



Baptcare
About

Autumn 2016

*Our
Caring
issue*

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Message from our Chief Executive



Welcome to the first edition of *About* magazine for 2016. In the past few months, we wrapped up celebrations of our 70th year and launched a new book of our history – *Making a Difference: The legends and landmarks of Baptistcare*.

The book is an amazing collection of stories about some of the people who shaped the organisation into what it is today. When I read it, the strongest theme across these stories was the determination and dedication to making a difference. Doing so even when there were no funds to support it.

To deliver, they rolled up their sleeves and got to work – that is after all the Baptist way. These people are our unsung heroes, the men and women dedicated to social transformation.

In our history, the women particularly stand out as exemplars of both leaders and servants. Today, this legacy lives on in nearly 1800 staff. You can read more about the book on the opposite page.

The focus of this edition of *About* is our work in the disability sector. We also showcase our Houses of Hope project – providing transitional accommodation for people seeking asylum – that recently opened its third house in partnership with the local church and community.

On the cover and on page 4 we feature the story of Mulu, a single mother of six and the sole carer for her severely disabled daughter Heaven. Mulu receives no government financial support.

In Mulu's own words, "I don't have any support like carer's allowance, you know. But...I have Baptistcare Family Service, it is a big hand that supports me. They give me hope, they give me support to survive in my life, always they [remind me] 'you are a strong woman'."

Mulu was recently awarded the National Carer Awards' Family Carer of the Year Award, a small token of recognition of her role as Heaven's carer.

When you talk to Mulu she is humble, "I have hope, because Heaven, she is my little angel."

Simple words from an inspiring woman and a true testament of how we are living our mission of partnering for fullness of life every day.

Graham Dangerfield
Chief Executive

Baptcare's Mission

Partnering for fullness of life with people of all ages, cultures, beliefs and circumstances.

Baptcare's Vision

Communities where every person is cherished.

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.

Cooperation: We value working together toward our goals.

Baptcare is a faith-based, not-for-profit organisation working across Victoria and Tasmania, providing care to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged for more than 70 years.

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‘Making a Difference’ book launch



IN February we concluded the celebration for Baptcare’s 70th anniversary with the launch of our history book entitled *Making a Difference: The legends and landmarks of Baptcare*.

The book is a wonderful collection of stories that highlight some of the amazing work that Baptcare has achieved over the past 70 years.



We were honoured to host many key figures in Baptcare’s history at the book’s launch, including Sadie Newnham (left), a resident at Strathalan aged in her eighties.

When she was just fifteen years old, Sadie and her brother, Vic Stewart, accompanied Reverend William Pope and his wife Mary on their first trip to view the Strathalan Homestead, which was to become the Victorian Baptist community’s first aged care facility and would start the journey towards what would eventually become Baptcare.



Sadie was a member of the Hawthorn Baptist Church youth group when she visited Macleod with the Pops in the early 1940s.

Mary Pope and the Baptist Women’s Association went on to raise over £4,000 – an extraordinary amount at the time – to pay for the homestead, which opened as the Strathalan Homes in 1945, with nine residents.

This is a common theme among the stories throughout this book – that of courage and determination to make a difference.

This still holds true today as we live our Mission of partnering for fullness of life with people of all ages, cultures, beliefs and circumstances. These stories underpin what Baptcare stands for – listening and understanding with empathy, and working together to find ways to make a difference in people’s lives.

***Making a Difference* is available for sale through Melbourne Books. www.melbournebooks.com.au**

Official Baptcare Day reflects on 71 years of service

IT’S been more than 70 years since Baptcare began realising its vision to build communities where every person is cherished – a whole lifetime of partnering for fullness of life with people of all ages, cultures, beliefs and circumstances.

Along with our newly launched Baptcare history book, Mission Development General Manager Olivia Maclean sees Baptcare Day as a time to examine our history, what defines us and sets us apart from other organisations operating in our sphere.

“The official Baptcare Day celebrates the distinctiveness of our organisation,” Olivia said. “After more than 70 years of service we wanted to start reflecting consciously on our identity and the important work we do.”

