

The Companion

EST. 2007

OUR PEOPLE ARE WITH YOU EVERY STEP OF THE WAY

SUMMER 2011



Veggies, cakes and curries!

Welcome to the first edition of *The Companion* for 2011, now in its 5th year of publication. There's plenty to report on in this issue as our residents get more and more involved in their local communities.

In November, Avondale Heights residents attended the official launch of the East Keilor Sustainability Street raised garden beds where they planted beetroots, carrots and all sorts of other vegetables in August last year. Avondale Heights resident, Joyce Douglas had the honour of cutting the ribbon to officially open the garden beds alongside celebrity gardener Vasili Kanidiadis.

In mid-December, Avondale Heights staff dressed up in their national costumes and tempted their colleagues with a range of delicious traditional cuisine from ten different nations. It was a wonderful initiative, not only offering insight into the culture that shapes each person's beliefs but also bringing everyone together to talk about something other than work over a very fine meal. We hope there are more to come.

For this issue, I asked an old colleague of mine, Maureen Corrigan, to write a piece about how her life has changed since she was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. Maureen is a regular contributor

to DiVine's online community which is written for and by people with a disability. I think you'll agree, her positive outlook on life is inspiring.

The Productivity Commission Caring for Older Australians Inquiry has released its draft report with some pleasing results. We hope the government will adopt the recommendations, working towards a fairer aged care funding structure and a system that caters to cultural diversity.

We've had some wild weather over the last few months with flooding affecting north-western Victoria and some of our staff in Shepparton. Our thoughts are with everyone affected and we hope they get back on their feet soon.

Mark Anderson
Chief Executive Officer

Rawrr!

The beautiful Tiger painting featured here on the front page of *The Companion*, was donated by Avondale Heights nurse Xuan Tran and can be found in the main foyer at Dousta Galla's head office.



Mary Lindsay

Canty Birthday Mary!

Serenaded with Scottish songs by entertainer Alex Hearst, Doutta Galla Yarraville Village resident, Mary Lindsay celebrated her 100th birthday in early December last year. Surrounded by fellow residents and family members, Mary was spoiled with presents and attention as well as a spectacular photo collage depicting a century's worth of memories.

Like many of the Doutta Galla residents, Mary has lived an extraordinary life and loves sharing stories with the local school children who come to visit Yarraville Village.

Mary was born in Belfast on 12 December 1910. Her father was an army officer of the First Royal Light Brigade. A few years later she moved to India after her father's redeployment but, when World War I broke out, they moved to Scotland. Having lived through two world wars, and despite losing her father and youngest brother to war, Mary's philosophy on life is simple – you just have to enjoy it.

She's certainly lived by that rule. A keen adventurer and traveller from an early age, Mary has traversed the globe and used to ride around Scotland on the back of a motorcycle with her late husband Tom before they were married. Mary and Tom tied the knot in Scotland in 1935 and moved to Australia after World War II in search of a better life.

So Mary, on behalf of Doutta Galla, 'Lang may yer lum reek!' (an old Scottish saying for 'may you live long and stay well!').

Life after MS

In this edition of The Companion, we are privileged to hear from Maureen Corrigan on her life with Multiple Sclerosis (MS). Maureen began work as a medical practitioner before later moving into management of hospitals, health services and aged care. Maureen is a regular contributor to DiVine (www.divine.vic.gov.au) which is an online community for and by people with a disability.

I was once a director on a school board with Doutta Galla's CEO Mark Anderson. I used to tease him sometimes by saying "Hello Mr An-der-son" mimicking the style in the film The Matrix. They were memorable times but I had to resign in 2006. That was a year of big changes for me.

I had started work as a doctor and ended up helping to run hospitals and aged care services. Then, five years ago, I was diagnosed with secondary progressive MS. My problems with mobility and extreme fatigue made working too difficult. I had to retire and left the board and work. I learnt to deal with the change and realised that without work there was a lot more time available to do things I never had time for before. As well as managing my new condition, I have now been able to travel much more often and I have since taken up writing.

Travel these days needs a lot of planning and I need to have help organised. But despite my MS, I have been on road and canal trips in Portugal and France and ventured down to Antarctica where the icebergs and the quiet were spectacular. Last year I went to Egypt and Jordan where I have the most fabulous memory of the walk into Petra in Jordan with a wheelchair and horse cart. Despite my various mobility aids, I have ended up in all sorts of odd places in all sorts of conditions, but I've learnt it is okay to rest too.

It seems that people with a disability are sometimes afraid to travel. I enjoy writing and I like to think that through my writing I might encourage people with a disability to get out more when they can.

A lot has happened since those school board meetings - I now take the opportunity to do the things that I am passionate about much more often.

A multicultural feast!



