

Knowledge is power for carers

When Kate's husband, Jerry, was diagnosed with dementia, she didn't know how to help him.

Jerry's behaviour was changing. Life became increasingly difficult. They found themselves arguing, frustrated and not knowing how to adjust to this change in their lives. "I thought our marriage was falling apart," Kate said. "I just didn't understand the triggers for his behaviour."

Reaching out for help

One afternoon while visiting Frankston library, Kate saw the Alfred Health Carer Services sign and decided to cross the road and knock on the door.

She spoke to a carer support worker who helped her understand that feelings of confusion and frustration were to be expected after a dementia diagnosis.

"I felt better right away," Kate said, "everything I said to her, all my reactions, she told me were natural."

The carer support worker visited Kate and Jerry at home to



start talking about the types of assistance available. Kate wanted to learn more and enrolled in Creative Ways to Care, a seven-session course for carers of people with dementia.

The course is designed to help carers and family members discover ways of using everyday activities to connect and share meaningful time with the person with dementia.

"The program was mind-blowing," Kate said. "I went in knowing nothing about dementia, and came out with so many tools and strategies that have made such a difference to our lives."

By connecting with other people in similar situations, the course helps carers to build relationships with each other and often these grow into their own personal support network.

It's ok to take a break

After participating in Creative Ways to Care, Kate also realised she needed to look after herself more.

She decided to attend a retreat in Daylesford, where carers took part in mindfulness and tai chi workshops. These types of activities offer an outlet from the demands of caring and expose carers to new ways of managing their own stress and help maintain



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Carer South News is published quarterly by Alfred Health Carer Services for carers who live in Melbourne's Southern Region.

24 hour Carer Support and Respite



1800 052 222

(freecall except from mobile phones)



Alfred Health
Carer Services
Caulfield Hospital
260 Kooyong Road
Caulfield VIC 3162



Sign up for Carer South News via our website
www.carersouth.org.au



Service providers can request multiple copies by emailing
info@carersouth.org.au

We encourage carers, friends and families to tell us your stories so we can listen to what is most important to you and perhaps share them with others in our community. Phone us on **9076 6439** or email info@carersouth.org.au



Alfred Health Carer Services acknowledges the traditional Aboriginal owners of country throughout Victoria. We pay our respects to them, their culture and their Elders both past and present.



Our organisation values diversity and is committed to providing an accessible service and a safe and respectful environment for our staff and clients.

▶ a healthy caring relationship.

Kate has maintained relationships with others from the Daylesford retreat and meets monthly with local carers who participated in the Creative Ways to Care course.

"It's great how we continue to help each other, give and get support in our grief," she said.

"It is a natural relationship because you go into other parts of their lives as well and you become good friends. You see what is happening to others, and learn from it," Kate added.

Sharing stories and experiences with other carers who understand the demands and frustrations of caring can help sustain positive relationships with both the person you care for and family members.

Accepting support

Kate now receives home cleaning services through Jerry's care package. As part of Jerry's care plan she has selected an aged care facility that offers respite, and is working with Jerry's doctor to help manage his transition to respite when the time comes.

Kate's advice to other carers is to work with carer support staff to set up the right services. She believes that education is invaluable to manage the transition to caring and recommends carers seek out education opportunities.

"Carer Services helped the whole family, not just me," Kate said. "We were at sea, and because I am confident in what I am doing, I don't need to discuss all the details with the rest of the family anymore, just the important bits."

Names have been changed for privacy.

If Kate's advice resonated for you, and you are interested in speaking to other carers, download the carer support group brochure from www.carersouth.org.au.

Also, the Creative Ways to Care course is offered four times per year. The next course begins on 26 September 2018.

To enroll, or to learn more please call Alfred Health Carer Services on **03 9076 6150**.

Shining a light on caring

They say the only guarantees in life are death and taxes. Ask any carer and they will add *change* to that list. Changes in health and changes in services can be constant.

That's why the Victorian Carer Strategy is so important.

In July, the Victorian Government launched their plan for carers – *Recognising and Supporting Victoria's Carers: Victorian Carer Strategy 2018-22*.

It promises greater access to support groups, financial services and transport, and better identification and help for young carers. The plan was developed following wide spread consultation with carers

across Victoria and had input from services that work with them.

