

# About

Spring 2013 | [www.baptcare.org.au](http://www.baptcare.org.au)



**Baptcare**

Bringing care to life

# Message from the Chief Executive



Almost seven decades ago, at a time when Australia was still in the last throes of war, a group of determined and compassionate Baptists saw a need for care for the older people in their local Melbourne community. Their united action established Australia's first Baptist home for the elderly and led to the founding of Baptcare.

The social conditions and the issues facing Australia have changed markedly since those early years, yet we still share the same spirit of our founders. Our values fuel our commitment to care for others, to advocate for the weak and vulnerable, and to work towards a fair and compassionate society. Today, one of those vulnerable groups are the people seeking safe asylum on our shores.

Last year, the Baptcare Board passed the Baptcare Social Policy Position Paper on Asylum Seekers. This policy paper was informed by our experience in providing support to asylum seekers since 2008 through our Baptcare Sanctuary program in Melbourne. Baptcare has followed up this paper with several advocacy actions aimed at making a positive contribution to the community debate on asylum seekers – a debate which has received increasing media attention over the last 12 months.

Baptcare has had grave concerns about the negative tenor of asylum seeker policies on both sides of the political arena prior to and during the recent federal election campaign. As Baptcare itself and through Baptist Care Australia (the peak body of Baptist aged

care and welfare agencies across Australia) we have been active in urging all those who aim for political leadership to deal justly with humanitarian issues. We now urge all those elected to federal parliament to demonstrate an ethical stance in debating refugee issues on the basis of fact, not fear.

The majority of asylum seekers currently in Australia will indeed become part of our community and we urge the government to ensure that asylum seekers become productive members of our community by providing all with access to English-language classes, education and training, Centrelink and health services, and the right to work. We urge the government to embrace the Australian value of a fair go.

I recently attended a forum at RMIT on these very matters and I was struck again by the complexity of the issues and equally, encouraged by the integrity and passion of the many who attended and who provided intelligent and compassionate food for thought.

The immediate needs and long-term future of this vulnerable group of people must continue to remain a genuine priority for those in leadership. Baptcare will continue to participate in the discussion as our commitment to the people seeking asylum remains and is strengthened by each Sanctuary resident we meet and serve.

Graham Dangerfield  
*Chief Executive*

## Baptcare's Mission

Excellence in Christian care for individuals, families and the community.

## Baptcare's Vision

Caring communities for all.

## Baptcare's Values

**Respect:** We value the inherent dignity and equality of all people, regardless of their circumstances.

**Justice:** We value equality of opportunity and consistency of outcome for all.

**Commitment:** We value dedication to meeting the challenges of our mission.

**Integrity:** We value consistency between word and deed.

**Accountability:** We value the acceptance of personal responsibility.

**Co-operation:** We value working together toward our goals.

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# Baptcare Northaven finalists in HESTA Aged Care Awards

Baptcare Northaven Community was a national finalist in the 2013 HESTA Aged Care Awards, for the innovative redevelopment of its dementia unit and a total revision of the dementia model of care.

A finalist in the Team Innovation category, Baptcare Northaven Community's dementia unit was renovated into a sixties-style dementia-specific unit, with a bright retro-style kitchen complete with a cupboard of vintage Tupperware. The care delivery model was also radically changed to better support people with dementia in rural areas.

Director of Nursing, Donela Perry (pictured right), said after consultation with staff, residents, families, dementia specialists and architects, the sixties era was chosen because it was the period when residents were at their most mentally active.

"When it opened, many residents and families commented that it was just like the house they used to have, or indeed still had, right down to the chook-shed and the water-tank outside in the garden," Ms Perry said.

"Meal times are also more relaxed. Residents can come in for a leisurely breakfast whenever they want. It's become a much more inviting environment for our residents.

"Now, residents from right across the facility, their families and friends seek out the dementia space as a place of peace and quiet.