On 24 February 2016, the inaugural Baptcare Day, Olivia presented some of the landmark moments in our history book to staff at our Camberwell Office. “When you look at some of the milestones in the development of Baptcare and how we started, you can see we were never afraid to dive in head first to take action when we saw it was needed,” she said.

“From our first Baptist aged care home in Victoria in 1945 to our recent venture in the affordable housing sector, we continue to jump in quickly to meet needs, learning and developing as we go.”

“A lifetime’s worth of providing services across a growing range of programs through the commitment of almost 1800 staff and 600 volunteers across Victoria and Tasmania deserves to be celebrated.”



Family Carer of the Year – Mulu Mihretreab

Mulu and Heaven

WHEN twenty year old Hezron speaks about her Mother Mulu winning the National Carer Awards' Family Carer of the Year Award, her eyes fill with tears.

“My Mother has given her all for my sister Heaven and it’s amazing for someone to finally say to her; you’re doing a really good job.”

Single mother of six, Mulu Mihreteab, has been the sole carer for her severely disabled teenage daughter Heaven for fourteen years. Heaven’s many health issues, including cerebral palsy, chronic lung disease, throat palsy, pneumonia, asthma and epilepsy, mean Mulu gets only three hours sleep a night.

This tireless devotion and the many struggles Mulu and her family faced, prompted her Baptcare caseworker to put her forward for the 2015 award.

Mulu fled war torn Sudan for New Zealand with her husband and children in 2000. Her dreams of studying nursing were shattered when her husband left while she was pregnant with Heaven.

“This was a very dark time for me; I was on my own with six children, the doctors told me Heaven would not survive, and I could not speak the language,” Mulu said. “I was broken hearted and scared but I realised I had to survive for my children, for some reason I knew I had to come to Australia to survive.”

The Mihretreabs finally came to Australia in 2005. Since then, with the help of family support services like Baptcare, Heaven has more access to the specialist care she needs; medical care, schooling, equipment and some respite for Mulu.

But the Mihretreab’s precarious visa situation means Mulu doesn’t have access to all the support a complex condition like Heavens’ requires. Without the help of local churches and not-for-profits like Baptcare, Mulu doesn’t know how she’d survive.

Mulu’s daughter Hezron praised Heaven’s Baptcare caseworker Rose Indomenico for her tireless fighting for funding and for putting Mulu up for the award she so deserved. “Winning this award has returned my Mum’s hope,” Hezron said.

“It’s given her the strength to keep on fighting and we now believe that Mum and Heaven will someday be able to get all the support they need.”



Brimbank Citizen of the Year – Despina Havelas

Despina, Bill Shorten and Kon

COMMUNITY leaders are often defined by their willingness to share knowledge and support others – Brimbank Citizen of the Year 2016 and Baptcare client, Despina Havelas founded her organisation, Autism Angels on these very principles.

Despina's advocacy for the wellbeing of her family, her 15-year-old son Kon and other families touched by disability in her community, saw her nominated for this year's award by Brimbank City Council.

"I'm honoured and humbled to get this award," Despina said. "I've seen a lot of changes in disability support services since I first came to Baptcare with Kon 12 years ago and I'm happy to have been part of it."

"When Kon got his formal diagnosis at three years of age, not only did we find a lack of services, we found a lack of knowledge about the services we were eligible for."

"Apart from learning to cope with meltdowns and the financial stress of paying for therapies when one parent has to stay at home, we felt really socially isolated and alone."

These experiences prompted Despina and her husband Chris to form Autism Angels in 2008, a group which supports the entire family and connects them to support networks within their community.

Since its formation, Autism Angels has lobbied all levels of government to improve disability services, advocated for improved support for teenagers on the Autism spectrum and helped many families in the Brimbank area connect socially.

Despina praised Baptcare for their efforts to inform families about what services are available in the disability sector and hopes the development of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) signals further change.

"There still needs to be work done—I'll continue campaigning for more services in the teenage disability space and more social programs for those living with a disability and their families—but we've come a long way."

"My hopes for Kon's future are brighter, I believe he'll finish school, maybe find a job and continue to stay engaged with his own community."



