



*News from across Uniting AgeWell communities*



## ➤ Focus on research and innovation



**Uniting AgeWell is well on its way to becoming a leading innovator in senior services, with the launch of three exciting new research projects.**

We are the lead aged care industry partner in a multi-million dollar research project led by Deakin University into how new technologies can assist older people living at home or in residential aged care.

The Federal Government allocated almost \$3 million in funding for the Australian Research Council (ARC) Research Hub for Digital Enhanced Living.

Uniting AgeWell is one of 22 organisations involved in the project, including technology companies, the Black Dog Institute and other premier Australian and international universities from Denmark, New Zealand, Ireland and Germany.

This project will have a real impact on the way we deliver aged care, with the development of innovative, intelligent care solutions that will have huge benefits for the wellbeing of older people, both at home and in residential aged care. You can read more about it in this edition of DoveTale.

Uniting AgeWell is also involved in a \$400,000 dementia research project with Swinburne University and Alzheimer's Australia Victoria. The funding for the two-year project was allocated as part of the Department of Health's Dementia and Innovation in Aged Care grants, which are very hotly contested.

The study aims to address the gap in the mental health needs of older people with dementia in residential aged care.

And finally, we are partnering with Deakin University and the University of Tasmania for a study

into community engagement in aged care. This research project aims to understand community engagement and participation activities and initiatives at Uniting AgeWell, and to explore the beliefs, perceptions and understanding of customers, staff and volunteers towards community engagement.

**The study will involve interviews and focus groups with clients, staff and volunteers from selected Uniting AgeWell sites. You can read more about the project and how you can get involved in this edition of DoveTale.**

All these projects are in perfect alignment with the 2017 – 2020 Strategic Plan, which has a strong focus on enhancing our research and innovation profile and providing better outcomes for older people. The Strategic Plan has now been endorsed by the Uniting AgeWell Board and will be made widely available in the near future.

**Andrew Kinnersly**  
CEO



## ➤ The brave new world of aged care

**Uniting AgeWell has helped hundreds of people understand the new aged care system through a series of community information sessions in towns and cities across Victoria and Tasmania.**

From Mildura to Bairnsdale, Hobart to Latrobe and everywhere in between, Uniting AgeWell's Community Services teams held more than 20 information sessions from March to June.

The sessions were designed to inform and support people in the community on their aged care journey and include information about the different types of government-funded aged care programs available, eligibility criteria for each program and services offered by Uniting AgeWell.

Assistance was also offered to those wishing to register with My Aged Care.

Uniting AgeWell Community Programs Manager Ana Mubaslat said there was a clear need for these information sessions in the community, as many found the aged care system very complicated.

"The sessions were so popular that we needed to run additional sessions at some sites where there were too many people to accommodate in a single sitting," said Ana.

"We had 110 people attend the first session at Strathdon in Forest Hill and 140 at Bendigo, pictured above, with the overflow covered at subsequent sessions."

**"The feedback from the community has been very positive, which is fantastic."**

Judith and James Stephens attended the Castlemaine information session to find out more about the new system.

Judith told the Bendigo Advertiser they found the session valuable.

"I think it's made it all a lot clearer," she said. 🙌



*Further community information sessions will be held throughout the rest of the year. Dates & times will be on the Uniting AgeWell website: [unitingagewell.org/get-involved/events](http://unitingagewell.org/get-involved/events)*

## ➤ Helping plan for the future

**As we age, it's important to plan ahead and feel confident when making decisions – even for those uncomfortable but very important events in life.**

Uniting AgeWell is holding a series of free monthly seminars to help seniors and their families be prepared.

From advice on advanced care planning, palliative care and managing anxiety and depression, to information on planning a funeral and Powers of

Attorney and Wills, these seminars help people work through some difficult decisions.