"We're proud this is a place that families want to come to and, in fact, at least one family now chooses to make it the venue for their Christmas get-together.

This demonstrates to us that we have achieved one of our main goals for the development."

The judges praised the achievements of Baptcare Northaven Community and the great improvements it has delivered for residents and their families.



Director of Nursing at Baptcare Northaven Community, Donela Perry, with their trophy.



Read more about Northaven's dementia unit in our cover story on page 4. Pictured on our cover: Mrs Bertha Greenway.

# Caring communities for all – Baptcare's Aged Care vision



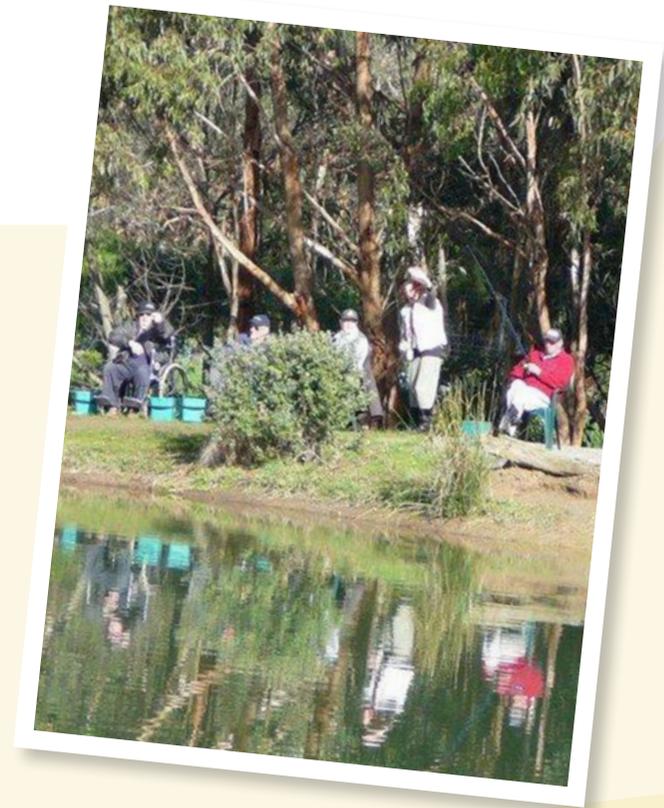
## Providing care to older people is a privilege.

Our oldest generation have paved the road ahead for us (figuratively and literally), built homes, established our schools and fostered our communities. They have survived war, illness and accidents. They have been the cricket coaches, the tuckshop mums, the carpool parent, the nurses and plumbers, the service club member selling raffle tickets, the business people, and the volunteers running Sunday school. Older people are everything we value in our community.

If any generation were entitled to sit on a sofa and drink tea all day, it is them.

However, contrary to popular belief, older people don't want to sit on a sofa all day. There are still things to do and people to see. Older people still have goals, they still have things they enjoy or things they wish to create. Baptcare has been playing an important role in supporting older people to achieve their goals for nearly 70 years.

Surveys of older Australians have consistently found that the majority want to stay in their own homes as long as they can and so the Commonwealth government funds a range of home support services. One of these are Home Care Packages, which are determined according to need and



then coordinated by organisations such as Baptcare. Much of this Home Care assistance is focussed on practical help in the form of personal care, help with housework, meal preparation, transport, assistance with home maintenance, home nursing care and assistance with medication. However, it can also be a pathway into greater social support to decrease isolation.

Later life is also a time when people can revisit a long lost interest or hobby. An example of Baptcare taking the initiative in sparking people's interest in old passions comes from the team at Baptcare Community Packages in Gippsland. Diversional Therapist, Fay Stitt, suggested taking a group of men out on a fishing trip (pictured above). To improve their odds, they visited the Rhyll Trout and Bush Tucker Farm. One

of the participants, whose wife had passed away recently, was particularly happy to be reconnected with his love of fishing. Reigniting a spark for life is vital, as a Baptcare–Monash University study found a link between depression in the elderly and eventual admission to aged care homes.