Garden in bloom after mine blaze

HOPE blooms where flowers grow a year after the Latrobe Valley coal mine blaze forced residents of Bapcare's St. Hilary's Aged Care Home to temporarily evacuate their residence.

The new garden at St Hilary's has been a labour of love for both staff and residents over the past year and is the centrepiece of the residents' activities.

Finally in full blossom, the versatile space is now the venue for coffee club, afternoon tea, daily exercise and the monthly barbeques held for local primary schools.

For 93-year-old Mrs Johanna Van Zweten, one of the residents who spent six weeks living in temporary accommodation during the huge clean-up effort last year, the new garden is her sanctuary.

"I love to sit under the shade of the Mop Top trees while they play music out here," Mrs Van Zweten said.

"It looks beautiful how it is but we've recently been working on containers of ornamental plants which we might use violets, fuchsias and vegetables in for next year."

"It was so nice to get back home after we had to leave last year," she said. "And this summer when we spend time outside, it is more beautiful than ever."

Contemplation corner

Easter is calling you

What is God calling you towards this Easter? Somehow I don't think it is chocolate and hot cross buns, as good as these are. Easter is the most important time of the year for Christians. In this somewhat strange story, the deepest truths of Christian faith are revealed. Jesus, a man who loves deeply and has compassion for all, a man who does not meet the expectations of the religious establishment, is crucified by the authorities. On the cross, Jesus cries with the pain of God-abandonment (Matthew 27:46).

In his living, Jesus has shown us that God draws us towards loving – loving that is easy and difficult. On the cross, Jesus becomes the suffering God. He shows us that God's outstretched arms take in everything. Every secret, every sorrow, every fear, every joy, every hope. Even the experience of God-abandonment.

In the Christian story, suffering is not the end. Three days later Jesus was raised from the dead (Matthew 28). At Easter, Christians reconnect with this powerful truth that each of us is invited into new life, no matter how terrifying or brutal the dying has been. What new life is God calling you towards this Easter?

This is my last epistle as Pastoral Care Manager. Thank you for your faithful support of Baptcare and of pastoral care in particular. Blessings,

Ilsa Hampton, Pastoral Care Manager

Give thanks for

- More than 70 years of service to the community (page 3)
- Parents like Mulu, who dedicates her life to her disabled daughter Heaven (page 4)
- A new garden for residents' enjoyment at St Hilary's Community (page 6)

Pray for

- The growth of our Houses of Hope program to house more people seeking asylum (page 13)





“We encourage participants to write about their own lives in their own handwriting; then have guided group discussion looking both at content and methods of story-telling.”

Story of my life

Dementia therapy study at Brindabilla published

OUR dedication to improving the lives of individuals living with dementia through memoir has been taken even further with an exciting workshop-based program at Baptcare's Brindabilla Day centre.

Baptcare Diversional Therapist Paula Bain and La Trobe University Emeritus Professor of English, Richard Freadman FAHA recently published an article on their pilot project in a special edition of the eminent journal, 'Life Writing'.

"I first met Richard three years ago at a lecture he gave on the uses of memoir in health care settings and we both realised we were interested in exploring life writing in dementia care," Paula said.

"We were both very grateful to Baptcare for collaborating with us and supporting us in developing our own innovative program."

According to Professor Freadman, some elements of the Brindabilla Biography program differ from the more traditional methods of memoir writing in aged care and leave it open to further developments and study.

"Our method is based on the creative writing workshop model that has an excellent record in university teaching," Professor Freadman said.

"We encourage participants to write about their own lives in their own handwriting; then have guided group discussion looking both at content and methods of story-telling.

"Through this we compiled our special Baptcare publication *You Won't Believe It! Baptcare Clients Tell Their Stories*.

"There is also scope for researchers in other fields to build on what we've done with solid evaluations of mood patterns and morale to assess the relationship between depression and dementia. Cognitive function testing could be used to examine if there is an actual slowing of cognitive decline or whether this is related to mood and well-being."

Contact us on info@baptcare.org.au or call 03 9831 7222 for more information.



Dot McHugh and Greg McCulloch

THE moment you are born, your life story begins unfolding – and as you age, recounting your personal journey can be a grateful reflection on a life well lived.

