

104-year-old war veteran shares secret to a long healthy life

WORLD War II veteran David Nappers appeared in the pink of health as he celebrated his 104th birthday at the Illawarra Diggers Aged and Community Care in Corrimal.

Seeing Mr Nappers comfortably move around without a walker, converse coherently without a hearing aid, all the while staying healthy and active at the great age, left the guests in awe.

Mr Nappers, who said he'd never suffered from major sicknesses during his life, had words of wisdom for the young.

"Your health is the most precious thing. Keep away from drugs, cigarettes and drinking, you shorten your own life by being stupid," he said.

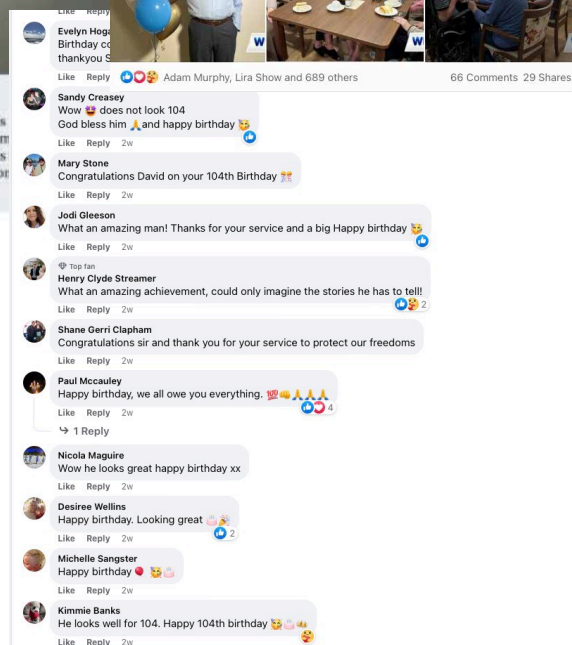
Mr Nappers himself as a man, most circumstances and challenges life.

"I was the First World War was followed by the Great Depression. It was not easy for our family at the time," he said.

Mr Nappers served in the Army during World War II and believes his time at the camps made him resilient and appreciative of everything in life.



WIN News Illawarra
October 24 at 3:28 PM
David Napper is one of the oldest living World War two veterans. He celebrated his 104th birthday in residential aged care today, surrounded by friendly staff and residents who only had kind words to say about him. We'll have the full story at 5:30pm #WINNews | Channel 8 & 80 (HD)



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104th birthday at the Illawarra Diggers Aged and Community Care in Corrimal.

Seeing Mr Napper comfortably move around without a walker, converse coherently without a hearing aid, all the while staying healthy and active at the great age, left the guests in awe. Mr Napper, who said he'd never suffered from any major sicknesses during his life, had words of wisdom for the young.

"Your health is the most precious thing. Keep away from drugs, cigarettes and drinking, you shorten your own life by being stupid," he said.

Mr Napper described himself as a rather plain man, moulded by the circumstances and the challenges life threw at him.

"I was born right after the First World War, which was followed by the Great Depression. It was not easy for our family at the time," he said.

Providing for a family with seven children was quite a task for his parents, Mr Napper said. "I remember we had to make do with pass me down clothes. We struggled quite a bit, but did as best as we could."

The 104-year-old jokingly said being one of twins meant he always got half of everything. Mr Napper served in the Army during World

War II and believes his time at the camps made him resilient and appreciative of everything in life.

"I've never expected too much and have always been satisfied with whatever I had. Even here at the aged care, I'm satisfied."

Mr Napper was born in Rockdale where he spent the first 100 years of his life.

"I used to work there too, I was involved in produce trade."

"When I turned 100, my son looked around for an appropriate aged care and thought this to be as good as he saw," he said.

Mr Napper celebrated his big birthday with his family on Sunday and with his friends from the nursing home the next day.

By Mercury journalist
Zaina M Sayeda

NOVEMBER 2022 EDITION



Happy 104th Birthday!