Wanting to make a contribution to your community also doesn't stop just because one is getting older. One of Baptcare's clients at Warrnambool is 93 year old Tim who has volunteered at Fun for Kids every year for the past seven years. It is the camaraderie of the festival and the sense of being involved in the community which keeps him coming back. At Baptcare Templestowe Orchards Community a group of residents (pictured below right) spend every Friday afternoon knitting bedcovers, knee rugs, scarves and caps for those in need. Over the past five years these

women have knitted 130 rugs which have been sent to nursing homes and orphanages in Romania. This activity is a joint act of compassion for those less fortunate as well as being a passion shared and an activity to anticipate.

Baptcare understands that in order to allow people to age at home, it is vital to support those people who are caring for a loved one. The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates there are more than 325,000 people providing the primary care for elderly people. Mostly these carers are spouses and partners, or adult children. Compared to the general Australian population, carers are known to be in poorer physical and mental health, have less social support, and incur greater expenses coupled with fewer opportunities for paid work. Baptcare knows that the wellbeing of carers is vitally important. Baptcare has respite services

and accommodation providing carers with a much needed break, as well as the peace of mind that their loved ones are being well looked after. Baptcare also offers a variety of Day Centres which provide varied activities from music, exercise groups, armchair travel, walking groups, and café lunches, to activities relevant to different cultural groups.

As older people become too frail to continue living independently, due to physical or mental decline, residential care becomes the next step in life. Baptcare recognises that our nine residential aged care homes are peoples' homes and wherever possible should reflect this reality.

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Pictured right: residents at Baptcare Templestowe Orchards Community knitting rugs for Romanian orphanages.



## Caring communities for all – Baptistcare's Aged Care vision (from page 5)

One example of this is our Baptistcare Northaven Community at Kerang in Northern Victoria where, over the past couple of years, the Director of Nursing and staff have undertaken a range of changes aimed at making Northaven a more welcoming, personal and inclusive space. Every unused corner is being turned into an inviting sitting area and the hairdressing salon and kiosk have been fitted out as inviting boutiques. Multiple outdoor gardens enable people of varying needs to have their own space and areas have been re-designed to include children's play spaces, edible gardens, and a chook house.

In the dementia unit, the servery area and nurses' station are now set out as a vibrant retro 1960s style kitchen (pictured left) even complete with a cupboard of vintage Tupperware. The 1960s era was chosen because it was the period when current residents were at their most mentally active. Northaven Director of



“When the 1960s area opened, “many residents and families commented that it was just like the house they used to have, or indeed still had, right down to the chookshed and the water-tank outside in the garden. It’s become a much more inviting environment for our residents.”



Nursing Donela Perry explains “When [the 1960s area] opened, many residents and families commented that it was just like the house they used to have, or indeed still had, right down to the chook-shed and the water-tank outside in the garden. It’s become a much more inviting environment for our residents. Meal times are now more relaxed. [Dementia] residents can come in for a leisurely breakfast whenever they want.”

Located in the multicultural urban area of Footscray in Melbourne, Bapcare Westhaven Community recently won an Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency Better Practice Award for “Caring for People from Asian Communities” – in particular the Vietnamese and Chinese communities in this area. Some of their older members have little English and few fluent English-speaking acquaintances or family members. They remain extremely connected to their

own culture, language, and tight-knit communities. Westhaven has dedicated a wing of the residential care facility to cater for this group with culturally relevant décor, food, and the celebration of festivals (pictured below left). Signage, the resident handbook and some forms and aged care literature are available in Asian languages. The adjoining internal courtyard has been redone with plants that reference Asia. Recruitment has emphasised a desire for bilingual staff – particularly those with some skills in Cantonese, Mandarin or Vietnamese languages.