To combat the grief, loneliness, failing health and memory loss faced by many older people, a new movement to record seniors' stories is gaining popularity. At Baptcare's Orana Day Centre, long-term client Dot McHugh is enjoying telling her tales to dedicated volunteer Greg McCulloch.

"I'm really starting to feel as if I'm rather an important person," Dot said. "I've been very lucky, I've lived a fairy tale life and it's been wonderful to look back on—I had a great childhood and I loved my job as a teacher."

"I lost my husband ten years ago, I've always talked about him to keep him with me and now it's written down for my grandchildren to see."

Greg McCulloch has worked in the social care sector all his life and believes as people age, it's important to know they have a voice and how they've lived has value.

"I really look forward to our sessions and getting Dot to focus on the happy times in her life," Greg said.

"I'm a bit older, and I've done a lot of reminiscing with individuals living with dementia. I feel it's important to make care more meaningful. Dedicating time to really communicate with someone whose sight is failing and who perhaps has hearing impairments is vital."

"It's been a treat getting to know Dot, to learning about times gone by, the history of the local area and learning what a kind, caring and feisty lady she is."

Living independently in Hobart

LIKE any 26 year old, Sasha Walker from Hobart values her independence and wants to spend her twenties building the foundations for a solid future.

She began working with one of Baptcare's Tasmanian Local Area Coordinators, Cassie Hoskins, six months ago to achieve two of her major goals; finding open employment and living independently with her friend.

Sasha was eligible for self-directed funding under the new National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) model due to a mild learning disability and with the help of Baptcare she's creating the life she wants.

"I didn't want to live in supported housing with people I don't know," Sasha said. "It was important to me to get out on my own, do things by myself and live with who I wanted."

Sasha's housemate of choice is her good friend Leah, who she met a year ago on Facebook. Sharing a love of cooking, music and movies the pair were excited to move into their own place in January.

"It's really nice living with a friend and it helps that we both like keeping things clean."

At present Sasha is working at Blueline Laundry in Hobart, an Australian Disability Enterprise, but is hoping to find open employment as a kitchen hand. "I love cooking so I think I'd really like to try working in a busy kitchen."

With the help of Baptcare and a disability employment organisation in Hobart called Headway, Sasha is building her resume, practising interview techniques and applying for that all important dream job!

Cassie, Sasha's dedicated coordinator, believes these positive outcomes and her autonomous lifestyle have been easier to achieve under the new NDIS funding model. "Sasha knows what she wants and she's more than capable of getting it. It's really positive to see the successes she's achieved and the happiness her independence gives her."



Our new website and Enquiry Centre

THE launch of Baptcare's new website and customer enquiry centre marks the start of a journey that began two years ago to make Baptcare even easier to deal with for our Home Help customers.

The 'customer enquiry centre' and website was built from the ground up by a dedicated taskforce headed by Project Manager Stephanie Mayne.