CEO's Message

Hello to all our residents, staff and families

Firstly I would like to thank everyone involved in helping to make Remembrance Day at Illawarra Diggers a special event again this year. As many of you will know, Illawarra Diggers was started in 1946 as a both short-term and longer term home for ex-servicemen. We are now a fully independent residential home, providing respite care and a permanent home for older men and women from across all parts of our community. However, we maintain respect for the ethos of both military and community service and, along with ANZAC Day, Remembrance Day remains a significant event for our Illawarra Diggers' community.

This year we were again very grateful to have our local cadets join us and contribute to the formal service.

They are always so professional and polite and are very warmly welcomed by residents and staff alike.

In recent years we have also broadened the way in which we observe Remembrance Day. We also take the opportunity to remember all of our residents who have passed away in the 12 months since our last Remembrance Day. These people have all served their families and their communities in many different ways and each one deserves our respect and to be remembered. In reading out their names on Remembrance Day, we keep them alive in our hearts and minds. It has been greatly appreciated by our residents and staff and lends another dimension to our Remembrance Day each year.

In this issue we also have some great photos in tribute to our resident David Napper. What a gentleman David is. He is liked and respected by all, he takes everything in his stride and it is our privilege to assist him to enjoy his life to the fullest.

It would be a rare correspondence from me in the last few years that does not mention COVID-19. We are very disappointed that again this year we are unable to open up our home for families and friends to share our Christmas events. When I was asked to review the pre-Christmas letter to families a few days ago I found that all I had to do was change the date to 2022 and it was the same letter as 2021, and 2020 before that. NSW Health have already started reporting an upsurge in Covid cases and we are building up PPE supplies again in preparation. So we can again hope that by this time next year we are able to welcome families in for Christmas concerts and meals. Regardless, we will work to ensure that all our residents feel loved, respected, safe and well with us here and that they are given every opportunity to enjoy this lead up the Christmas.



Kind regards

Peter Whittall
CEO



A Message from the Lifestyle Manager

Hi Everyone,

Firstly I would like to say thank you to the Cadets of the 26ACU Wollongong for attending Illawarra Diggers Remembrance Day Service. It is such an honour to have the Cadets contribute to the service with the Catafalque Party, laying of the wreath and reading the Ode. Also, thank you to Mr Robert Duggan, Corrimal RSL, Minister Matt Douglas and Barbara Douglas for your contributions to the service.

In October we celebrated a very special birthday, with David Napper turning 104. David attributes his long life to clean living, working hard and never smoking or drinking. As an ex-service man, David says his time in

the Army set him up for life, teaching him discipline and respect.

It is that time of the year when we start planning for Christmas and in the lead up there is so much to do. It's easy to get caught up in the hustle and bustle of shopping, parties and wrapping gifts. Here at Illawarra Diggers we find the best way to spread Christmas cheer is singing loud for all to hear; so this year, our choir will be performing for staff and residents. There will also be the Residents' Christmas party and a Christmas Picnic Day and of course Santa's visit; so there should be something for everyone to enjoy in the December calendar.

This year the January issue of Diggers Digest will highlight all the Christmas events, so keep your eye out for that.

In a blink Christmas will be upon us and we will all be making memories with our family and friends. We hope Christmas is fun, festive and full of sparkle for all of our Diggers family. Our warmest of wishes for a very merry and safe Christmas.

Merry Christmas from Vikki and the lifestyle team, Deb, Mel, Will & Donna.



STAFF PROFILE

Ashleigh Wilkinson

Hi. My name is Ashleigh Wilkinson. I have been employed by Illawarra Diggers to help organise and facilitate training for all the staff.

I was drawn to the role as I have a background in training and love to help people learn. Illawarra Diggers seemed like a really friendly and caring environment.

I really enjoy working with the aged community and the residents I have had the pleasure of meeting so far have been so lovely and welcoming. They have lots of amazing stories to tell.

This is my first job in aged care, but I would have to say from my short time here, I think it's important the residents feel safe, comfortable and well cared for.