The seminars, which started in March, are being held at various Uniting AgeWell sites in Victoria and Tasmania until November. 🙌



*A full list of events and locations can be found on the Uniting AgeWell website: [unitingagewell.org/get-involved/events](http://unitingagewell.org/get-involved/events)*

# Hi-tech care at home

Uniting AgeWell is responding to the growing challenges of enabling ageing people to live comfortably in their own home or residential care, through involvement in a multi-million dollar research project.

The Australian Research Council (ARC) Research Hub for Digital Enhanced Living will explore low cost and non-invasive ways to support older people, through the invention of new personalised medical technologies.

Led by Deakin University and involving international organisations and universities, Uniting AgeWell is the lead aged care industry partner.

Deakin University Pro Vice-Chancellor ICT Innovation and Translation Professor John Grundy said Uniting AgeWell was a perfect major partner for Deakin in the Hub venture.

Prof Grundy said the organisation would provide key aged care domain expertise, locations for trials, feedback on effectiveness and efficiency of solutions, and access to its large client base.

**“Uniting AgeWell is an Australian leader in residential and in-home quality aged care provision and is continually seeking new, innovative ways to leverage emerging technologies to deliver improved care, help connect ageing people within their community, and improve quality of life,” Prof Grundy said.**

Prof Grundy said partnering with organisations like Uniting AgeWell was essential to ensuring the project’s success.

The project received \$3 million in Federal Government funding and more than \$2 million from the partner organisations and in-kind contributions. Work on the project is now underway. 🐦

*Technology enables Uniting AgeWell customer Gwen Limb to remain connected to her community*



# › Recognising our past, present and future

**Uniting AgeWell is proud of its history and those who worked hard to establish the many aged care communities we have today.**

We also remain committed to continuing the high standards of the programs and services we now deliver to thousands of older people in Victoria and Tasmania.

And yet we must always have an eye to the future, and ensure we do even better for those who need care and support as they age.

The Uniting AgeWell Board recently adopted a Strategic Plan for the next three years.

Following months of development, five strategic priorities were identified and approved to guide the further development of Uniting AgeWell and its services.

These strategic priorities are summarised by five positive affirmations:

- › The quality of life and experience of our customers is at the heart of everything we do.
- › A progressive employer of choice, with a culture of customer-centred care, innovation, trust and respect.
- › Proudly an expression of the Uniting Church in Australia.
- › Stronger, smarter and more sustainable.
- › Strength, learning and innovation through partnership and collaboration.



**These statements define who we are and the values that underpin our organisation as we assist increasing numbers of people to truly age well.**

I'm proud to be part of an organisation that can affirm these things about itself. The Board looks forward to working in partnership with staff to ensure these aspirations become realities in all our services.

The future looks good for Uniting AgeWell, its customers and their families.

**Allan Thompson  
Board Chair**

## › LASA award recognises LGBTI work

**Uniting AgeWell's work in providing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) inclusive services has been recognised with a LASA 2017 Excellence in Care Award.**

The organisation received the Community Inclusiveness Award at the LASA Vic State Conference in May.

Uniting AgeWell CEO Andrew Kinnersly said the award acknowledged the work the organisation had done to ensure its services were LGBTI-inclusive.

Andrew said that as part of the Uniting Church in Australia, Uniting AgeWell celebrated the contributions LGBTI staff, volunteers and clients had made to the organisation's communities over decades.

"Our work with the LGBTI community enhances our long history of providing services for older people, irrespective of their faith, cultural background, gender or sexual identity," he said.

"It continues the Church's spirit of embracing diversity, respecting differences, being open to discuss controversial issues and what it means to be inclusive of all people."

Last year Uniting AgeWell won a Dorothies Award in Tasmania, which recognised "Inclusive Practice for LGBTI Elders in a Faith-Based Care Service." 



*Want to know more? Visit our website at [unitingagewell.org](http://unitingagewell.org)*

## ➤ Friendship knows no age limit

**Two children's programs at Uniting AgeWell sites are having a profound impact on residents with dementia, sparking old memories and kindling new and unlikely friendships.**

At Uniting AgeWell Carnsworth Community in Kew, weekly visits by the local Davis Street Kindergarten have resulted in a special bond being formed between 79-year-old resident Dobbie and four-year-old Jude.

