

Creating tranquil surroundings at Illawarra Diggers

The aged and disability sectors are working together to develop a sensory garden to transform an outdoor area into a place for relaxation for Keira Wing residents at Illawarra Diggers Aged and Community Care complex in Corrimal.

Greenacres Disability Services has been helping the elderly residents and staff to create the garden, which will include brightly coloured flowers, shrubs and trees, garden furniture, an herb garden, a bird bath and may soon even incorporate a chicken coup.

WEA and Greenacres Support Worker Colin McKenzie has designed the garden, with Bellambi Bunnings Activity Organiser, Maree Gilmour, donating plants,

pots and other resources to help with the project.

Illawarra Diggers CEO Peter Whittall said the aim of the garden was to transform the present outdoor area into a relaxing and welcoming place to sit, walk and take in the sensory aspect that the garden will provide.

He said one of the most enthusiastic workers in the sensory garden has been Josie, who is always involved in any projects happening at Illawarra Diggers.

"The garden has given Josie the opportunity to meet new people and build friendships while doing something she really loves," he said.

It has also been a "fun experience" for 30-year-old Greenacres supported employee Natalie Adams, from Thirroul.

"It will be a beautiful and relaxing place for the people who live here," she said. "I really think they will like it."

The regular Illawarra Diggers volunteers, in conjunction with the residents, will maintain the garden.





ILLAWARRA
DIGGERS
CARING FOR THE COMMUNITY'S AGED

NOVEMBER EDITION 2019

CEO's Message

Dear Residents and Families

I am writing this column having just come from our Remembrance Day service as well as another service I will describe later.

The Remembrance Day service, like ANZAC Day, is always a special event for our residents, families and staff. Remembrance Day, formerly call Armistice Day, fundamentally celebrates the ceasing of hostilities at 11am on 11/11/18 to halt The Great War. Over the years it has become a remembrance event for all those that gave their lives in the armed forces in service of Australia and of Australians.

At Illawarra Diggers we widen our remembrance a little further, as we also take this opportunity to remember those residents who passed away in the last 12 months. Our residents are part of our community, our family, and throughout their lives they have served their families and communities as well.

Today's service was well attended by residents, families and staff. Our special guests were our residents who are also ex-service personnel and they wore their medals proudly. We were also well supported by Ray Morgan of the Corrimal RSL Sub-Branch and Harry Bassett, also of Corrimal who is a Director of Illawarra Diggers. We are also grateful to Gwen on piano and Matt on the bugle as well as the Wollongong Cadets who provide the guard of honour.

Our Lifestyle Team do a great job of organizing the service and making it all run smoothly. Thankyou very much to all staff who support our residents today as well.

About 12 months ago we lost our longest residing resident Mr John Gardner. John lived with us here for 28 years. We decided to use the occasion of Remembrance Day to hold a small second service for John and for all the

residents who have passed away in the last 12 months.

We held our service on the deck outside between Caringbah and Woonona wings. The names of the 23 residents who passed away were read out to those gathered and then their names and photos were buried, along with Johns ashes, in a small memorial grave beneath the majestic shading branches of the turpentine tree. A minutes silence gave time to reflect on our departed friends.

Both our ANZAC and Remembrance Day services are open to all families and visitors so please feel free to attend and support this tradition of respect and remembrance.

Changing subjects, many will be aware that the Royal Commission into Aged Care has handed down its Interim Report at the end of October.

What the Commissioners have said in this report is that the aged care system needs a fundamental overhaul to make it deliver the services and quality care that older Australians and their family's need, and that people who work aged care want to provide.

This Interim Report laid bare their stories but also shows us the direction that aged care must move towards and brings a clear sense of purpose, focus on quality care, and a renewed focus on compassion and kindness. Illawarra Diggers agrees with this focus.

The instances of poor care and neglect we have seen through the Royal Commission and in its interim report are not acceptable.

The Royal Commission has been important to expose significant problems and challenges thought the aged care sector. Now we hope it will set the standard of what is required to ensure older Australians get the care they deserve.

If you or your family have any concerns about the care we are providing, please contact myself or a member of our care team.