Bapcare Karingal, our residential facility in Devonport Tasmania, also won a Better Practice Award for their “People’s Stories” program. This project allows residents an opportunity to reflect on their personal experiences, including moving into and then living and coping with life in an aged care home. A volunteer facilitator gives residents individual and group time and attention to talk about what brings meaning to their lives. The residents then decided to publish a booklet of their stories and an initial 200 copies of ‘An Incredible Journey’ were printed in 2012, with a second reprint in 2013 (pictured above right).

One resident’s response to ‘An Incredible Journey’ was “I found it very moving to hear other people’s journeys. It makes me realise I am not the only one who has had tragedy to cope with. I’m just a pebble in the great



scheme of things. I am strengthened by what others say. I can learn something there, apply it to my own life, and then perhaps I can impart that learning to others.”

This reminds us that older people continue to have stories to live and tell. A challenge for our society is to remain open to the stories of older people and to be intentional in our efforts to build communities capable of nurturing and hearing these stories. For Bapcare, we will continue to travel with people along the journey of later life and advocate for their stories to be told.



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## Baptcare Karana Community launch The Hub



(L-R) General Manager Aged Care Operations, Michael Wilson, Chief Executive Graham Dangerfield, Baptcare Karana resident Ruth Searle, Josh Frydenberg, Federal Member for Kooyong.

The Hub began life as a little-used craft room until its transformation into a multi-purpose space. Now residents and visitors to Baptcare Karana Community have access to a room that can host small family celebrations, private luncheons or meetings as well as hosting activities (including craft).

In August, The Hub was officially opened by Federal Member for Kooyong Josh Frydenberg with Karana's longest residing resident Ruth Searle.

Baptcare Karana Community Manager Belinda Wandabwa saw potential for the craft room as an ideal venue for smaller group activities including special luncheons, birthday celebrations and family get-togethers.

Prior to the upgrade, Karana residents used the room for craft activities. The storage shelving and equipment took up considerable space and it has always been difficult to fit any number of wheel and flotation chairs into the room. With the increasing number of high care residents at Karana the issue of space in room became an issue. A 'craft on wheels' activity was devised which brings craft activities to the residents rather than them coming to the room. This is supplemented with smaller craft activities in the Hub.

In February Felicity Rentos, Baptcare Karana Lifestyle Coordinator went to work cleaning out the room and organising the refurbishment including painting the room, new blinds, new furniture, new paintings for the walls and a new storage cupboards built opposite the room. The new name was then chosen for the room "the Hub". 'The Hub has had an amazing transformation from being just a craft room into a multipurpose room we are very proud of.' said Felicity.

We are sure the Hub will bring a lot of joy to many Baptcare Karana Community residents in the future.

## Churches providing the loaves and fishes



The impact of the government policy changes that removed an asylum seeker's right to work has been felt most acutely by the residents of Baptcare Sanctuary. No longer able to earn money to buy their own food, they are reliant on the support of charities and other support organisations.

With the pantry near empty, Baptcare started rallying support from Baptist Churches around Victoria and they have been extraordinarily generous in response. We are delighted to have eight churches arranging to deliver groceries totalling more than \$4,500, with one church managing this feat twice. West Preston Baptist has joined Moreland Baptist in committing to regularly supplying pantry items to Sanctuary residents.

In addition, two Baptcare central employees have also arranged a contribution worth \$500 each. We were also pleased to receive donations of food and supermarket vouchers from Baptcare staff. The pantry is near filled, however it won't stay like this for long as we have seventy four mouths to feed! If your church would like to support this food drive, on a one off or continuing basis, or join a food driver delivery roster, please contact David Barker, Community Engagement and Advocacy Coordinator, on 0407 855 099 or email [dbarker@baptcare.org.au](mailto:dbarker@baptcare.org.au).

As Jesus said in the parable of the sheep and the goats, 'When I was hungry you fed me and what you do for these, you do for me.'