The kinder has been visiting for the past year and Jude hasn't left Dobbie's side since. The duo spend the morning building towers, drawing and singing – and Jude even brought his dad one day to meet his new friend.

Leisure and Lifestyle Coordinator Vindhya Mendis said the residents felt more energised, empowered and part of the community with the children around.

"The children teach our residents games on the iPad and one resident with dementia even wrote his own name for the first time in five years," she said.

At the Uniting AgeWell Kingsville Community, the sounds of the Hokey Pokey and children squealing with delight are filling the halls through a new music and art program.

Every fortnight, young families with babies and toddlers from the Kingsville area visit the aged care residence to join in music and art sessions run by the lifestyle team.

"We see fantastic benefits for our clients, many of whom are in advanced stages of dementia," says Lifestyle Coordinator Pamela Bruder.

"They often show a level of engagement during the sessions that just isn't there during their everyday activities.

Uniting AgeWell CEO Andrew Kinnersly said it was hoped intergenerational programs like these would delay a decline in cognitive function and enable residents to remain connected to the community.



*Uniting AgeWell CEO Andrew Kinnersly with resident Dobbie and four-year-old Jude*

**"It is a beautiful thing to watch the children interact with our residents through activities and see them enjoy each other's company, building trust and friendships."**

"We have seen really positive changes in our residents and have also seen the children's confidence grow as new relationships are developed," he said.

Davis Street Kindergarten Director and teacher, Ruth Wallbridge, said they had also noticed the benefits of the visits to their children.

"Especially those with special needs such as autism and attention deficit disorders. It gives them extra attention and develops greater empathy in our children." 🐦



*Want to know more?  
Watch the Seven News story on the UA  
Facebook page: [facebook.com/UnitingAgeWell](https://facebook.com/UnitingAgeWell)*



Monty spends time with Strathglen resident Frank Dingjan

## ➤ Four legged retirees bring companionship

Retired greyhounds are spending their twilight years keeping residents company and easing their transition into aged care at two Uniting AgeWell sites in Hobart.

The canines have been such a hit, they recently featured on ABC News in Tasmania and the ABC Hobart Facebook page, where the moving story has been viewed more than 420,000 times.

The idea to adopt a greyhound for the Strathglen Community came from Care Manager Tracy Harvison, who was concerned about reports that so many greyhounds were being euthanised at the end of their careers.

Tracy felt adopting a greyhound at the site would be a win-win for all concerned, given residents often have to give up their own animals when they enter aged care.

"There are so many benefits to residents having animals around," said Tracy. "From a mental health perspective, the physical aspect of being able to touch, pat and cuddle an animal is really beneficial."

"Contrary to popular belief, greyhounds are basically couch potatoes. They don't require a lot of exercise and are very docile," she said.

Ex-racer Monty has become a great fit for Strathglen; he is even in tune with those residents who need a bit of extra TLC.

**"He just seems to know when someone is unwell or feeling down," said Tracy. "If someone needs a bit more attention, Monty will seek them out and spend some extra time with them."**

Meanwhile over at Lillian Martin Community, Heston, has become a great ambassador and drawcard for the site.

"There have been people who, after meeting Heston on their tour of the site, have chosen to live here because of him," said Acting Care Manager, Frances Schroeter, who heads the Lillian Martin Pet Committee. 🐾



To find out more, you can view the ABC story on the UA Facebook page: [facebook.com/UnitingAgeWell](https://facebook.com/UnitingAgeWell)

## ➤ Improving wellbeing at home



*Mima maintains her independence through Uniting AgeWell*

**A new program is helping older people in Melbourne's north regain and maintain their independence through flexible, short-term care in their own home.**

Uniting AgeWell now offers Short-term Restorative Care (STRC), after it was allocated 10 packages by the Federal Government in the Aged Care Approvals Round (ACAR) in February.