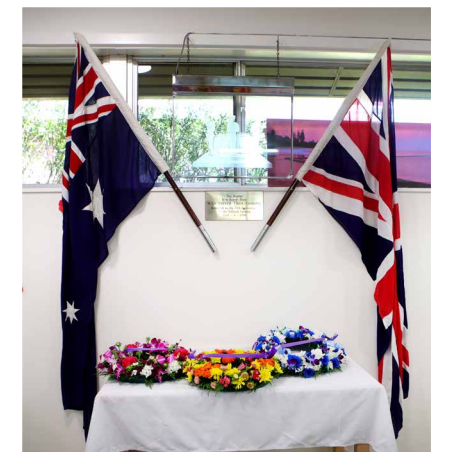
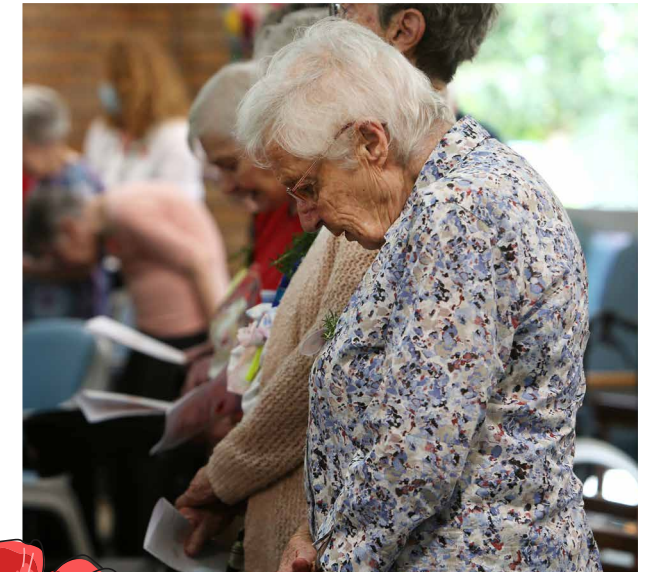
This is their home, and we are here for them so I think having well trained, caring and happy staff and also a clean and comfortable environment, with access to enjoyable activities are really important.

I am new to Wollongong, having just moved here from Sydney with my family, my husband and three children.

We are loving getting to know the area and look forward to spending many weekends at the beach over summer, which is one of our favourite places.



WE WILL
REMEMBER



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REMEMBER



Meet our Directors

Over the last two years we have been very fortunate to have attracted the voluntary services of six highly qualified and competent professionals. These directors, profiled below, join our three longer term, previously profiled board members, Chair Michael Grew and Directors Stephen Dawson and John Ireland AM.



Dr Rob Gordon is not a new director at Illawarra Diggers, but to date, he has not been profiled in our quarterly newsletter.

He joined the board in 2020 with a desire to contribute to improving the lives of older Australians.

"I believe Diggers is a safe, friendly and welcoming home for older members of the Illawarra community who are no longer able to live independently," he said.

"The aged care sector faces many challenges as

our population ages and the needs of aged care residents become more complex.

"These include significant workforce shortages and insufficient government funding, which places aged care providers under increasing financial pressure and represent risks for the sector as a whole.

Rob has worked as a health and aged care researcher at the University of Wollongong since 1996.

"I've been lucky to enjoy a long academic career," he said. "In that time, I hope I've been able to contribute within the discipline of health services research to improving the body of knowledge relating to rehabilitation, palliative care, mental health, and aged care."

Rob, who lives in Figtree, is married with three daughters aged 11, 15, and 17,

He is active in various local sporting and community activities, with his personal interests including running, watching AFL, and spending time with my family.



Rex Leighton is no newcomer to Illawarra Diggers. He served as CEO of the Corrimal complex for more than eight years from 2007.

His experience includes more than 38 years working primarily in management positions in aged facilities and health care services.

Rex believes currently, the environment for aged care providers is challenging.

"It is important that the focus is always on the best possible quality of care for residents and support of staff," he said.

"A key issue facing the aged care sector currently is the public perception which impacts the attraction of staff and desire of residents."

"Government has never funded the sector to the extent that it is sustainable.

"This will be ongoing as governments of both colours refuse to identify the real cost of care the community expects to be provided."

"The great strength of the industry is its resilience demonstrated by what it has achieved over many years despite Government underfunding and inappropriate indexation."

He said he has too many highlights in his career to recount.

