

VOCAL POINT

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Keeping clients smiling



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Cover image: Jen Warncken at Minda Brighton



Vocal Point is the official newsletter of Minda

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Kerri-ann Messenger and her parents John and Yvonne pictured at Inclusive Café last year

Living a different life

Kerri-ann Messenger lives in Minda accommodation at Reynella, but stayed with her parents John and Yvonne through the Coronavirus pandemic. The successful higher education student has previously authored a book chapter on student experience for Sydney University as well as her own plays and poetry – and kindly shared her thoughts on the Coronavirus pandemic in the hope of helping others. Kerri-ann wrote this piece over Easter, when South Australians were very much being urged to stay at home.

By Kerri-ann Messenger

Since COVID-19 has become a huge part of how we live our lives now, I would like to tell you how I have been feeling. For my part I feel afraid and you probably feel the same way too. But I do believe we will all come out together at the other end okay.

I find I fear touching anything and I am confused about when I should wash my hands rather than use hand sanitiser. I have done both so many times that I had to go to the doctor to get cream for my hands. My skin was getting very dry and before long would begin to crack, due to frequent washing or sanitising.

I know I've changed since the pandemic began. Now I find I am extremely anxious, fearful and confused. I don't go anywhere for

fear of becoming infected, too. I think these feelings are made worse by repeated updates and warnings being shown on television all the time. My parents try to keep as much as they can away from me.

Thankfully, I have come to live with my parents again because of COVID-19. My parents are getting older and should not be going out into public areas unless they really need to for food shopping and things like medical appointments. They brought me home so we could look after each other, until this awful virus is over. In a way, it was to make life easier for staff at my house and that means that staff can give more time to care for my house mates, as some don't have other homes to go to.

Living with my parents is not always the easiest thing after living away for 12 years. We have our own routines that we are used to. We have developed our own daily routines over the years since I moved away. I have my own bedroom at my parents' place but it is not the same. At my house, my bedroom is my comfort zone, and I can go there to listen to my music, write my poetry, work on my play, do my university study and watch television, whenever I want to.

But my routine is not like that at my parents' place. Even though I have my own bedroom here I like to sit in the dining room and kitchen area to do these things. It can be a pretty busy place with them ringing to check that family and friends are well, and cooking meals – ordinary daily life. I like my parents around me because I feel less afraid.

Because of COVID-19 we have to stay at home, and away from others, which means activities like going out to work, travelling on public transport, exercise classes, attending university and even visiting family members. One big disappointment caused by travel restrictions meant Mum and I had to cancel our holiday in Cairns where my brother and his family live. I miss them so much and talking on the phone is just not enough sometimes.

The virus has changed all our lives but we have to stay positive and enjoy what we have to keep us busy, and safe, until the world goes back to normal.

It is my birthday in a couple of weeks and I usually celebrate with work mates, family, and my house mates. This year it will be a very quiet time. Does that mean that I get double next year? I hope so.

Stay safe, follow the rules and we will get there okay.

Planning for the future

While South Australia has been one of the most successful states in limiting the spread of Coronavirus, at Minda we have worked hard behind the scenes to ensure the ongoing care and safety of our clients, and the wellbeing of our staff and the wider Minda community.

While we have all been in uncharted waters due to COVID-19, the Minda community has pulled together as we put in place our Coronavirus Response Plan.

The Coronavirus Response Plan outlined our response to this global pandemic, including the many precautionary measures and actions we implemented in the best interests of the people we support. You can read our Coronavirus Response Plan on our website.

While we all saw the scenes of hoarding goods and people ignoring self-isolation requirements, we have also witnessed examples of goodwill and humanity shining brightly too as we look after one another. Among the Minda community we have seen our staff, families and friends unite with the common purpose of providing surety and consistency to the lives of our clients.

What this pandemic has also brought into clear focus is the importance of living and demonstrating our values – heart, opportunity, respect, community and most importantly, empathy.

It is critical to maintain focus on the bigger picture, live our values, and show commitment to our vision and mission at every opportunity.

Our Strategic Plan 2020-2023 ensures we have a platform to grow and flourish

once the world emerges from the other side of this pandemic – and in time this difficult period will be over.

Ever since we began in 1898 we have remained steadfast in our vision to be a world leader in cognitive disability care, services and housing. Our passion remains fuelled by doing all we can so people can live their best life of their own choosing. Everyone has the opportunity to reach their potential, achieve goals and contribute to their communities.

