singing out aloud. But with the encouragement of her instructor, she began to sing a few words at a time and was soon joining in and enjoying herself.'

In fact, she was recalling a time when music played a very important part in her life.

Alison once played the piano and, while she was singing, her instructor noticed her innate musicality. And Alison was asked if she would like to take lessons.



Alison practicing the recorder

Alice then arranged for Alison to have fortnightly lessons at The Music Industry, a music school in Rosebud.

'I initially tried the flute, but it didn't work out. So then I moved to the recorder and I absolutely love it', Alison says.

'The lessons have helped with my breathing and I can feel myself improving each time, with the help of a little practice!'

'I owe Alice a great deal. We have more than a professional relationship. I believe we have a friendship, as well.'

As with all our work Brotherhood Aged Care focuses on building individual capability, looking for opportunity and connection to community.

**Invest today, be a part of lasting change.**

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## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

In our organisation, we believe that at every stage of life people should be valued, supported and included in the community.

As is the Brotherhood of St Laurence way, our aged care services work with a wide range of people from all types of backgrounds, to build the capability of people, recognise their individuality and create opportunities for greater involvement in their community. You will see the benefits of our values-driven approach demonstrated in stories throughout this newsletter.

The situation Wilma found herself in, for example, is one probably familiar to us all within our own circles. Dealing with new health challenges, she was in need of some in-home support. Wilma had previously entirely relied on her daughter but knew that she was busy with her own family. Wilma

went from a situation where one day she found she didn't have enough food stocked in her fridge and often fretting about being a burden to others, to accessing support services that enhanced her independence and even enabled her to pursue outside interests like her love of ballet performances.

This newsletter also contextualises new Consumer Directed Care regulation changes that have come into place for the provision of aged care services within the home setting. Through our research we've also looked at regulations around caring for people with dementia and address some key questions – what is the best role for regulations, and where are there gaps and inequities in the current structures?

I hope you find much to interest you in this edition of *Building better lives together*.



Tony Nicholson

Best wishes,

Tony Nicholson

## Kyra Evans, 2 Generation program participant at Jindi Family and Community Centre

**Filled with a new-found confidence having successfully completed the Work Ready training course, as well as showing ongoing commitment to the 2 Gen program, Kyra has signed up as a volunteer at Jindi Family and Community Centre in Mernda where she'll help run the playgroup.**

This leadership opportunity will allow Kyra to develop key professional skills while enjoying being an active member of the centre and wider community. Kyra will also have the added benefit of being close to her daughter, Summer, who attends the kindergarten at Jindi.

Ongoing support and connection have proved vital for Kyra, and staff at the Brotherhood are committed to continue providing this assistance. The next step for Kyra is to be linked up with a buddy, a fellow 2 Gen mum who's experienced a similar life journey and who is now working in a paid position.



Kyra Evans

Kyra hopes to follow suit. It's clear that she's making the most of the various options available to her, including a recent opportunity to train as a children's swimming instructor. This is thanks to a joint venture program Jindi is doing with King Swim.



# Bridging the gap between young and old

**We divide much of our society by age. But our Schools Engagement team actively encourages interaction and understanding through programs that promote social connectedness across generations.**

At times year 9, 10, 11 and 12 students in our Urban Camp program and members from the Brotherhood's aged care residences and day centre for disadvantaged seniors spend a week getting to know each other. They conclude the week by celebrating their new friendships with a two-course meal prepared by the students and enjoyed by all.

After spending time with older people, students began to look beyond the perceived stereotypes and develop friendships.

Seventeen-year-old Joshua says he had learned a great deal from this experience.

'Hearing the life stories and the hardships some of these older people have faced made me see that I hadn't really thought about what some go through.'

I think getting to know the members made me see older people in a different way.'

Urban Camp coordinator Stephanie Livingstone says students have returned to their schools and continued sharing their new knowledge and helping out in their own communities.

'We have even had groups organise excursions for people they have met while on camp. The program is helping to grow a culture of volunteering among young people and encouraging them to be involved with others.'

By bringing generations together, we can enhance young and older people's sense of self-worth, community inclusion and develop a better understanding of people that are different from ourselves.'



Young and old dancing together at Collingwood Town Hall



# Often it's the small, human things that make the difference

**The Brotherhood's Aged Care in-home support services enable people to live full, independent and connected lives, in their own home.**

Wilma has been receiving support in her Somerville home, located in Victoria, from her Client Advisor Michelle since 2009. Wilma asserts it has been a life-enhancing relationship.