## A grand opening for Life Essentials

Baptcare were delighted to participate in the opening day celebrations for Life Essentials Community Hub in Bendigo in August.

Life Essentials is an initiative of Bendigo Baptist Community Care Inc (BBCCI) under Bendigo Baptist Church. The plan is to provide an op-shop, café, community meals and counselling. Their mission is "to offer relief to all people, but especially the most vulnerable within our community, and empower them, through love, education and care to reach their full potential."

Matt Parkinson (right), Director of BBCCI, welcomed Counsellor Mark Weragoda (Bendigo City Council) and Baptcare Chief Executive Graham Dangerfield (centre), who both officiated at the opening.

Graham shared stories of Baptcare's engagement in the Bendigo community which goes back many years. Special mention was made of Home-Start and our work in community aged care, and the wonderful relationship between Bendigo Baptist Church and Baptcare. Baptcare have supported the establishment of Life Essentials with a Baptcare Community Engagement Grant.

Matt told of generous donations (including their delivery truck!) and heavily discounted shop fit out items that have enabled the opportunity shop to be established. Matt thanked the many volunteers who had given many hours of service to set up the shop. The op shop has been running for eight weeks and is already seeing a high level of sales. The café, meals and counselling rooms are in the process being established. The proceeds from these will assist the BBCCI in serving the people of Bendigo.





## Bev recognised as Carer of the Year

When it comes to dedicating yourself to looking after children, Bev and her husband Terry, are pretty spectacular examples of what you can do when you put your mind to it, or as Bev says, 'when you go for it.' Bev (pictured left) has been a foster carer for exactly 30 years. She can't remember the number of children, but she certainly remembers the children themselves.

"I wasn't working, I was living on a new housing estate and I was completely isolated. Terry and I wanted a larger family, but could not have one and as Terry always said – 'There are plenty of kids around who need help.'" So when Bev saw an article about the need for foster carers she could not get to the information night fast enough.

"The first child we fostered had special needs and this was an area I knew nothing about. He stayed with us for 18 months and although it was a big task, I learnt all I needed to know as we went along. It helped that I received lots of support from the Department of Human Services who were handling all foster care at that time."

In fact Bev has always enjoyed the support she's required to provide a safe, secure and loving home to children who need it. For the last 16 years that support has come from Baptcare and she continues to welcome it.

Baptcare and various government departments provide payments and reimbursement to carers to ensure that foster caring does not impose a significant financial obligation. Bev doesn't always claim reimbursements, but is glad that they are available when she needs them.

Baptcare encourages all foster carers to find out what is available to them and to take up those options.

We can help point you in the right direction to what payments are available.

"We have looked after children on both a long term and short term basis including permanent care. Most of the children we have looked after have come to us as at a young age, but we have cared for children of all ages."

"Very young children need a sense of safety and security, love, food, sleep and a routine. Older children need this too, but often their needs are more complex. It takes time for them to trust us, it certainly doesn't happen overnight."

Bev believes that whenever possible, children should stay with their families, but, she says sometimes that just doesn't work and placements or permanent care is necessary.

"Being a foster carer has changed my life. It has taught me to fight. You have to go into battle for the kids to make sure they get a good deal. I have a passion for it."

Bev's advice to anyone thinking of becoming a foster carer – "Just go for it. You will never know if you don't try."

Bev's efforts were recognised recently when she won the Carer of the Year Award at the Robin Clark Awards. These awards are offered by the Victorian Government, in the memory of Robin Dennis Clark, a widely respected leader in the field of child, youth and family services. The aim of the awards is to recognise service provision and leadership of the highest standards that significantly improves the lives of vulnerable children, young people and families in Victoria across the child and family service sector.

For more information on becoming a foster carer with Baptcare, please visit our blog [fostercareinfo.wordpress.com](http://fostercareinfo.wordpress.com) or contact us on 03 9373 3800 for a confidential discussion with our Recruitment and Retention Officer.