Our residents and children from Pioneer Road Long Day Care ha



If you prefer or feel more comfortable, you can directly contact the following agencies for advice and support:

- Older Persons Advocacy Network: www.opan.com.au/advocacy or 1800 700 600
- Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission: www.agedcarequality.gov.au; 1800 951 822 or info@agedcarequality.gov.au

We at Illawarra Diggers value the reputation we have for providing excellent care to our residents and for supporting and informing their families. We remain committed to providing the highest quality care and are here to support you and discuss any queries or concerns you may have with the issues raised during the period of the Commission.

I will be away over the Christmas period with my family so I take this opportunity, on behalf of my self, the management, staff and Board of Directors of Illawarra Diggers, to wish you all a safe and wonderful Christmas.

Kind Regards

Peter Whittall - CEO

A Message from the Lifestyle Manager

Hello from the Lifestyle Team, this is my first addition of the quarterly newsletter since taking the position of lifestyle manager in July. It's been a very exciting time and a lot has been happening. We only have, a few weeks to go until Christmas is here with all its festivity. Our Christmas High Tea will be held on Saturday 16th December at 2.30pm. Invitations have gone out to ensure everyone has ample time to RSVP by the 6th December 2019. As has been the case in previous years, this event is always booked out and space in the main dining room is limited. So we are only able accommodate two guests per family.

Illawarra Diggers continues to build on and value Community relationships and we have cemented a strong connection with the Greenacres Connect Group. The group, who visit on Monday and Tuesday, is part of the Keira Garden project. We all know the value and benefits of being able to sit outside taking in the sun, the breeze and smells of a garden. These sensations are no different for a person with dementia. Gardening is a great way to be active and gives purpose to being outside. Garden spaces engage the senses providing those with Alzheimer's positive emotions, boosting energy, promoting sleep and providing safe walking and sitting places.

Everyone is aware of the fabulous ABC program 'Aged care for four year olds'. So here at Illawarra Diggers we've embraced the opportunity to bring seniors and kids together to form fun and build meaningful relationships. It's taken a little time to get up and running but our program with Pioneer Rd Long Day Care has now commenced. The four and five year old children visit fortnightly on Mondays between 10.00am and 11.30am. This Intergenerational bonding is good for everyone, and a great opportunity for both to learn new skills. It gives the child and the older adult a sense of purpose, the program is magical.

Ange Cass is a PhD ART student using collage to reconnect with past memories. Creative art plays an integral part in enhancing the lives of older people. Ange is building a strong relationship with those she is working with and she has is developing new ways in which her small group can express themselves and share their stories.

A very big thank you to the community groups who have come on board and embraced the opportunity to connect with our wonderful residents here at Illawarra diggers.

Best wishes

Vikki, Deb, Hannah, Sophie.

Having fun and forming meaningful relationships







REMEMBRANCE DAY
NOVEMBER 11



Staff Profile

VIKKI WILESMITH

I have worked in Aged Care for close to 19 yrs and my background is in Lifestyle and Dementia. I completed my degree in Dementia Care with the University of Tasmania in 2017, and I hope to pursue further study in Dementia in the future

I live in Wollongong, and I'm blessed with a wonderful partner, Kim, and we've been together for 12yrs now. He inspires me to be the best person I can be. Between us we have a large (and growing) blended family; six grown up children and partners and six grandchildren. Stella, not quite 2yrs, is our youngest addition and it's a joy to spend Fridays with.

We love taking trips away on the motor bike and as our family is scattered from Adelaide, Gold coast, Canberra and Wollongong, there is always someone to visit and some where to go.

I love red roses, collecting tea pots and cooking. I spend a lot of time knitting, for family and charity. At one stage in my life I had a flock of coloured sheep which, I kept for spinning wool. I've been a Parramatta Eels fan since high school and an Elvis fan since I was about 10yrs old. I love hearing other people's stories and sharing experiences.

As the newest member of the Lifestyle team, I am finding my feet and loving my new position. If we haven't met yet, pop down to the lifestyle office for a chat.

What are your views on the care of those with dementia?