'I was in and out of hospital and one day I came home and there wasn't any food in the fridge. Because I'm vision impaired, I couldn't even go down the street to buy some', Wilma recalls.

'Everything changed when I met Michelle. Instead of sitting here, brooding and asking myself what will I do, I know there are people I can depend on.'

Wilma has a daughter on whom she used to rely for support, but is now busy raising her own family. Wilma became increasingly reluctant to contact her for help, knowing how hard it was for her.

'I was at a loss what to do with my life', she says.

However, since becoming part of the Brotherhood's in-home support service, much of the pressure has eased for Wilma and her family.

'I phone Michelle and she always follows up straight away', Wilma says.

Aside from the emotional reassurance and comfort that this relationship has provided, there is practical assistance that makes Wilma's life much easier at home. Wilma praises Michelle for her attention to detail and being able to really understand the challenges she faces with vision impairment.

'I noticed that the food was not so cold and the freezer was not working so well. I had all this food going to waste, so I rang Michelle. She sent me an email with some fridges to choose from, I chose one and Michelle ensured it was delivered the next day. I was impressed.'

Observations and quick action can make the world of difference to someone finding tasks like this increasingly challenging.



It also makes Michelle's work more rewarding.

'These sorts of moments are really exciting to me. That's when I feel like I'm really doing my job', she says.

In-home support is about more than just caring for people's physical health. One day Wilma mentioned her love of ballet and opera to Michelle and expressed her disappointment at how difficult it was for her to now attend performances. Michelle took note of this and investigated options to allow Wilma to attend. As a result, outings to the ballet have been added to the list of activities run by the Social Activities Hub in Frankston, with the first outing being to the Victorian State Ballet's performance of *The Magic Toyshop*.

As with all our programs and services, we build relationships with people, and work with their strengths to identify opportunities for participation and connection. Wilma says the relationship has become incredibly important to her. 'She's very, very good. She's like a daughter to me, actually.'

Michelle appreciates working for Brotherhood Aged Care because of the importance placed on really





Wilma (right) receives support from the Brotherhood's Aged Care service

getting to know clients. 'It's about having the person at the centre of everything that happens for them. Wilma is very much the decision maker when it comes to her care', she says.

Brotherhood Aged Care offers a range of in-home support services tailored to people's individual

preferences and circumstances. We provide as much or as little support as people choose, including respite support. If you're interested to see the full range of services we have available, please visit [agedcare.bsl.org.au](http://agedcare.bsl.org.au) or call **1300 147 147**.

## Snapshot from the past



Then and now - Craftwork at the Coolibah Centre



# I can share my love for people

**Ann Redhead is cheeky. At 81, she takes life at a run; keeping active and jumping at new opportunities, such as volunteering with the Brotherhood of St Laurence.**

Ann recalls that she first went along to a meeting about volunteering at the Brotherhood just to keep her friend company. 'My friend wanted to cook, but I didn't', she says. 'During the meeting, the lady turned to me and asked if I would be interested in volunteering, as a volunteer "jockey" to be more specific. I said I'd love to volunteer but I don't know anything about horses! I didn't even know they had horses.'

Ann laughed a great deal as she couldn't work out the connection between horse-riding and aged care. It transpired that a 'jockey' is a transport assistant who rides the bus with the driver to help Brotherhood clients get out and about to different places and events.

Matt, the bus driver, and Ann start their day by picking everyone up

from their homes. When they arrive at the centre, Ann helps people get off the bus and settled, then gets them exercising – 'Keeping active is very important', she says. 'I try to get everyone involved.'

'My very first day', says Ann, 'I remember walking in and seeing Mary – she's very quiet and shy. I went over and said "Hello, how are you love?" and her face beamed. I will never forget that. I now make sure I go up to everyone throughout the day and make sure they are okay.'

Ann loves meeting people and volunteers just to see the smiles on everyone's faces.

'Ann is an exceptional woman!' says Michelle, a Brotherhood Aged Care Team Member. 'She has an abundance of energy and is fun to



Ann Redhead, Brotherhood Jockey

have around. She brings smiles and joy to all our clients and staff. We love having her here.'

Ann has a real passion for life and while she's only a few weeks into her volunteering, it has already made a big impression.

Find out more about volunteering with the Brotherhood at **[bsl.org.au/volunteer](http://bsl.org.au/volunteer)** or call **(03) 9483 1390**.



Anne Redhead (centre) with Brotherhood clients

# The role of regulation in aged and dementia care

Today, about 15% of the Australian population is over the age of 65 and 1 in 10 people in this age group have a degree of dementia. Many individuals living with dementia rely on a range of care and support services that are regulated by a complex system of Government policy and service requirements. But what is the best role for regulations, and where are there gaps or inequalities in the risk mitigation offered by the current regulatory structure?