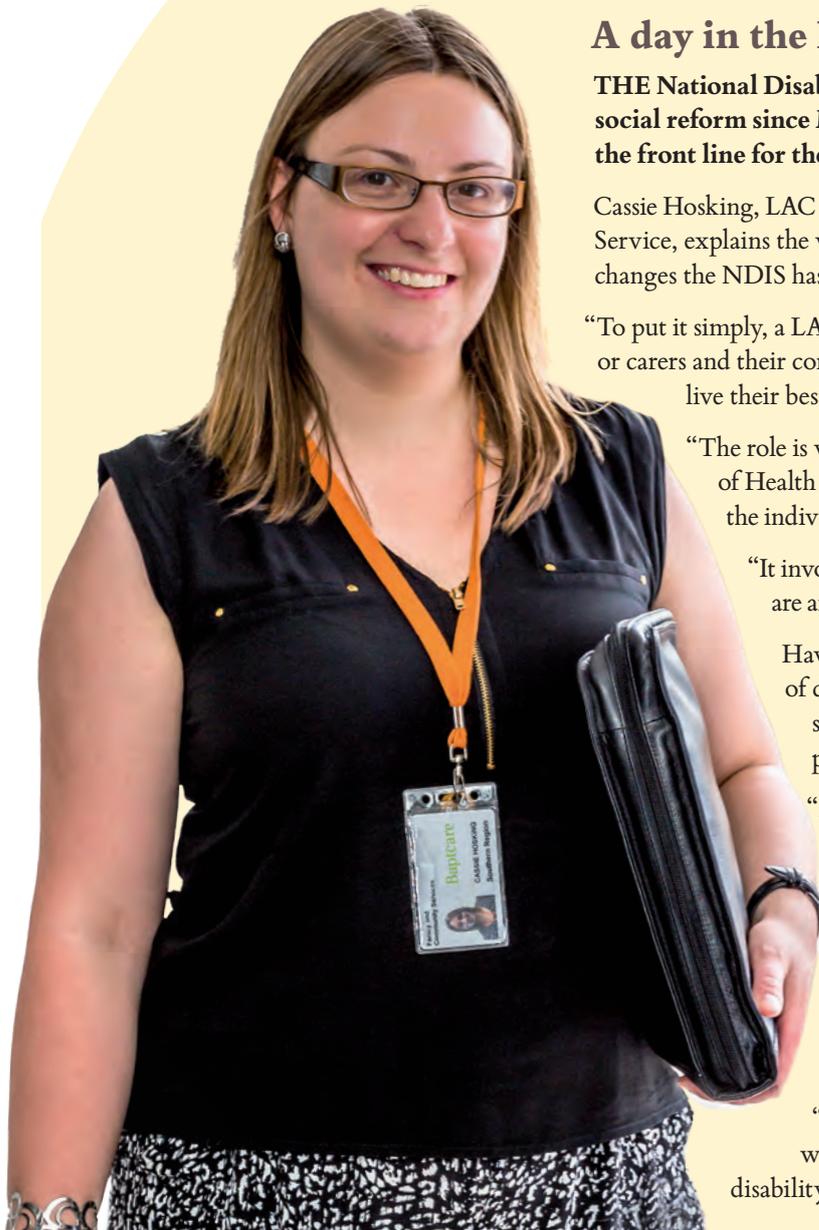
"As an organisation that prides itself on putting the customer first," Stephanie said, "we wanted to put the customer at the heart of what we do and listen to what they want and need, while being very easy to deal with."

With such a far-reaching organisation as ours, we needed to take into account the many different types of clients visiting our website and calling us.

"Our enquiry centre and online contact form is the start of our process to guide potential customers towards solutions for their needs."

**You can visit our new look website at www.baptcare.org.au
Contact our customer enquiry centre on 1300 HOME HELP.**

A new model of support: NDIS



A day in the life of a local area coordinator

THE National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is Australia's biggest social reform since Medicare and Local Area Coordinators (LAC) are on the front line for these significant changes.

Cassie Hosking, LAC with Baptcare's Southern Tasmania Family and Community Service, explains the vital role LACs play in our disability services and the changes the NDIS has brought.

"To put it simply, a LAC works with an individual with a disability, their families or carers and their communities to get the best support possible for a person to live their best life," Cassie said.

"The role is very different from how it used to be under the Department of Health and Human Services, there's more emphasis on getting what the individual wants and needs now and linking them with services."

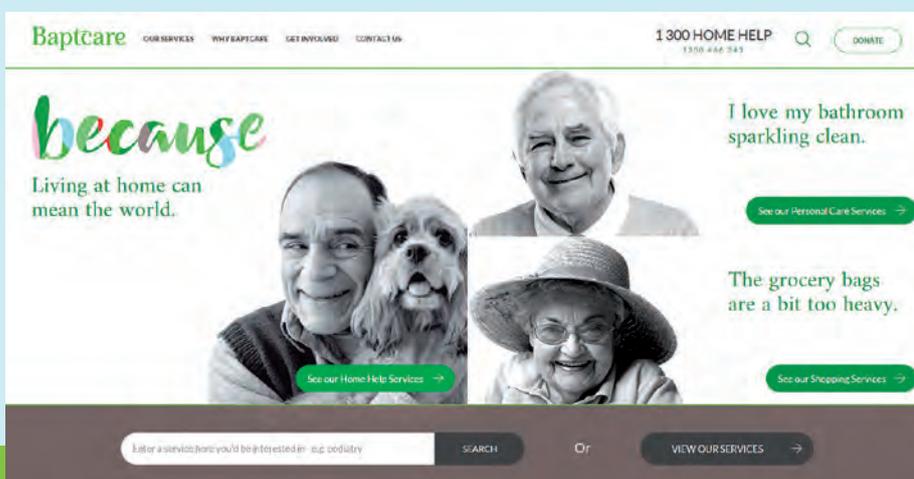
"It involves lots of assessment of what a particular individual's goals are and a lot of coordination on how to best to achieve these goals."