It will allow carers more opportunities to be physically and mentally healthy, and aims to improve access to education, employment and peer-led support programs.

The Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, Martin Foley and Parliamentary Secretary for Carers and Volunteers, Gabrielle Williams, spoke with commitment about the new plan, which also includes the provision of more than \$350,000 to promote carer support at GP clinics.

This is a huge win for carers like Kate (you can read her story on our front cover) who cares for her

Dementia in My Community: join us in Rosebud

Come along to a morning of free entertainment and dementia education!

The Peninsula Dementia Action Group is hosting Dementia in My Community on Wednesday 19 September. The morning will begin at 10am with presentations, information and stories from local community members.

You will be able to ask lots of questions and meet other people who care for someone with dementia.

Morning tea and lunch will be provided. To enroll, or to learn more please call **03 9076 6150** or email info@carersouth.org.au.

September is Dementia Awareness Month

Did you know that more than 1.2 million Australians are involved in the care of someone living with dementia?

Dementia is recognised as the single greatest cause of disability amongst older Australians. Common types of dementia are Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, Huntington's and alcohol-related dementia.

Held every September, Dementia Awareness Month aims to encourage all of us to be more dementia aware and create communities where people with dementia are supported to enjoy a better quality of life.

We all come into contact with someone who is

living with dementia at some time in our life. It may be a family member, a friend, neighbour or someone in our extended community. Are you interested in learning more about living well with dementia?

There are a range of free events running throughout September that you can attend. You can easily find an event near you by visiting www.dementia.org.au/events.

Or, to begin a conversation about support, call Alfred Health Carer Services on **1800 052 222**.



husband Jerry. Kate expressed her frustration at the lack of information available at doctor's clinics and the missed opportunity to link carers into support services right from the beginning.

"At the time Jerry was diagnosed, there wasn't anything in the doctor's waiting room about support for carers. It would have been really helpful to get that information right from the start."

Acting Manager of Alfred Health Carer Services, Melanie Hill said the strategy was a fantastic investment in the future of all Victorians.

"At some point in our lives, we will all care for another person or have care needs. This strategy recognises the importance of caring

and keeps carers in the forefront of Victorian government policy," she said.

"The Victorian government has a long standing tradition of supporting carers. It's a great base for carers to receive ongoing support in Victoria when many other service systems 'for the person they support' are changing, like NDIS and My Aged care. This strategy lets carers know there's a vision for the future," Melanie added.



To access a copy, go to www.2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/policiesandguidelines/Victorian-carer-strategy-2018-2022

Dementia education

Receiving a diagnosis of dementia is often a shock, but can sometimes be a relief. It explains why certain things have been happening and confirms that something is wrong.

Most people associate dementia with memory loss, but that's not always the case. It can be helpful to think of a dementia diagnosis as a bit like a cancer diagnosis. Different cancers will have different symptoms, requiring different treatment. It's the same for dementia. There are over 70 different diseases that cause dementia.

Alfred Health Carer Services promote and deliver a range of courses for families to attend to help understand the symptoms of dementia and to start learning about how you can respond to the changes and help the person you care for.

Alfred Health Carer Services dementia courses:

Creative Ways to Care

Starting 26 September 2018

Carers tell us this course is life-changing! Over a seven session

course, family members learn strategies and activities to keep communication open and keep enjoyment in your relationship.

What is Dementia

25 October 2018

This is an introductory workshop for carers and family members following a dementia diagnosis. It will provide an introduction to dementia and its causes, symptoms, stages and the typical changes that may occur.

Dementia and Caring

Starting 14 November

Presented by Dementia Australia, this three-part course is designed

for carers who may be struggling with the changes in their life and relationships since diagnosis.

Please call Carer Services on **03 9076 6150** for more information and to book into these extremely valuable and free sessions.

Dementia Australia course:

Living with Dementia

This is a flexible four or six week education course for couples following a recent dementia diagnosis. This course will be held in Frankston throughout November and December.

Please call Dementia Australia on **1800 100 500** for more information.



Just ask, R U OK?