The current focus in dementia care policy and practice reflects a shift from medical intervention, towards creating positive environments for people living with dementia.

Government regulations aim to alleviate risks, including but not limited to physical, medical, financial and social risks that can affect people living with dementia.

Recent research conducted by Simon Biggs and Ashley Carr of the University of Melbourne and the Brotherhood of St Laurence Research and Policy Centre explores these questions, and has shown that services in dementia and aged care attract different levels of policy. In short: some areas of care are more regulated than others.

Biggs and Carr have developed an innovative system map of the Australian regulatory framework showing where rules and guidelines form what they term 'regulatory clusters', and how these clusters affect the experience of individuals and their carers as they negotiate typical pathways into and through dementia care, from first diagnosis to acute dementia care. Their map shows not only the moments of transition (for example, moving into residential care) that attract a cluster of regulations, but also the potential points of duplication and overlap between different systems, regulatory agencies and jurisdictions.

In their paper, *Research Insights 2*, they write, 'Understanding such regulations processes and patterns allows us to target particular areas and explore the relationship between, for example, protection of vulnerable adults and service innovation. It could also contribute to the more effective allocation of resources.' (*Research Insights 2*, BSL 2016.) With increasing numbers of people over the age of 65 in Australia, and an



Caring for the aged

anticipated 900,000 people living with dementia by 2050 (AIHW 2012), these questions are pertinent and pressing.

'Regulations do not exist in a vacuum', Biggs and Carr assert, 'They have become an important policy area because they exist where politics, governance, provider and end user interests, plus theoretical and research inquiry, all intersect.' (*Research Insights 1*, BSL 2016.)

Biggs and Carr have developed their research and innovative systems mapping to help ensure that Australia's dementia and aged care system for the future is robust, fair and effective at managing risk, providing an appropriate level of care for the individuals and their carers who enter into a range of aged and dementia care services.

For more information, visit [bsl.org.au/knowledge](https://bsl.org.au/knowledge)

## About the researchers:

**Simon Biggs** is Professor of Gerontology and Social Policy in the School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne, and in the Brotherhood of St Laurence Research and Policy Centre.

**Ashley Carr** is a Research Fellow in the School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne and a Research Officer at the Brotherhood of St Laurence Research and Policy Centre.



# Returning a kindness

In 1984, aged 20, Trudy Forster, now a Brotherhood bequestor, moved from Adelaide to Melbourne after being accepted into the Victorian College of the Arts. She had been attending Flinders University in Adelaide, supporting herself through part-time retail and babysitting work, but didn't have a great deal of money to draw on for her move. 'I arrived at Spencer Street Station in February, with only the contents of a suitcase and a tea chest to my name, and knowing no-one,' she recalls.

As Trudy was studying, she was not entitled to unemployment benefits, and her Tertiary Education Assistance Scheme (TEAS) had run out the year before after completing her first degree. She found herself in a difficult financial situation – 'I think I had enough money to live on for about six weeks, but I was young, and supremely confident that things would work out.'

Trudy found accommodation in a share house but was in need of

inexpensive furniture, particularly a bed. One of her new housemates suggested she look at one of the local Brotherhood of St Laurence op shops.

'I must admit that I didn't look like a needy case, as I clearly wasn't down on my luck', says Trudy, 'I probably looked like some middle-class kid telling a story!' Despite this, Trudy was given the benefit of the doubt by the store manager, and was able to purchase a bed, mattress

and wardrobe for \$15, which were delivered the next morning. 'As I handed over the money, I promised him that one day I would pay the Brotherhood back for their kindness', she says.

'I don't think he believed me, but I have kept my word. After I started a family, it was time to draw up my will, and the kindness of that man at the Brotherhood shop has not been forgotten. What goes around, comes around. I was the recipient of a great kindness and I promised to return that kindness. My bequest allows me to do that.'

For Trudy, supporting the Brotherhood is not just about fulfilling a promise, though: 'I like the fact that the Brotherhood is a Melbourne charity, delivering services and support to my local community. I can identify with their mission to rid society of poverty and I appreciate that they deliver practical solutions to everyday problems.'

Including a bequest in your will, no matter the size, helps us continue to tackle the causes of poverty and to enable people to build better lives.

If you're interested in finding out more, please call us on **(03) 9483 1371**.



Trudy Forster, Brotherhood bequestor



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Working for an Australia free of poverty

*Building better lives since 1930*

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