

# SEASONS

KEEPING YOU CONNECTED

ISSUE **54**

Young Carers'  
Mentor Program

'Build a Bus'  
campaign

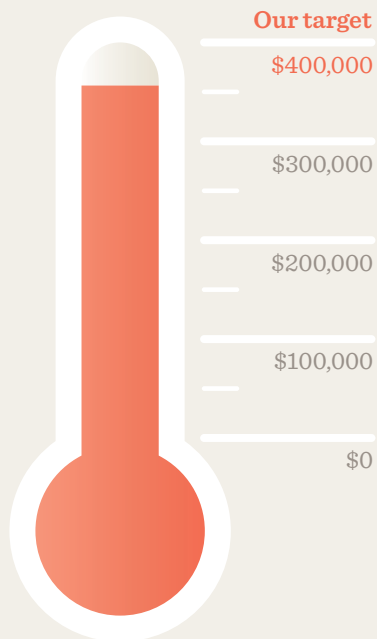
Donor profile:  
Walter Dodich

'Make a Splash'  
update



**VMCH VOLUNTEERS  
SUPPORTING OUR  
YOUNG CARERS**

## MAKE A SPLASH CAMPAIGN



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Help us  
change lives

## SEASONS

We welcome your feedback and  
contributions to Seasons.

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## CEO'S MESSAGE

**In this final edition of Seasons for 2016, it is appropriate to reflect on some of the year's achievements and say 'thank you' to you, our most valued donors and supporters. Without you, our organisation could not achieve many of the amazing things that we do to enhance the lives of the people we support.**

July 1 marked the first anniversary of the merger of Villa Maria and Catholic Homes, and we acknowledged the occasion with 'Foundation Day' celebrations across the organisation. As one unified organisation, our vision to be the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne's leading provider of high quality disability, specialist education, aged care and retirement living services is becoming a reality.

Throughout 2016, we have been reviewing and enhancing our service offerings. With the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) rollout in July and the upcoming Customer Directed Care (CDC) changes in early 2017, it is a time of great change in the disability and aged care sectors, but also a time of great opportunity.

In the property development space, one stand-out achievement this year was the opening of St Joseph's Mews in Hawthorn. These exceptional retirement living apartments offer residents a unique environment with a range of support services and wellbeing and entertainment facilities.

National Carers Week in October reminded us all of the astounding job 2.8 million unpaid carers do in our communities. Our Christmas Appeal this year focuses on our 'Young Carers' Mentor Program' which has lost its grant funding and will cease if funds are not urgently raised. The program connects young carers in the Hume region of Victoria with mentors who give them invaluable support and social opportunities. You can read more about this program on pages 4 and 5.



You can also read about our other fundraising efforts including our 'Make a Splash' campaign which culminated with a Charity Golf Day in October. Forty organisations contributed to the event and over 125 competitors enjoyed the perfect golfing weather. The event was a great success and raised \$80,000. These funds will go directly to the renovation of St Paul's College's warm-water pool, and we look forward to updating you about this exciting project in the new year.

I wish you all a safe and joyous Christmas.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Dillon', written over a light blue background.

**Michael Dillon**  
**Acting Chief Executive Officer**



## YOUNG CARERS' MENTOR PROGRAM

**The role of mentoring is simple, but its impact on young carers is immeasurable.**

Villa Maria Catholic Home's (VMCH) Young Carers' Mentor Program is the focus of our 2016 Christmas fundraising appeal. Grant funding for this unique initiative has run out and unless funds are raised quickly the program will cease.

Every child deserves the right to enjoy their childhood and adolescence, complete their schooling, and pursue their dreams. But, for hundreds of young people, caring for a loved one with a disability, physical or mental illness, achieving such goals is extremely hard.

The Young Carers' Mentor Program connects young carers in the Hume region with mentors who provide them with valuable support and social opportunities. Young carers often face social isolation and depression, and drop out of school so they can care for their family member at home. Some are as young as nine and have little family, community or financial support. Research indicates that, if they are not adequately supported, their own health and wellbeing can be seriously affected.

Cobram teenager, Kaitlin Hamilton cares for her mother who has Multiple Sclerosis and is confined to a wheelchair. Kaitlin has been her mum's carer since the age of 12. She helps her with personal care, household duties and medical appointments. Kaitlin has limited time to socialise with friends, play sport or enjoy the things most teenagers do. She dreams of becoming a paediatric oncology nurse.