Eleni, Dalwinder, Delores, Saba and Devota

At Dousta Galla's Avondale Heights facility, it's not just the residents who enjoy taking part in activities. Getting into the festive spirit of December, Avondale Heights staff decided to hold a multicultural lunch for themselves. With ten different nationalities represented at the facility, employees from Sudan, Ethiopia, Philippines, India, Ireland, South America, Romania, Yugoslavia, Sri Lanka and Australia dressed in their national costumes and brought in a range of food and desserts for their fellow colleagues to try.

Staff enjoyed a feast for all with the table creaking under the weight of the many curries, breads, dips, noodles, rice dishes, ginger foods, fruits, pavlovas and desserts.

Avondale Heights Activity Coordinator, Allen Brown, said the day was a huge success with staff agreeing to make the lunch a regular event. "The lunch was a rare opportunity for all of us to sit down, have lunch together and talk about where some of us used to live and the traditional foods we like to cook and eat at home," Allen said.

"It's fascinating to find out a bit more about the type of clothing other nationalities wear and the techniques and ingredients they use when cooking," he said. "But the most enjoyable part of the day was seeing the passion and pride for culture and nationality."

Due to the dietary restrictions of the residents, food sampling wasn't possible but future resident involvement is being planned by including activities such as a national dress fashion parade and letting the residents be the judge.

New Minister for Health

After a nail biting finish, Victoria elected a Liberal Government in November last year. A new government means a new Minister for Health and a new Minister for Ageing. These two portfolios have been allocated to Liberal member for Southern Metropolitan Region, David Davis.

He may not be long into his term, but (with Premier Ted Baillieu) Mr Davis has already brokered a \$20 billion deal with the federal government which has seen significant changes to the health sector. The future sees funding tied to hospital performance, and provides additional resources to the States for administering and running hospital systems.

Reforms will ensure patients can be confident of elective surgery and emergency department waiting times. Victorian patients should start to see elective surgery waiting times drop from July 2011 under the new agreement.

The Commonwealth has also committed to assume full responsibility for funding, policy, management and delivery of a national aged care system. The Victorian Government is now considering handing over all funding responsibilities for Home and Community Care (HACC) services to the Commonwealth, which the previous Labor Government rejected mid-last year.

At the start of his term with policy reform high on the agenda, Mr Davis is sure to remain busy and we'll be watching the health reforms as they progress with great interest.

DAVID DAVIS > FAST FACTS

- Age: 49
- Married
- Leader of the Liberal Party in the Legislative Council
- Member for Southern Metropolitan Region
- Shadow Minister for Health and Ageing (December 2002 - December 2005)
- Previous Occupation: Chiropractor

Commission update.

In the last issue of *The Companion*, we announced that Dousta Galla had submitted its recommendations to the Productivity Commission for a more flexible aged care funding system which asks the government to consider a range of issues and programs to ensure we continue to meet the needs of all our residents, regardless of where they were born and what language they speak.

The Productivity Commission Caring for Older Australians Inquiry has now released its draft report and we were pleased to see that the Commission acknowledged the problems with the current funding structure and has proposed those entering aged care be given the option of paying for their accommodation costs either as a periodic payment for the duration of their stay, a lump sum (such as an accommodation bond held for the duration of the stay) or a combination of the two. To ensure accommodation costs reflect the cost of supply, accommodation bonds are to be equivalent to the relevant periodic accommodation charge. We believe this will create a much fairer aged care funding system which will bridge the gap between Melbourne's eastern and western suburbs.

In our submission to the Commission we stressed the varied care needs of the elderly people from non-English speaking backgrounds and costs involved in ensuring specialist training of staff. The Commission responded by proposing an Australian Seniors Gateway Agency which would provide interpreter services and culturally appropriate diagnostic tools for assessment of care needs.

The Commission is currently receiving feedback on the report and will present its final recommendations to the government by the end of June. *The Companion* will continue to keep you updated on the progress. Visit <http://www.pc.gov.au> to download the report.

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Green-thumbs up!



Joyce Douglas with Vasili Kanidiadis

In December last year, Dousta Galla Avondale Heights residents celebrated the official opening of new raised garden beds at East Keilor Sustainability Street Community Gardens, in the company of celebrity gardener Vasili Kanidiadis.

Moonee Valley City Council CEO, Neville Smith, officially opened the beds, which were donated by Council for the International Day for People with a Disability. Avondale Heights resident, Joyce Douglas, had the honour of cutting the ribbon which was suspended between two nut trees, also donated by Moonee Valley Council.

Once declared open, Dousta Galla residents and local community members were treated to a tour of the garden by the enthusiastic Vasili Kanidiadis who brought back his *Vasili's Garden* show in mid February 2011.

Doutta Galla CEO, Mark Anderson said the raised garden beds are a fantastic initiative bringing people together in the name of health and friendship.

"Raised garden beds allow older people and those with a disability to keep their hands in the earth and stay connected to like-minded green thumbs," he said.

"Dousta Galla has built raised garden beds for residents across its facilities and they are always a centre for activity, not to mention fresh veggies!"