Our 122-year history demonstrates our ability to adapt, change and respond to tough times and periods of change.

Our organisation has endured two world wars, survived economic recessions in the early 1980s and 90s and came through the Global Financial Crisis of 2008.

More recently, we have adapted in response to unprecedented transformation within the disability sector, and embraced new opportunities created by the NDIS and the fundamental shift in how supports for people with disability are funded and delivered across Australia.

There has been plenty of milestone moments to celebrate too.

We have expanded our services to meet growing demand, and our footprint now extends well into outer suburbs and regional areas. Transformation of our Brighton site through the Master Plan has seen state-of-the-art living options created, the construction of Brighton Dunes and focussed investment in supported employment through SA Group Enterprises.

Like every journey, it's important to look out the windscreen rather than the rear-view mirror, and the Strategic Plan offers a roadmap to ensure our sustainability and success.

You can read our Strategic Plan 2020-2023 on our website.

Your support, counsel and dedication to the lives of South Australians with cognitive disability is truly appreciated. The catch-cry about how we are all in this together rings



CEO Dr Clare Allen



President Joanne Denley

especially true when you experience the love, care and compassion shown across our entire Minda community.

Keep looking after each other and continue to stay healthy and safe.

A handwritten signature of Clare Allen in black ink.

Clare Allen
Chief Executive Officer

A handwritten signature of Joanne Denley in black ink.

Joanne Denley
President

Client wellbeing is top priority

Dilip Jose works in the concierge role at Bright Way and Fassina Way at Minda Brighton. Having worked at Minda for nine years, he loves working to help improve people's independence and confidence in their own abilities.

He says while COVID-19 restrictions have presented challenges in recent months, the support team has pushed to do their very best to achieve the best possible outcomes for clients.

"Our clients' routines were drastically changed by this situation," he says.

"Family visiting has reduced, and older parents themselves are in isolation.

"It can be an emotional change for the people we support, but staff and families are together trying to reduce the gap by using

social networking or video chat wherever possible."

Dilip, recognised as being calm and supportive of others during the pandemic, believes Minda has taken very effective precautionary measures to ensure the living environment for Supported Independent Living clients and the working environment for accommodation staff is safe.

"All visitors and staff go through temperature checks and sign a declaration before they enter Minda houses or buildings. Clients' temperatures are also monitored," he says.

"We are practising social distancing wherever possible. All the staff have completed an online course which promotes understanding of how to stop the spread of the virus and stay infection free.

"NuCaMs technology and communication plays a vital role in maintaining social distancing and staff-client communications.

"Medical appointments have changed to tele-consults and locum doctors are in high demand. We are lucky to have dedicated nurses on site who go above and beyond to attend where possible."

Dilip says with MyPATH operating differently with COVID-19 restrictions, day options staff are coming to clients' apartments or homes to interact, engage and



Dilip Jose

stimulate with various activities, and this has worked well.

Furthermore, he says all necessary client and household information has been put together with an action plan so if any major change occurs within our community, the care of clients is not jeopardised.

Dilip says he has always enjoyed working at Minda and despite the challenging time, is proud that Minda always provides outstanding services to people with disability.

"The best thing in this job is that we push ourselves and the support team to do better every day, to achieve the best possible outcome for our clients," he says.

Countering isolation

Kahlim Conroy is one of our frontline staff members who helped clients to counter isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Supported Independent Living (SILs) North/North East manager Karen Negus says Kahlim "has stepped up and just gone with the flow, whatever gets thrown his way." Kahlim's support leader role sees him involved with regular one-to-one client care as well as keeping up with the associated admin role. "We have a good regular crew here who understand and accept the situation we find ourselves in with virus-related restrictions. It's harder for the clients, who range from high-dependency through to quite self-sufficient," Kahlim says.

"Every day, we also look for ways to ease the isolation factors. For example, we've been able to get out to currently unused soccer fields to kick a ball around for exercise and fresh air. We tap into online social and entertainment options for clients, depending on their interest and abilities. One of our clients used to love going



Kahlim and Dwayne playing soccer

to the cinema – so we organised some regular Netflix movie time. Or we help them to access their favourite online games like Halo." This is an important time to look after the staff around you too, Kahlim says. Six years ago, Kahlim left a role as operations manager for Harvey Norman to seek a profession that was directly linked to giving back to the community.

"This is exactly what I wanted, and it's the best job I've ever had," he says.