Carers like Kaitlin greatly benefit from VMCH’s Young Carers’ Mentor Program. Since being matched with her mentor Marion Craig, 12 months ago, Kaitlin has enjoyed some much-needed ‘time-out’ from her caring responsibilities and support from an adult outside her family.

**“MARION AND I ARE VERY CLOSE AND I’M ABLE TO TELL HER ANYTHING THAT HAPPENS OR BOTHERS ME. I FEEL LIKE MARION IS A SECOND MOTHER TO ME AND IS ALWAYS THERE IF I NEED HER.”**

“Having a mentor is important for young carers as they face a lot of pressure and responsibility. They need a chance to just be kids. Being out and independent of home is a chance to feel special. They also have a chance to discuss issues that may be affecting them with someone neutral,” says Marion.



**UNPAID CARERS**  
AVERAGE **40hrs** PER WEEK



**10%** OF AUSTRALIANS ARE CARERS [68% ARE WOMEN]  
AROUND **1 IN 10** CARERS ARE UNDER **25\***

“As mentors, we are investing in the future of these young carers by providing them with much deserved support. A little investment can provide some real joy.”

\$40,000 is required to cover the salary of the program coordinator, Marion Rak, who recruits volunteer mentors, matches them with young carers, and oversees the program. It will also fund social events where the young carers can come together with their each other and their mentors for much-needed fun and relaxation.

**“ I WANT TO HELP SUPPORT CHILDREN WHO SUFFER FROM CANCER AND ARE ALSO CARING FOR A LOVED ONE,” KAITLIN SAYS.**

## SUPPORT

You can support young carers by giving to our Christmas appeal.

Visit [www.vmch.com.au/donate-now](http://www.vmch.com.au/donate-now) or call **1800 036 377**.

\* According to figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016.

## DANIELLE SAYS THANK YOU

**Danielle Burnet would face an impossible choice without the St Paul's College chaperoned bus service. She would have to decide which of her two sons, Sebastian, 9, and Charlie, 7, she could take to school.**

The boys have Multiple Sulphatase Deficiency, a debilitating condition that requires them to have 24-hour care. Because they are both in wheelchairs, they cannot both fit in the family car.

The mother of four shared her story during last year's fundraiser, the Build a Bus appeal, to raise enough money to buy a new bus for the school. The aim was to get even more students onto the chaperoned school bus service and to this wonderful school in Kew, run by Villa Maria Catholic Homes.

"If I didn't have the bus, I would only be able to take one child to school, which would be quite sad because I have seen the boys thrive on the bus and at school," she said.

When she shared her story, one that is also faced by other parents at the school, she was deeply touched by the outpouring of support. The campaign resulted in more than \$220,000 for the appeal to buy a new bus and cover running costs.

"I was incredibly moved at the response to the campaign. For people to read the article, to consider supporting and then to actually donate! Gosh, that's moving," she said.

"There are so many worthy causes out there and for a reader to feel enough to want to help care for not just my children but for all the angels our school bus carries, is humbling."

She wrote a message of thanks to everyone who donated to the appeal and we'd like to share it.

### DANIELLE'S MESSAGE

When you face a difficult situation in life that is out of your control, and life-changing in a hard way, it can be a lonely path to travel.

You instantly become isolated from the normal realm you have lived for so long. My family falls in to this category. But, so do so many people I have met in life.

Everyone has a story and everyone has experienced hardship.

That is why when the story of Build a Bus came about, I was deeply moved at the response to the campaign.

Our community is standing by our kids and I'm not just thankful for that I'm incredibly proud.



**BIG THANKS  
FROM THE  
BURNET FAMILY.**

## THANK YOU

**Special thanks to these generous supporters of the Build a Bus campaign:**

The Collier Charitable Foundation  
The New York Lap4Life Relay, Lisa Buxton and Ariel Lakman  
St Columba's College, Essendon  
The Pamela and Lorenzo Galli Foundation  
Br Gerard Trust  
The 2015 Dinner & Art with Heart fundraising evening



## A PLACE AT THE TABLE FOR EVERYONE

**Whenever we attempt to read the signs of the times it is helpful to listen to young people and the elderly ... The elderly bring with them memory and the wisdom of experience, which warns us not to foolishly repeat our past mistakes. Young people call us to renewed and expansive hope, for they represent new directions for humanity and open us up to the future. (Social Justice Statement, 2016-17, p.16)**

Each year Australia's Catholic Bishops issue a social justice statement and this year they are asking for "a place at the table" for our ageing society.