Having worked as a LAC under both the old and new models of disability support, Cassie has nothing but praise for the new system and believes it's the start of huge cultural change for people with disabilities.

"I switched over to the NDIS in June 2014, so I was right at the beginning on the ground level and had some influence on how things would look going forward which was very exciting," Cassie said.

"I really feel that there is a higher level of life satisfaction for NDIS participants and we can now be more innovative in what we can offer – they just have more choice in how their lives look."

"I believe Australia will become more inclusive for people with a disability and perceptions about people living with disability will change."



Our Sanctuary

SANCTUARY – Baptcare’s supported accommodation for people seeking asylum in Preston – held their second art exhibition of residents’ work in December.

The men at Sanctuary have fled desperate situations in the countries of their birth and many of them are suffering from the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder.

The art therapy service we provide at Sanctuary can have a unique role as an intervention tool with traumatised individuals.



Ravi* was unjustly imprisoned, tortured and sexually violated for four months in his home country because of his ethnicity. This has had a profound impact on his mental health.

He spent four years being moved around Australian detention centres and tried to take his life twice during this time.

He arrived at Sanctuary in Melbourne two years ago and now believes art therapy and poetry has helped save his life.

“When I came to Melbourne I had nothing and I was nothing, I thought I was zero,” Ravi said.

“I had been in Australian detention for four months and I couldn’t even speak English. I thought; how could I make anything?”

The group collaboration sessions are non-judgmental and invitational, with no pressure on participants to share stories and Ravi has felt his confidence grow in many ways.

“I never drew or painted in school and I didn’t think I could do it when I started, but every time you try something more and now I’ve painted maybe twenty paintings.”

“My English is improving too.”

Ravi’s paintings are bright, bold and beautiful with a sense of hope, the artist and poet is starting to feel more of these days.

“I still don’t know what my visa situation will be or what the future will bring,” he said.

“Sometimes I have nightmares and I feel very sad, but I have much more happiness than I did two years ago.”

***Names have been changed**





Ashburton welcomes new residents

IN 2014 a group of Ashburton residents decided to help people seeking asylum in Australia – the result is a joint project called Houses of Hope, which received its first tenants in March.

Local resident Bernie Pigdon and other members of his church group first began talking about how to support refugees after hearing a speech by Baptist Pastor and refugee advocate, Tri Nguyen.

“Tri was expressing his solidarity with those seeking asylum in Australia and spoke about how welcome he’d felt when he came to Australia in the eighties with his family,” Bernie said.

“That’s when we realised that for various reasons, be they political or economic, this openness has changed.

“In a community like Ashburton, you tend to only see those seeking asylum hidden behind the news media lens. We wanted the opportunity to engage with new people, show them support and welcome them to our community.”

When Baptcare approached Ashburton Baptist Church to promote the organisation’s Houses of Hope (HoH) project, this group of local members persuaded the church to commit resources to a partnership.