Jen Warncken at Minda Brighton

Keeping clients smiling

Jen Warncken has been supporting Minda clients for 20 years – and has been doing everything she can to keep people smiling during this unprecedented time in Minda’s – and indeed the nation’s – history.

Jen normally works as the Team Leader for MyPATH’s Retirement Lifestyle Services, a day options program for older clients, but with temporary changes to the way we do business due to COVID-19, Jen has spent time working out of the Waterhouse accommodation complex.

She says MyPATH staff in the Waterhouse complex have been engaging clients in fun and meaningful ways.

“We are living in interesting times, but we’ve been keeping things going at Waterhouse with painting, music, Easter activities and walks around the Brighton site,” Jen says.

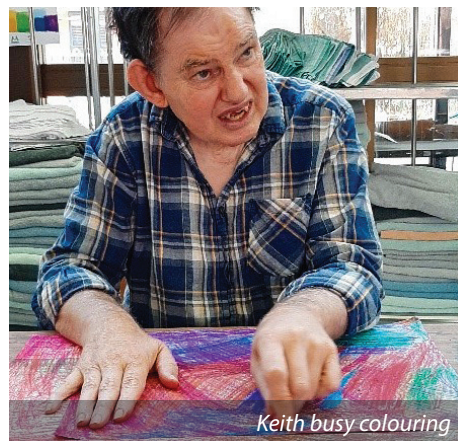
“While many clients missed their usual routines at the start and are missing their friends like the rest of us, it has helped that we have been able to get out and about on the Brighton site (which temporarily closed to the public).

“Maria, Shane, Tracey and Mariah have been enjoying these walks and getting some sunshine, hearing the birds chattering, and looking at some of the beautiful flowers to be found.”

There were plenty of arts and crafts happening around Easter too, Jen says.

“Bruno got in the spirit supervising hat making, while Kathy tried one on for size. There’s also been lots of painting to make our rabbits, Easter wreaths and large eggs for the wall decorations,” Jen says.

“The Waterhouse staff are doing excellent work, and we are working together as a team to ensure our clients have the best care we can give them.”



Keith busy colouring

MyPATH in the community

When the COVID-19 crisis hit, our Lifestyle Services team led by Dale Govett immediately swung into action to begin implementing day options in home-based and community settings.

During these months, MyPATH has provided some great one-on-one activities and outings to clients during the COVID-19 restrictions.

At Blackwood, we established a small program at Homestead Cottage for a small number of clients who receive one-on-one support.

One-on-one outings have been enjoyed by clients including James who went on a visit to the Garden Island dolphin sanctuary, and Grace, who enjoyed the trail at Oaklands Park.



Grace at the Oaklands Park trail



James at the dolphin sanctuary

Emily achieving goals

Support staff from our community accommodation have helped Supported Independent Living (SILs) client Emily achieve some fitness and creative goals.

Christie McWilliams, Laurin King and Tracey Oxtan are Disability Support Workers who helped support Emily through the COVID-19 restrictions.

Christie, who has worked at Minda for seven years, says Emily is normally an enthusiastic regular at her local gym, and enjoys walking home from the bus stop after her work at Bedford. However, both stopped due to COVID-19.

"To stay active, Emily and I have been going for walks and light jogs, doing home workouts and going for bike rides," Christie says.

"I bring my portable speaker in on my shifts, so we are listening to music and dancing rather than sitting and watching TV.

"Another staff member (Tracey) was kind enough to bring in her bike for staff to use to ride with Emily.

"Most recently, we've been for a nine-kilometre ride and both enjoyed it, discussing what we see on the ride and having races against each other."

Laurin has been helping Emily with creative endeavours.

They recently did an online painting tutorial together on creating flamingos on canvas.

"It was fun, a bit messy, but the outcome was fantastic!" Laurin says.

"Emily said she had a great time doing this, and we are trying to incorporate more art into her routine.

"We've also done lots of other creative projects together like painting pots and pictures.

"I am very art orientated – textile art mainly – so I love to use those skills with my clients whether it's painting on paper, pots or faces!"



Emily and Christie enjoy bike riding

Christie says the various inputs from the team in Emily's house have created a positive environment.

"Emily is always excited to show me a new painting she has done when I come on shift," Christie says.

"Overall it has been a really positive atmosphere in Emily's house with different inputs from staff."

Emma's 50th birthday

Our Supported Independent Living (SILs) client Emma recently celebrated her 50th birthday!

While social distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic put a hold on parties, our support staff wanted to make sure Emma felt special for her milestone birthday.