The statement highlights the significant contribution older people make to the life of their communities and recognises the important role they play in society.

The statement is called, 'A Place at the Table: Social Justice in an ageing society'.

Villa Maria Catholic Homes (VMCH) was proud to help launch the Australian Catholic Bishops' Social Justice Statement for 2016-17 at one of its aged care communities recently.

A joint VMCH and Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne (CAM) launch of the statement was held at St Catherine's Residential Aged Care, in Balwyn, in September.

The event included a liturgy led by Melbourne Auxiliary Bishop, Mark Edwards, OMI, and Episcopal Vicar for Social Services, Fr Joe Caddy, and more than 40 residents at St Catherine's also attended.

The service was also attended by VMCH Board Chairman, Bill Scales, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Michael Dillon, Residential Services General Manager, Geraldine Webster, Director Catholic Social Services Victoria, Denis Fitzgerald, and St Bridget's Parish Priest, Fr Dennis Rochford.

VMCH Board Chairman, Bill Scales, said the social justice statement contained a timely and important message.

"It's critically important that we understand that everybody in society has a role to play. Everybody has a dignified life to lead and what the church is reminding everybody, both in the secular community as well in the religions community, is about the dignity of people as they're ageing," he said.

VMCH Acting CEO, Michael Dillon, also applauded the Bishops' decision to highlight older Australians in this year's statement.

"We welcome the Bishops' emphasis on older people, and the statement's recognition of the increasing aged population, the role they have to play in Australian life, either through employment or engagement at a community level and the need to support them during hardship," he said.

VMCH Residential Services General Manager Geraldine Webster, praised the timing of the statement.

"It is a privilege to provide care and support for older people in our community. With Australia's population aged over 65 years expected to double over the next 40 years, the need to offer them compassionate, high-quality support and care is more important than ever before," she said.

### LEARN MORE

The 2016-2017 Social Justice Statement, called, 'A Place at the Table: Social Justice in an ageing society', can be downloaded from the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council website:  
[www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au](http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au)



## VMCH CONNECTIONS: WE TWO

**Jane Parsons is the Pastoral Care Worker at Shanagolden Retirement Village and Aged Care in Pakenham. Father John Readman is a Shanagolden resident, who celebrated his 90th birthday and 60 years as a Priest this August. Together, they provide spiritual and emotional support to over 100 people.**

### JANE

My role at Shanagolden is to be a listening presence and bring spiritual and emotional support to the residents.

One day, when I was with one of the residents, her daughter came to visit. She had known me when I was nursing and said, "I knew I would run into you someday, nursing somewhere." "I'm not nursing anymore," I said. Before I could continue her mother interjected, "Yes you are, you are nursing our souls."

There's no typical working day for me. I don't have a set program as what occurs overnight can dictate the flow of the next day. A resident might be made 'palliative', might even be dying, and this will direct my activities.

There are some regular tasks I do like organise weekly Masses, 1:1s with residents, parish meetings, and conducting various groups such as Spiritual Meditation; Advent Reflection; Grief and Loss.

I first met Father Readman at a morning tea at the Village three years ago. I had heard a "Priest"

was moving in, so I introduced myself. I had never formally met him before, but had seen him around the Parishes as he sometimes did relief work. What sticks in my mind is that he always finished Mass with a joke - he always remembered the punch-lines.

Father can be definite in what he wants. He supports me in my role 110%. He often gives me books to read for "spiritual nourishment." He is a guiding light, and very approachable and non-judgemental. He has a quick sense of humour, is extremely generous and giving of his time.

He's actively involved with both the Aged Care and Village residents. He visits all the new Village residents, regardless of religion. He is an endless source of energy and inspiration and has given me confidence and spiritual direction.

### FATHER READMAN

Life is fantastic at Shanagolden. There's a lovely spirit here. People are relaxed; their life's work is done. I've lived in lots of communities, and in many ways, this is the best.

I was born in Shepparton, and then my family moved to the Mallee to take up a soldier settlement farm during the height of the Depression. There's a great spirit in the Mallee. Once you live there, it never leaves you. I still call myself a 'Mallee boy.'

In my twenties, I entered the Corpus Christi Seminary in Werribee and was ordained in 1956. Soon after, I moved to Gippsland and became the Director of Catholic Education for the Diocese of Sale. We had very little resources back then - it was a PR job, more than anything. After 18 years in that role, I relocated to Narre Warren and headed up the parish.