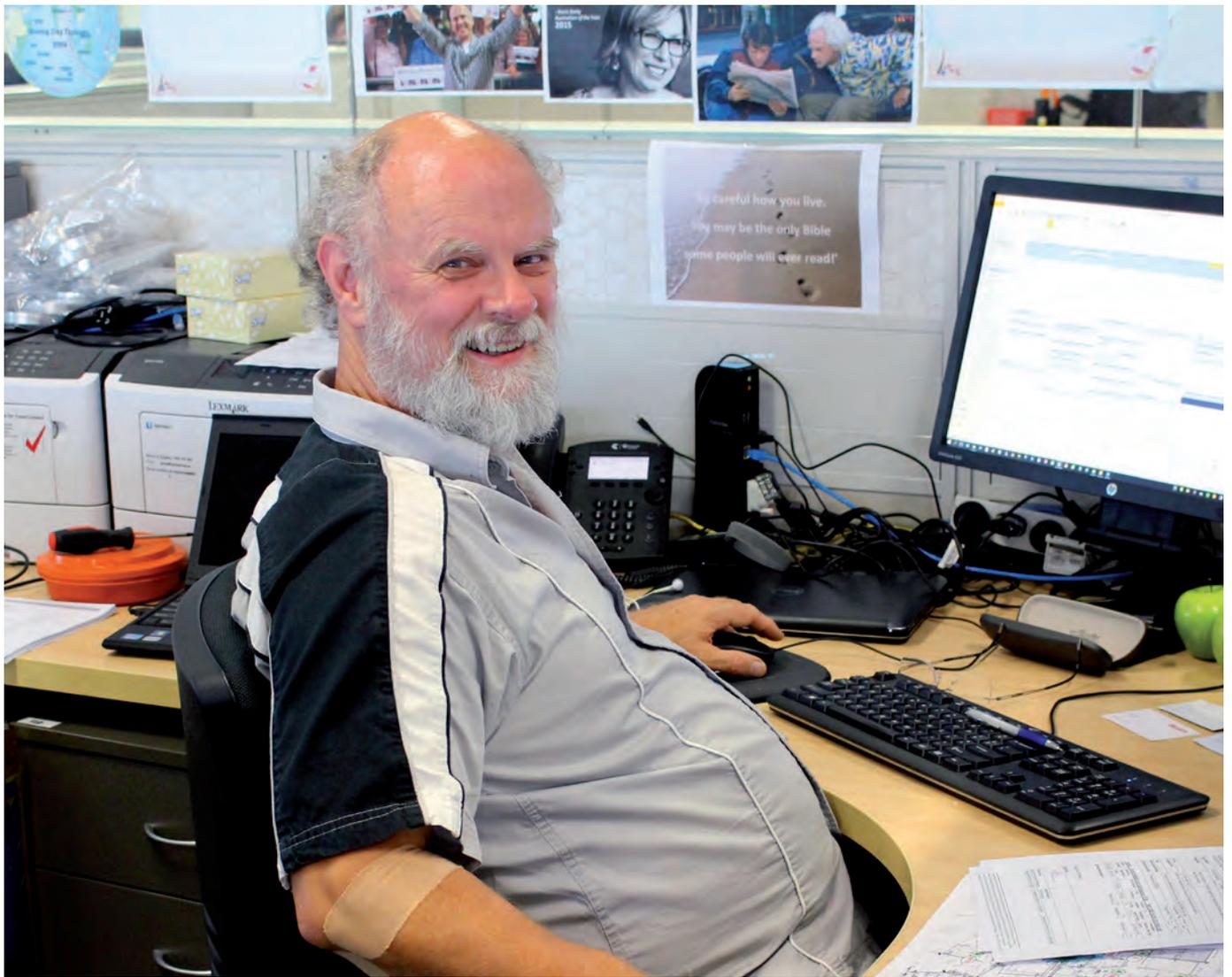
The HoH project, which has another residence in Burwood, was set up to assist the growing number of families and individuals with pending asylum visas that are not eligible for any income support or cannot afford safe housing and have recently been homeless.

“With our encouragement Ashburton Baptist Church provided Baptcare with a house. We felt they had the resources to link our tenants to the social services they desperately needed,” Mr Pigdon said.

Volunteer Ruth Buckmaster has been working closely with the new tenants and has been impressed with how the local community has pulled together to help their newest residents.

“Our new tenant has a school age child and to see how the school, the students and local volunteers rallied around to get our young student ready for school has been heart-warming,” Ms Buckmaster said.

“I hope this project will be an inspiration to communities, churches and non for profits to open their doors to help people in need.”