# Asylum seekers – a fair and ethical debate

## A statement by Baptcare

As an organisation providing housing and support to asylum seekers living in the Victorian community, Baptcare was appalled by the scapegoating of this vulnerable group in the 2013 federal election campaign. We call on all those elected to demonstrate an ethical stance in debating refugee issues on the basis of fact.

Baptcare rejects the popular view that boat arrivals are economic migrants attempting to bypass Australia's immigration processes. Figures released by the Department of Immigration & Citizenship show that over the past few years 90% of people arriving by boat were found to be genuine refugees. Baptcare believes all people should be judged solely according to the merits of their claim regardless of their mode of transport.

Baptcare believes any attempt to scale back Australia's commitment to the United Nations' Refugee Convention is not appropriate at a time when Australia holds a seat on the UN Security Council. We urge our federal government to maintain the legal rights of asylum seekers already in Australia; to ensure timely and fair assessment of refugee claims; and to maintain access to the appeal avenue of the Refugee Review Tribunal.

We believe most Australians are genuinely appalled at the human rights records of the home countries of many refugees. It is not the Australian-way to return people forcibly to places where they will face torture and death. Baptcare believes our Immigration system should only return people to areas where there is adequate assurance and monitoring of safety and freedom from persecution.

Baptcare opposes mandatory detention – in Australia and overseas. It is not illegal for anyone to seek asylum

in a foreign country, therefore no crime has been committed under international or Australian law in arriving on our shores seeking asylum. Also, Baptcare decries the mental health impacts of detention, which are well documented. As a Christian organisation with concern for and work with vulnerable children, Baptcare particularly opposes the detention of children, families, and unaccompanied minors. We urge the government to scale back the current system of mandatory detention costing billions of dollars and replace it with the far more humane and cost-effective community-based detention.

The majority of asylum seekers currently in Australia will indeed become part of our community. Baptcare is concerned at the level of homelessness, destitution, stress and mental health issues caused by long delays in immigration processing, inadequate income, lack of housing, and the impacts of detention. We call on all levels of government to ensure that asylum seekers become productive members of our community by providing all with access to English-language classes, education and training, Centrelink and health services, and the right to work.

Having family around helps people settle successfully in Australia. Baptcare calls on the federal government to increase the number of humanitarian places available for family reunion and to open these to all new Australians judged to be genuine refugees.

Baptcare calls on all members of federal parliament to ensure Australia meets its international humanitarian obligations and acts in a way which reflects our Christian heritage of justice, humanity, compassion and generosity, and the Australian value of a fair go.

## Contemplation corner

Recently I had the opportunity to hear best-selling author of *The Joy Project*, Amanda Gore speak to a large group of people who lead volunteer programs from all sorts of organisations. It was fascinating to me in part because one of the things she spoke about resonated with Baptcare's desire to ignite the flame of human vitality. Amanda used the image of a pilot light to talk about how all of us have a spirit inside us. She went on to say that people are two basic types: spirit igniters, or what she memorably called, 'spirit foofers'. Amanda humorously made the important point to 'beware the spirit foofers', and the danger of being a 'spirit foofer' ourselves. Jesus came for us to have a wonderfully ignited spirit – to have life abundantly (John 10:10). This edition of *About* is a great celebration of Baptcare's commitment to being spirit igniters. What can you do this Spring to ignite the spirit of yourself or another?

Ilsa Hampton  
*Pastoral Care Manager*

### Pray for...

- A new vision of ageing in our communities that celebrates and respects all that older people have to offer.
- More foster carers to come forward.
- Pantry food at Sanctuary to multiply like the loaves and fishes! (page 9)

### Give thanks for...

- Bev and Terry, and the love of all our foster parents (page 10).
- The eight churches that have committed to providing food to our asylum seeker friends (page 9).