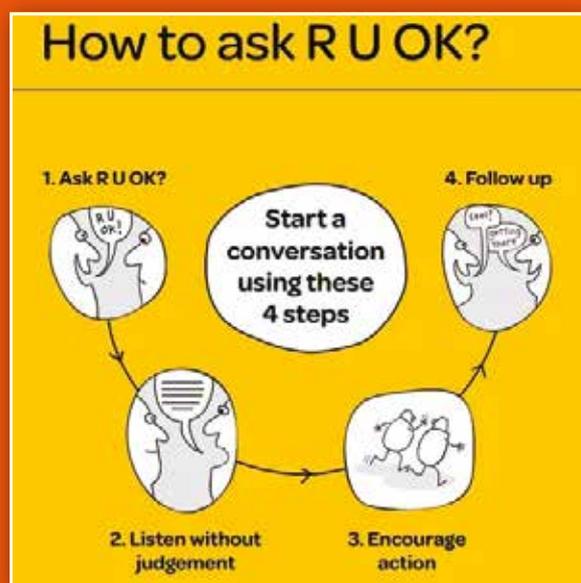
This simple question can make a big difference, or even save a life.

R U OK? Day is a national day of action for suicide prevention. It's a good reminder that any day is the day to ask, "R U OK?" and support the people around us who may be having a hard time or actually experiencing mental health issues.

So, on Thursday 13 September, take a moment to ask your neighbour, your local shopkeeper, or even yourself – "R U OK?"

If you're a carer, reach out, make a phone call and take time to care for yourself.

Alfred Health Carer Services offers 24-hour support and respite for carers, and run a number of wellbeing workshops to help carers manage the pressures and frustrations that can come up when caring for someone.



Get confident and make sense of the NDIS

Come along to a free NDIS information session! Alfred Health Carer Services invites carers to join us for a presentation on how to prepare for the NDIS and feel confident within the new disability system.



Carers who have attended these sessions tell us they feel better equipped to complete NDIS paperwork, and that they have a greater understanding of how to access the information they need.

If you would like to attend any of the sessions, please call **03 9076 6150** at least a week before your preferred date.

Tuesday 18 September, 10am – 12pm, Alfred Health Carer Services Frankston, 51 Playne Street, Frankston

Thursday 20 September, 10am – 12pm, Alfred Health Carer Services, 260 Kooyong Road, Caulfield

Tuesday 25 September, 10am – 12pm, Dandenong Council, Level 2 Lonsdale Street, Dandenong

Tuesday 13 November, 10am – 12pm, Alfred Health Carer Services Frankston, 51 Playne Street, Frankston

Thursday 15 November, 10am – 12pm, Dandenong Council, Level 2 Lonsdale Street, Dandenong

Tuesday 20 November, 10am – 12pm, Alfred Health Carer Services, 260 Kooyong Road, Caulfield

Local National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) news

La Trobe Community Health has been appointed as the new Local Area Coordinator for Greater Dandenong, Casey and Cardinia councils and will now work with the National Disability Insurance Agency to help prepare for the roll-out of the NDIS in these areas.

Local Area Coordinators are there to help people with disabilities develop an NDIS plan and connect with local support services.

Contact your Local Area Coordinator:

Brotherhood of St Lawrence:
1300 275 6347

For people living in Port Phillip, Stonnington, Glen Eira, Bayside, Kingston, Frankston and Mornington Peninsula.

La Trobe Community Health:
1800 242 696

For people living in Greater Dandenong, Casey and Cardinia.



Upcoming events

We would love you to look after yourself and come along to one of our upcoming events!

If you would like to attend, please call **03 9076 6150** or register at www.caresouth.org.au. Events can be found under the *Who do you care for?* tab.

Please note, if the person you support has an approved NDIS plan, you are not eligible to attend these events.

September

Self-care through Tai Chi and Mindfulness

Explore how the gentle movements of Tai Chi and the practice of mindfulness can sustain you in your caring role. This is a three-session course, and single sessions are not available.

When: Tuesdays 11, 18 and 25 September, 10am–12.30pm

Where: Longbeach Place Neighbourhood House, Chelsea

October

Carers Get Frustrated Too

This workshop will explore why we get frustrated and how to manage these feelings to make positive changes

When: Thursday 25 October, 10am–12.30pm

Where: Classic Residences, Brighton East

November

Self-care through Tai Chi and Mindfulness

Explore how the gentle movements of Tai Chi and the practice of mindfulness can sustain you in your caring role. This is a three-session course, and single sessions are not available.