Uniting AgeWell General Manager Strategy and Business Development Fonda Voukelatos said STRC used a multi-disciplinary approach to help reverse or slow a person's functional decline so they could regain or maintain their independence, improve their wellbeing and delay their need to enter into longer-term care.

**"Wellness, reablement and restorative approaches are powerful ways to help older people improve their function, independence and quality of life."**

"An eight-week goal-oriented care plan is designed with the client, and all care is provided in their home," Fonda said.

"This means they don't need to visit external clinics for occupational therapy, physiotherapy or other allied health services."

Fonda said an STRC package could include services such as bathing/dressing, house cleaning, meals, shopping, gardening, nursing, aids or equipment and more.

"Our care team coordinates the services needed to achieve an individual's unique goals," he said.

The packages are available in Melbourne's northern region to anyone who meets the eligibility criteria and is approved for STRC by an Aged Care Assessment Team, irrespective of their age.🕊



For more information about the Short Term Restorative Care packages and eligibility, visit [unitingagewell.org](http://unitingagewell.org) or contact 1300 783 435.



*Isabella Shorrock, with her husband Joe, was part of the COTA project*

## ➤ Information for the community, by the community

**Uniting AgeWell was involved in the birth of an important information brochure designed to support people in their journey through the complicated aged care system.**

The project forms part of a broader undertaking by COTA Australia, known as the Consumer Engagement in Aged Care (CEAC) project, which began with an Australia-wide consultation process that identified three major areas of concern from consumers and carers involved in the sector.

COTA invited a number of aged care services to participate in three co-design processes across Melbourne, Newcastle and Hobart.

Residents from Uniting AgeWell Ningana in Hobart and a number of key staff were involved in the project.

Uniting AgeWell General Manager Tasmania Jane Johnston said a co-design approach ensured the solutions would be useful and relevant.

“Co-design is essentially about consumers being involved in the development of a product,” Jane said.

“It’s about getting all the stakeholders involved and working as active participants to find a solution to a problem – which makes a lot of sense.”

The Hobart group, which included representatives from Uniting AgeWell, the Migrant Resource Centre, COTA Tasmania, rural representatives from Oatlands and surrounding communities, and South East Community Care, was asked to address the fact that ‘consumers and carers need support to access aged care services and support’.

“By working collaboratively with COTA Australia, we progressed through a structured co-design process to come up with some ideas and eventually agreed that an information brochure that identifies the key pathway into and through aged care, as well as key support agencies, would be the best way to address this issue,” Jane said.

**“It was a very robust process that enabled us to develop a product that not only meets the needs of people in the community, but was designed by people in the community too.”**

The brochure was launched at a special event in May, where those involved in the process and interested parties came together to celebrate and learn more. 🐦

## ➤ Seeking your opinion

Uniting AgeWell clients, staff and volunteers are invited to participate in a research project with Deakin University and the University of Tasmania about community engagement in aged care.

The joint project aims to understand community engagement and participation activities and initiatives at Uniting AgeWell, and to explore the beliefs, perceptions and understanding of customers, staff and volunteers towards community engagement.

The study will involve interviews and focus groups with up to 200 clients, staff and volunteers from selected sites across Victoria and Tasmania.

These sites are at Kingsville and Box Hill in Victoria, and Strathglen and Lillian Martin in Tasmania.

The project team is now seeking clients, staff and volunteers from the four sites to participate in the study.



All information is confidential and participants will not be identified. The results will be collated into a report for the Uniting AgeWell Board and AgeWell Community Advisory Committee.

The report will aim to show what community engagement means to our clients, staff and volunteers and how Uniting AgeWell can improve and support people to enjoy and engage with their community. 🐦



To find out more about taking part in the study, contact Dr Helen Rawson from Deakin University on 03 9246 8383 or email [helen.rawson@deakin.edu.au](mailto:helen.rawson@deakin.edu.au).

## ➤ Racing against dementia

For the second year running, Uniting AgeWell staff and supporters came together to participate in the Alzheimer's Australia Memory Walk and Jog, to raise much needed funds and awareness for dementia.