Providing quality care for the person with dementia, in my view, requires not only a sound understanding of the disease and the trajectory of dementia, but in-depth knowledge of the person; their life story, their past and present self. Imagine trying to paint a picture of a

garden, but not knowing what a garden is. It's the same when caring for a person with dementia.

A person with dementia should be supported to continue to live a full life and participate more actively in society. They are entitled to receive person-centred care based on needs, values and choice.

Quality care requires support and active involvement from family members and carers, working together to make decisions about their care, especially at the end of life.

Finally, never forget there is a person behind the diagnosis of dementia who has the right to be respected and valued.

Do you have any tips for families dealing with putting their loved with dementia in care?

That's a difficult question. Too often, families begin this process from a position of stress, frustration and guilt. The person with Dementia usually goes into care when the primary carer/carers can no longer continue to care for them at home.

Firstly, be kind to yourself, you haven't failed or let your loved down.

Educate yourself about dementia and maintain a positive and realistic attitude towards the new care providers.

Get to know the staff in advance and see if your values and care expectations align.

Help caregivers get to know your loved one, by chatting about personal stories and life experiences.

Try to focus on the atmosphere rather than the décor. While it is understandable you want the very best for your loved one, don't focus on 'opulence'. Look at the environment, is it designed for Dementia? Does it have accessible safe outdoor spaces for walking, relaxing and sitting? Does it feel welcoming, friendly and happy?

Have staff, been specially trained in Dementia? Do they have the resources to meet the individual and unique needs of each person with dementia?

Consider all aspects of care. Does the facility support physical therapy, diverse and personalised activity programs, a religious, spiritual, cultural and social connections?

Should they visit regularly even if their family member doesn't recognise them?

Yes definitely. Families often find it difficult communicating with their loved one after a diagnosis of dementia, especially when they no longer remember relationships. Remember that the visit is about having time together and sharing what is now. The person with dementia may not remember you, or what transpired during the visit, but they will know that someone was there. Don't focus on the loss of the person. Focus on the person as you know them and the moments you can still share. Reminiscence is a wonderful way of connecting or reconnecting with someone who has dementia.

What lifestyle programs would you like to see introduced at Illawarra Diggers?

Promoting greater opportunities for socialising. I'd like to see increased social engagement, with different community groups like the relationship we share with the Greenacres connect group; such as an intergenerational program with a local pre-school.

Implementing lifestyle programs that are reflective of our residents past experiences, sharing of life's story and reminiscing which can be a very positive experience for everyone.

A key focus for me, is developing chore-based activities for those with dementia to encourage purpose and build self-esteem.

Build on our Volunteer programs to support spiritual and emotional care.

In your short time with Diggers what do you see as their strengths in aged care?

Diggers strength, in my view, is has a strong sense of community and resident focus. It's nice to be a part of an organisation whose philosophy is 'staff work in their residents' home, and not residents living in our workplace.'

I think there is a strong focus on residents person-centred care at Diggers. I like that staff and residents mingle, outside of carer/resident roles, with shared common areas encouraging 'normal' social interaction between staff and resident. Residents are encouraged and supported to have purposeful roles; raising and lowering of the flag, collecting the mail, recycling of cardboard and help setting up activities.

Why do you like working in aged care?'

I achieve real personal satisfaction from my work. Working in aged care provides me with the opportunity to meet a wide variety of older people. Providing support to older people, you can make a tremendous difference to their quality of life. It is a very rewarding career.

Do you believe there is still a stigma involving putting "parents in a home"?

Yes, I think there still is. There is a lot of negativity in the media about age care, which has contributed to people feeling skeptical and scared about choosing an age care provider. Coupled this with feelings of guilt and the angst of cultural, religious or family expectations the decision can be very overwhelming.

My Bachelor of Dementia Care degree has opened my eyes and change my thinking to the many ways I can support the quality of life of people living with dementia.

My knowledge, compassion and ability to advocate for the person with dementia, their specific needs and their families has increased giving me insight to the needs of people with dementia.

Finally, in providing the best possible care for the person with dementia, you need to step into their world not bring them into yours.

Father's Day at Diggers