When: Thursdays 8, 22 and 29 November, 10am–12.30pm

Where: Education Centre Lecture Theatre, Caulfield Hospital, Caulfield

Dealing with Carer Stress

Learn practical tools and tips so you can care for yourself while caring for another. This is a three-session course, and single sessions are not available.

When: Thursdays 22 and 29 November and 6 December, 10am–1pm

Where: Old Cheese Factory, Berwick

Mental Health Month 2018: focus on young people

Not so long ago, mental health wasn't something people talked about openly. This is despite the fact that most of us will have some experience with mental health issues, either directly or because someone we love is struggling.

Thankfully, this has now changed as more people recognise that mental illness does not discriminate and that community-wide awareness and action is the key to supporting good mental health and breaking down stigmas.

Mental Health Month 2018 is running from 7 October to 6 November and has its eye on young people, particularly those between 16 to 25 years of age. People in this age group are experiencing major life changes, and one in seven will experience a mental health condition during this time.

This can lead to a wide range of social and physical consequences, including problems with alcohol and other drugs, low self-esteem,

risk-taking and anti-social behaviour, school-drop-out and unemployment, and an increased risk of suicide.

Vanessa Robertson, Mental Health Program Manager at Alfred Health Carer Services said Mental Health Month is an important initiative that helps drive awareness and understanding about mental health.

"Mental Health Month encourages people to think about their mental health and wellbeing, regardless of their lived experience of mental illness," she said.

"Young people are particularly vulnerable, and as a community we need to understand the pressures they are facing, and take steps to help them."

Alfred Health Carer Services offers support for young carers under the age of 18, who are at risk of disengaging from education. If you are a young carer, or know someone who is, you can call **1800 052 222** to speak to a carer support worker.



The Mental Health Foundation of Australia will be holding a series of forums throughout Mental Health Month. Visit their website to find a forum near you, or keep in touch with your local council for information about activities and supports in your area.

Blokes care too

Anyone can become a carer, however in Victoria only 30 per cent of carers are male. Men are often reluctant to reach out for help, and as a result, it can be harder for them to connect with other men in a similar situation.

That's why Alfred Health Carer Services recently partnered with Dementia Australia to offer a men-only workshop about caring for a person with dementia, called Blokes in a Caring Role.

The course explored the emotional side of caring and

participants had the opportunity, often for the first time, to speak with other men going through similar situations.

We spoke with John, who cares for his wife Margaret, about his thoughts on participating in Blokes in a Caring Role.

Can you tell us a little bit about your experience as a carer?

I became a carer when my wife was diagnosed with Parkinson's in 2006, and later with Dementia in 2015.

In the beginning, my role as a carer was very straightforward.

I was managing medication and attending medical appointments with my wife. Over the years, my role increased and in 2015 I retired from full-time employment to become a full-time carer. My role as a carer now includes ensuring her wellbeing, running and maintaining a household, and trying to have a (very limited) social life.

What was the most valuable part of the course?

Without a doubt the most valuable insight for me was understanding and accepting that carers are not superhuman and we all need support!

A new face in the team

In this issue we introduce **Nicole Oliver, Communications Officer at Alfred Health Carer Services.**

What is your role at Alfred Health Carer Services?

I joined the team in May this year, in the role of Communications Officer. I oversee the Carer South website, newsletters (including this one!) and all of our brochures. I will also be involved in upcoming carer stories and consultations, to make sure our services continue to meet carers' needs.

There has been a lot of change within the health sector, including the transition to the NDIS and My Aged Care. It is important we ensure carers are supported with good information to make these transitions as smooth as possible and communication plays an important role in this.

What have you been working on since you joined the team?

We recently redeveloped a range of resources we send out to carers. We have updated our Carer Support Group handout and

made it into a brochure for 2018, providing a list of support groups throughout the Southern Region of Melbourne. It's great for new carers who want to connect with local people who understand what it is like to care for someone. You can choose a support group based on your interests/hobbies and meet other like-minded people.

We also updated two of our mental-health-specific resources for people who care for someone with a mental illness. These include support groups and agencies that can provide support, counselling, education and more.