Alan Brook AOM

A member of our Baptcare family Alan Brook and his wife Barb have been awarded the highest honour in the land; the Order of Australia Medal.

Alan was recognised for 42 years of voluntary service to his community including Scouts Victoria, Heidelberg East Ivanhoe Uniting Church, basketball coaching, guide dog training and work with the indigenous community.

“I was a little embarrassed when I found out,” Alan said.

“It’s very humbling. For me, rewards are not something you get or receive; the reward is in what you give to others.”

Helping others has always been a part Alan’s life—his Minister father always encouraged their family to serve those in need in their community.

Alan and Barb’s shared passion for volunteering was how they first met and their children now continue the family tradition of community service.

“It makes me very happy to see my own children and other children I’ve volunteered with in the past go on to volunteer themselves.”

In his long career of civic service, Alan’s educational work with the indigenous community of Cairns stands out in his mind as his biggest achievement.

“I’ve always felt a strong connection with the indigenous community and this beautiful country.”

After 35 years working in information technology for large corporations, Alan joined the Baptcare team as an I.T. project manager four and a half years ago.

“I wanted to spend the later part of my career using my professional skills in an organisation that helps others,” he said.

“Things like helping one of our clients in a residential home come out of depression by getting her an iPad so she could have more contact with her son and his family in L.A. make my job at Baptcare worthwhile.”



Soprano steals the show

IT may not be Melbourne's Regent Theatre but the 2015 Peninsula View Christmas pantomime boasted accomplished opera singer, Pat Vivien Lal.

The former soprano with the Victorian State Opera Company and current resident of Peninsula View hit all the right notes at this year's pantomime; Cinderella.

Originally from Lancashire in England, Pat moved to Melbourne in 1962 and furthered her opera career here, having previously held the role of Eliza in *My Fair Lady* in London before Dame Julie Andrews.

"It was very nice to be able to open my mouth and sing and make an old fool of myself again," Pat said. "I was a bit anxious about learning all my lines because I have a touch of dementia you see, but everyone was very helpful."

Pat, who has been a resident at Peninsula View for just over 18 months, adored performing for all her friends and hopes she'll be called on again for next year's performance. "Well it's very fun to perform again after all this time. I really wouldn't recommend getting older, but if you do, I recommend a home like this."



Children's Christmas Party

The Baptcare Children's Christmas Party at Moonee Valley Racecourse at the end of 2015 was a truly magical day. Our annual party provides over 300 disadvantaged families with the opportunity to have some good old fashioned fun in the silly season.

What could be more fun than jumping castles, animal farms, face painting and hair spraying and getting physical with Kelly Sports. It wasn't all about the kids—Mums and Dads were treated to music from Simon Phillips and a delicious Christmas barbie kindly donated by Spotless.

Baptcare couldn't hold this annual event without the generous support of our sponsors and organisations/schools who donated toys for Santa's Workshop. We sincerely thank Laundry Solutions Australia, BankVic, Bunzl, Hirotec, Toyota, Carey Baptist Grammar school and students from Kilvington Grammar school for their help.

Norlane Integrated Community Project Construction



STOP PRESS

Baptcare is proud to announce that work has commenced at the former Isik College school site in Norlane. This is a project that will provide new affordable rental housing, aged care facilities and community centre for the use and benefit of the Norlane community.

Health, wellbeing and quality affordable living is being provided to enhance the lives of residents living in the area.

A coffee shop has been incorporated into the development to encourage interaction amongst residents as well as a playground for children to play. This development is an exciting and innovative addition to the Norlane community that will create jobs, a place to gather, and a place to meet.

We understand some people may have already completed training to make them eligible for employment in the Aged Care facility and we look forward to sharing the project with you.

There are a number of ways you can keep up-to-date with the project and its progress. If you have access to a computer and email you can subscribe to a project newsletter by emailing communications@baptcare.org.au. Or you can view our webpage at www.baptcare.org.au; scroll down to 'News' and click on 'Norlane-Baptcare Development Projects'.

Alternatively, we are happy to send a copy of the newsletter in the mail, simply register your name and address with Claire Alale on 03 9831 7321.

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