Laurin King has worked at Minda for three years as a disability support worker in our community accommodation. She worked with Emma for two years and is currently working with Emma's neighbour Emily (see story on Emily above).

Laurin wanted to make sure Emma had a great start to her birthday.

"I was doing a fill-in night shift with Emma on a Tuesday night, the night before her birthday, and I had some origami paper I'd used doing art with Emily in my bag. I thought it would be a wonderful thing for Emma to wake up to a big Happy Birthday sign on the wall," Laurin says.

"So, after Emma went to bed, I cut out

the letters and stuck them to the wall.

"I have a lovely rapport with Emma, so I like to go the extra mile to make things special."

While Laurin didn't get to see Emma's reaction when she got up the next morning, she was happy to hear from fellow staff members that Emma was super excited to see her name on the wall.

"It was a team effort to make her birthday a special one," Laurin says.



Emma on her birthday



Michael and John enjoying a picnic

A picnic for two

Life is wonderful when you have friends! During a time when people have been following COVID-19 guidelines set out by the government, everyone at Minda has been working to minimise risk while also valuing good friends and supporting each other.

Michael and his house mate John have been supported by the Supported Independent Living (SILs) Brighton team and Home Care to enjoy the simple things in life that make you smile.

The two friends enjoyed a picnic in their backyard surrounded by their garden, birds, and plenty of good food.

Staff member Marilyn Webster has also supported Michael and John to rediscover the beauty in Minda's stunning grounds on the Brighton site.



Executive Manager,
Commercial Enterprises, Andrew Wallace

The sky's the limit

Andrew Wallace has been a man with his sights set on the future since joining SA Group Enterprises (SAGE) back in 2011.

He came to the business with an interesting and varied background that included a potential career as a commercial pilot.

"At the same time as learning to fly, I became involved with managing small businesses. That was how I paid for my flying lessons," Andrew says.

"But it was the business management that eventually became my passion."

In 2013, SAGE had invested in building the capacity of Aspitex (now Electronic Recycling Australia), of which Andrew was manager. While promised rapid growth through the industry-funded National Television & Computer Recycling Scheme didn't eventuate, Andrew was closely involved in driving discussion with key industry groups to address the issues and secure new business.

In 2014, through the work of many dedicated individuals across the sector and within government, an alliance was formed between Minda and SAGE that has created a sustainable business model for ongoing supported employment opportunities. And under the new name Electronic Recycling Australia (ERA) the e-waste business has gone from strength to strength. In 2017 ERA was

handling 130 tonnes of e-waste and today this figure has more than doubled.

"Our Commercial Enterprises now provide a variety of supported employment options across a broad range of manufacturing, recycling, environmental and service businesses," Andrew says.

"The challenge now is to capitalise on this foundation with the aim to continue to grow meaningful employment opportunities for clients seeking supported employment.

"Part of that work is about consolidation, and the current co-location of WSL, WSL Repack and ERA at Ottoway will help us build on our strengths. But equally important is the work of getting our name out there, and building that community awareness, so people across the community know about our capability and capacity."

Business strong

While many Australian businesses have struggled in the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, Commercial Enterprises at Reynella is going strong with increased demand from a selection of packaging customers.

Minda and SAGE Commercial Manager Daryl Guidotto says the team at Reynella was 'flat out'.

"We have been packing large quantities of disinfectant and bleach for Foodland and Drakes with the huge demand for cleaning products due to COVID-19," Daryl says.

"In addition to cleaning products, demand for pet treats is through the roof, so we've also upped our output for Bow Wow pet treats."

Teams from Minda and SAGE Facilities Services – Laundry, Cleaning, Catering

and Grounds Maintenance – have pulled together during the pandemic, ensuring continued premium services to clients during challenging times.

Facilities Services Commercial Manager Nils Wartemann says the Minda Laundry became even more of an essential service, providing support for valued customers who needed the Laundry's service more than ever.

"We are proudly providing clean linen to some of SA's most important organisations like St Andrews Hospital, NECH, Resthaven,

Anglicare, ACH and Helping Hand, just to name a few," Nils says.

"The laundry was also successful in securing another major contract, supplying linen to one of Australia's largest aged care providers. This contract, which will commence soon, will help to create more job opportunities for people with disability."

Minda's Catering business was also very busy filling orders, producing thousands of extra meals for Meals on Wheels which experienced a huge increase in demand for their services due to COVID-19.



THANK YOU



Minda thanks the many generous individuals and businesses who support people with disability.

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