This year's team was lead by Uniting AgeWell CEO Andrew Kinnersly and his family and included staff and their families from across Melbourne.

The team walked, jogged and ran around Westerfolds Park in Templestowe on April 23, raising \$662 for their efforts.

Girrawheen Community Administration Officer Annie Van De Beek, who coordinated the team, said it was a fabulous day and a wonderful effort from all involved.

"It was great having Andrew at the helm this year," she said.



"He brought along members of his family too and they romped ahead of the rest of us on the 5km run."

The Uniting AgeWell team were easy to spot on the day, donning purple t-shirts and caps. After the event they joined Uniting AgeWell physio provider Transform Physio for a sausage sizzle.

Funds raised at the national event enable Alzheimer's Australia to provide continued support services, education and social research into dementia which affects more than 342,000 Australians.

"Thank you to all those who participated and represented Uniting AgeWell," Annie said. 🐦



## ➤ More aged care options for Latrobe residents

**Latrobe seniors will be able to access more aged care services close to home with a major extension and renovation of the Uniting AgeWell Strathdevon Community given the green light.**

Latrobe Council recently approved plans for a new 16 bedroom wing and upgrade of the existing building, pictured above.

Under the approved plans, the new wing will include bedrooms with ensuites, new common areas and staff facilities. The existing building will receive a face lift, including a new café, chapel, resident activity areas, gym, hair salon and a state-of-the-art cook fresh kitchen.

However an even bigger extension may now be on the cards, as Uniting AgeWell recently received Federal Government funding for an additional 15 beds through the latest Aged Care Approvals Round (ACAR).

Uniting AgeWell General Manager Tasmania Jane Johnston said the approved extension, and the additional ACAR beds, demonstrated the organisation's ongoing commitment to supporting older people on the North West coast, particularly in the Latrobe area.

"Both announcements mean more people will have the option to remain in their local community and

maintain social connections as they move into residential aged care," said Jane.

**"The project also means new jobs for local people, which is always good news."**

Jane said Uniting AgeWell would now work through the impact of the ACAR funding, and looked forward to continuing the excellent collaboration with the Latrobe Council to deliver the exciting initiatives for seniors in Tasmania's north west.

The Uniting AgeWell Strathdevon Community is located within walking distance of the Latrobe township and is opposite Mersey Community Hospital.

In addition to residential aged care, Uniting AgeWell provides a suite of services to people on the North West coast allowing them to move easily through the various stages of aged care. These include social housing, Transitional Care Packages, Home Care Packages and the Commonwealth Home Support Programme.

Uniting AgeWell also supplies the meals for Meals on Wheels in North West Tasmania. 🐦



## › Live life your way

**Are you a dancer, love cooking or gardening, or maybe haven't missed a local football game – ever?**

We all have a passion for something, but as we age sometimes we need a little help to keep doing them.

Uniting AgeWell has launched a series of fun new television commercials that show how we are supporting people to continuing living life their way.

They follow the stories of Keith, Nancy, Geoff and Grace, who all have something they enjoy but aren't quite as independent as they used to be.

*Front Cover:  
Uniting AgeWell home care enables Keith to keep watching his favourite footy team*

**As Nancy says: "I love dancing. I'm not as nimble as I once was, but I'm still light on my feet – thanks to Sarah (from Uniting AgeWell)."**

Uniting AgeWell home care packages can support people like Nancy to continue doing the things they love.

The ads are on air throughout country Victoria and Tasmania. But you can check them out on the Uniting AgeWell website. 



*How can we support you to live life your way?  
Find out today, by calling our friendly team on  
1300 783 435 or visit [unitingagewell.org](http://unitingagewell.org)*

We appreciate your feedback and welcome any story ideas.

Contact: Marketing and Communications Manager Charisse Ede at [cede@unitingagewell.org](mailto:cede@unitingagewell.org) or call 03 9276 5702.