I moved into Shanagolden Village just a few years ago. I love it here.

As the resident priest, I conduct Mass at the Village twice a week, and am called upon to anoint people, both in the Village and the aged home next door. I spend a lot of time with the residents and they've become like family to me.

I work closely with Jane. She's marvellous at what she does. She is very kind and a wonderful listener. She also has a great sense of humour. I can't speak highly enough of her. I follow her around like a puppy, really.

We're a good team - I'm not sure how it works, but it just does. I know God has a hand in it.



## INJURY FAILS TO STOP MARATHON DAD

**Walter Dodich has raised more than \$10,000 for one of our great causes. What is even more impressive is that he ran a half marathon with broken ribs to raise the money.**

Walter (pictured below right with his son, Stefan, and fellow half marathon runner Peter) says his motivation is Stefan, who attends Villa Maria Catholic Homes' specialist school St Paul's College. He raised money for the major VMCH fundraiser, the Make a Splash campaign, to help pay for the upgrade of the school's warm-water pool.

The father-of-three's half marathon preparations were going well until he broke two ribs during a vigorous game of soccer.

"I sort of got airborne, and landed on my ribs," Walter recalled.

He was in a lot of pain, had to stop training, but he refused to pull out of the half marathon that was part of the Melbourne Marathon on October 16.

"Nothing was going to stop me, I wasn't going to pull out, people had donated money. I thought I have got to do it," he said.

"The last three to four kilometres was pretty tough. I wanted to stop, but I kept thinking, 'I'm doing this for Stefan, come on keep going'."

Stefan, 8, was born with lissencephaly, a rare brain condition that results in significant neurological impairment affecting his speech and mobility. He also requires a wheelchair.

Walter says Stefan is a pretty happy kid, despite his challenges. The water is one of Stefan's favourite places and he uses the school's warm-water pool each week.

**"THE WATER IS A PLACE HE CAN ACTUALLY FEEL FREE AND MOBILE FOR ONCE. HE'S NOT CONFINED TO A CHAIR OR ANYTHING IN THAT POINT IN TIME," WALTER SAID.**

While Walter's efforts were pretty awesome, he says the real heroes are the teachers at St Paul's College.

"My wife and I can't thank the school enough. We're both very appreciative of what they have done for us," he said.

"The caring side of the school is amazing ... the time and effort that these teachers put into our children, they're pretty special people."

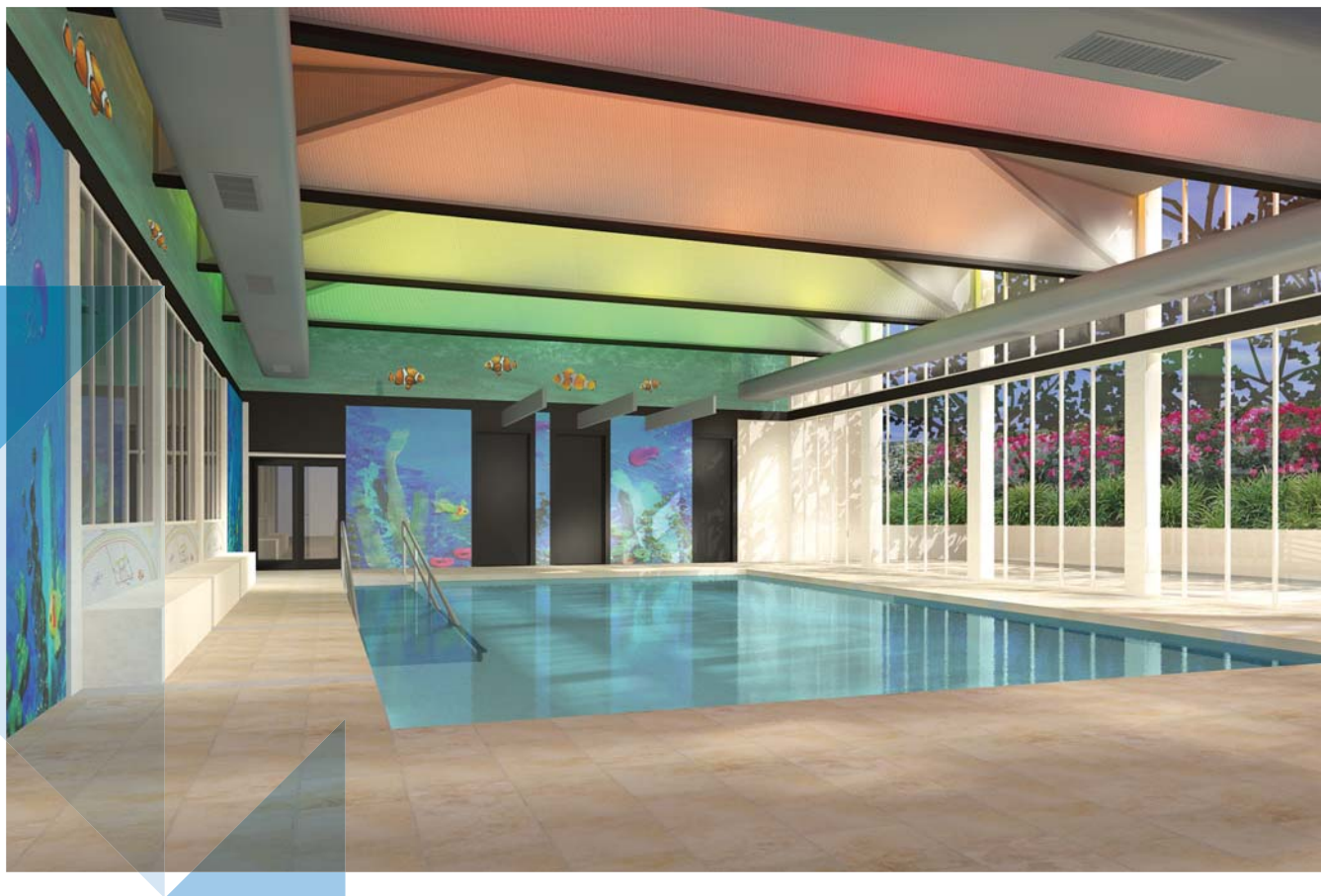
Walter also wanted to say a special thank you to his half marathon running partners Peter Gillson and Will Russell.



## HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE

VMCH is committed to working in partnership with people of all ages and abilities to help them achieve their goals and dreams, remain connected to their communities and enjoy their independence.

If you would like to donate to our **Make a Splash** appeal, please contact our donations team on **9926 2412** or **9926 2413**.



## POOL DREAM HITS MILESTONE



**Melbourne turned on stunning spring weather for the VMCH Charity Golf Day at the Southern Golf Course in Keysborough on October 14. 122 players, across 31 teams, enjoyed the perfect golfing conditions.**

The results of the Ambrose tournament were close with the team from m3property winning perpetual trophy honours. Catholic Church Insurance's team placed second and the team from V-Arc Architects secured third place.

This key VMCH fundraiser raised \$80,000 for our 'Make a Splash' appeal. This is an outstanding result and the highest amount we have ever raised through a golf charity event. All funds will go directly towards the renovation of the warm-water pool at our specialist school, St Paul's College in Kew.

This unique and much-loved pool that has been used by children and adults with a disability since the 1970s, and is now in desperate need of renovation.

**"WE WANT TO TRANSFORM THE POOL INTO A MODERN, STATE-OF-THE-ART FACILITY THAT CAN BE ENJOYED BY PEOPLE OF ALL ABILITIES FOR DECADES TO COME," SAYS VMCH'S ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER MICHAEL DILLON.**

"We believe everyone has the right to experience the joy and therapeutic benefits of water."

The pool at St Paul's College is special because it is accessible to people of all abilities and has equipment like hoists that assist people with even the highest needs to get into the water. Passionate and dedicated VMCH staff also run water therapy programs in the pool.

The reality is that hundreds of people we support could never access a swimming pool if the St Paul's College pool did not exist.



## THANK YOU

Thank you to all our wonderful corporate sponsors, prize givers, supporters and golfers for making the Charity Golf Day a huge success. In particular, we acknowledge the support of our **Platinum sponsor Aces Health** and **Gold sponsors Grant Thornton, Reflex Technology Group, Cura Health, Choices Flooring, and Maxxia.**

**“ OUR MAKE A SPLASH CAMPAIGN HAS RAISED \$353,000 AND WE ARE THRILLED BY THE COMMUNITY’S RESPONSE SO FAR,” SAYS MR DILLON. “ HOWEVER, WE STILL NEED \$47,000 TO MAKE OUR POOL DREAM COME TRUE.”**

## VISION

Help us achieve our target and make our pool dream a reality.

To donate to this worthy cause call **1800 036 377** or visit our website **[www.vmch.com.au](http://www.vmch.com.au)**