Who do you find inspiring?

I recently listened to a fantastic interview with author Caitlin Moran, and was inspired by her positivity, humour and intelligence. It is so nice to hear someone speak who is so joyful and vibrant – I think we can all benefit from looking on the bright side!



*Communications Officer,
Nicole Oliver*

What do you do to relax?

I try to practice mindfulness and meditation each day. It's so easy to get caught up in things outside your control, so I like to take a few minutes each day to be present in the moment.

I recently welcomed a labradoodle puppy into my home and he is an absolute delight – and has definitely helped me to stop and smell the roses!

Would you like to spend some time with people sharing a similar caring situation to you? You could consider joining a local carer support group. To find a support group, download the brochures from the Carer South website, you will find them under the *Resources* menu.

My key learnings were that it's okay to be frustrated and acknowledge that, at times, you're not the best carer in the world. It's okay to ask for help ... in fact it's essential you do! It's also okay to go back to basics and create a plan to succeed in your carer role.

What is the benefit of a men-only workshop?

The workshop really helped foster a strong feeling of mateship. Everyone really felt their contributions were valued and that they were an integral part of the course. The connection with other men who understand what it

is like to care for someone was fantastic, and many of us exchanged numbers so we can stay in touch.

What advice would you give to somebody who is just starting their caring journey?

As carers, we need to acknowledge and accept that we're all probably going to stumble at times, so



don't hesitate to seek help and assistance from organisations like Alfred Health Carer Services – they exist to help you.

Names have been changed for privacy.

Families connect at Younger Onset Dementia retreat

In May this year, a group of families spent a wellbeing weekend together at a retreat in San Remo.

All of the families that attended the retreat care for someone, under the age of 65, who has recently been diagnosed with dementia, known as Younger Onset Dementia

For families facing Younger Onset

Dementia, the combination of work, school and caring can be challenging. The retreat was a wonderful way for these families to take time out and enjoy relaxing, quality time together, away from life's daily pressures. It also gave them the opportunity to spend time together as a unit as they prepare for the changes to come.



All the families that attended care for a person with Younger Onset Dementia



Family members took time out to enjoy the local area and resort facilities during the weekend

Can we interest you in a cup of tea and cake?

Did you know there are two dementia-friendly cafés in Melbourne's south?

The cafés are a wonderful way for people with dementia and their family to enjoy time together in a warm and friendly environment in the company of people in a similar situation. Both cafes offer entertainment and morning/afternoon tea.



Connections Café

Presented in partnership with Casey Community Care, the Connections Café is held on the fourth Wednesday of each month (excluding December) at the Old Cheese Factory in Berwick.

To enquire whether this café is suitable for you and to reserve your place, please call Kate at Casey Community Care on **03 9792 7380**.

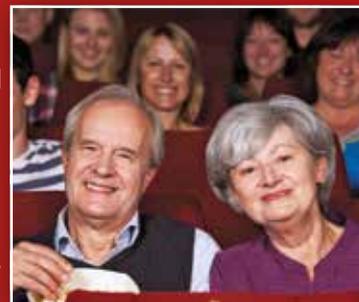
Memory Lane Café

Once a month Frankston RSL is home to the Memory Lane Café. The Café, a Dementia Australia initiative, is co-partnered with the Brotherhood of St Laurence and Alfred Health Carer Services.

To enquire whether this café is suitable for you, please call the National Dementia Helpline on **1800 100 500** or visit Dementia Australia website for more information.

A night at the movies

Two monthly movie clubs are available for carers to join and enjoy an informal evening in the company of others.



East Brighton

Open to older carers and the people they care for, the East Brighton

Brighton Movie Club is held from 4pm to 7pm on the last Monday of each month.

A light supper is served after the movie.

Your first session is free and you are welcome to bring the person you care for. After your first session, a fee of \$15 per couple or \$20 for three people is charged. Please call **03 9076 6150** during business hours for more information or to book.

Frankston

Open to all carers, the Frankston Movie Club is held from 5.30pm to 8pm on the third Tuesday of the month. Snacks and nibbles are provided.

The Frankston movie club is free and you are welcome to bring the person you care for. Please call **03 8781 3400** during business hours for more information or to book.