"But his highlights include working with the wonderful people who are a part of the aged care industry, particularly those to whom we provide

care, hearing their stories are uplifting, and the many, many committed staff who give so much under tough circumstances."

Rex and his partner Ann live in Cambewarra Village in Shoalhaven and have a total of four daughters between them, four grandchildren, and one great-grandson.



Mary Carroll is Illawarra's one of the most recent appointments to the Illawarra Diggers Board.

Mary has worked in aged care most of her professional life and believes she has something to offer Diggers as a board member.

Her vision for Diggers is that it continues to be a resident focused service that delivers quality care and support to its residents, and consistently communicates with residents and their families on issues related to the resident in a timely way.

"The key issues facing the aged care sector include finding enough and the right people to work in this challenging industry and the increasing frailty of the older people entering residential aged care.

"There is also insufficient Government funding to ensure our older people get the quality and suitable care.

Mary has worked in the aged care industry in various roles since 1992 as a registered nurse and qualified teacher, has post-graduate qualifications in aged care, literacy and numeracy, and adult education.

Meet our Directors

Mary Carroll (cont)

She includes raising her three children into wonderful human beings (she admits to being biased) and working in an industry where truly inspiring things happen regularly.

Mary, who has eight sisters and a brother, is proud of her achievement in learning a second language (AUSLAN: deaf sign language).



Liz Thomas is another new Illawarra Diggers board member who applied as she is passionate about giving back to the community.

“I also saw this an opportunity to not only contribute but to learn from others,” she said.

Her vision for the future of Diggers is for it to continue to provide high-quality personalised care while remaining sustainable and positioning for growth.

She also believes one of the critical issues facing aged care is the lack of staffing and an adequate and sufficient government funding model.

Liz enjoys working as a Registered Training Organisation Manager, as part of the Vocational Program at the University of Wollongong (UOW) College.

“The highlight of my working life is changing people’s lives through education,” she said.

“I am inspired every day by our students who commit to making a difference through undertaking vocational studies.”

Liz, who lives in “Stunning Kiama” and is married with two teenage boys, admits to being a rugby union tragic (which is not made easy being married to a Kiwi).



Megan, who was appointed to the Illawarra Diggers board in June 2022, took up the role following her

desire to give back to the community and gain some insights that could assist her as a pharmacist. “It’s a perfect fit considering the natural transition of many of my customers to residential care,” she said.

Megan believes Illawarra Diggers could be a role model for other residential care facilities.

“My vision is for Diggers to keep up the high standard of providing a friendly, safe, caring, and inclusive environment, with top quality care, and to continuously strive for improvement.”

She believes there are several key issues facing the aged care sector, including sourcing sufficient numbers of skilled workers with a passion for residential care, fixing the gap between the cost of provision of high-quality residential care and the actual funding provided by the government and the looming advent of residential care of the highly demanding Gen X population (ie, her generation).

After training as a pharmacist in Sydney’s Western Suburbs, she gained the opportunity to purchase a pharmacy in Kiama.

“Sean, our new partner Todd and I have been truly blessed with a beautiful community of clients,” she said.

“They are a great bunch of people, intelligent, caring, and good-humoured, and as we all know, laughter is the best medicine.

Megan, who lives in East Corrimal with her Chilean husband and two teenage boys, joked that her boys are 50% South American and 100% drama. She enjoys bike riding, fishing and fine dining, crosswords, and holidaying with the family.



Director Greg Fisher was keen to join the board this year to continue to be able to contribute to the local community in his retirement.

“My vision for the future of Illawarra Diggers is that it continues its successful track record of caring for members of its community.

He sees several vital issues facing the aged care sector.

“There is insufficient funding for the sector to allow a higher level and increased range of services that our residents deserve,” he said.

“Another issue is the poor remuneration rates for our amazing staff who genuinely care about our residents. Overall, aged care has a problem of attracting young people to make aged care their career choice.”

Greg, his wife Allyson, and two daughters live in Corrimal, a place he has called home for almost 30 years.

Greg, who is retired, has worked in aged care for eight years.

“The highlights during my career include working with fabulous, highly committed staff with teams achieving high performance and working well together.”