

HEARTBEAT

FREE



MILDURA
BASE PUBLIC HOSPITAL

MOBILE DIALYSIS

ALAN FREE TO HIT THE ROAD

SUNITAFE'S NEW CEO

BRETT MILLINGTON
TAKES OVER THE REINS

FOUNDATION GALA BALL

HOLLYWOOD GLAMOUR
NIGHT IN COLOUR

IN A BIREES" FASCINATING JOURNEY

DR. NABREES SINNALEBBE'S LIFE BEGAN IN SRI LANKA
ON A PATH FAR REMOVED FROM THE QUIET
CORRIDORS OF MILDURA BASE PUBLIC HOSPITAL

SUMMER
EDITION
2024



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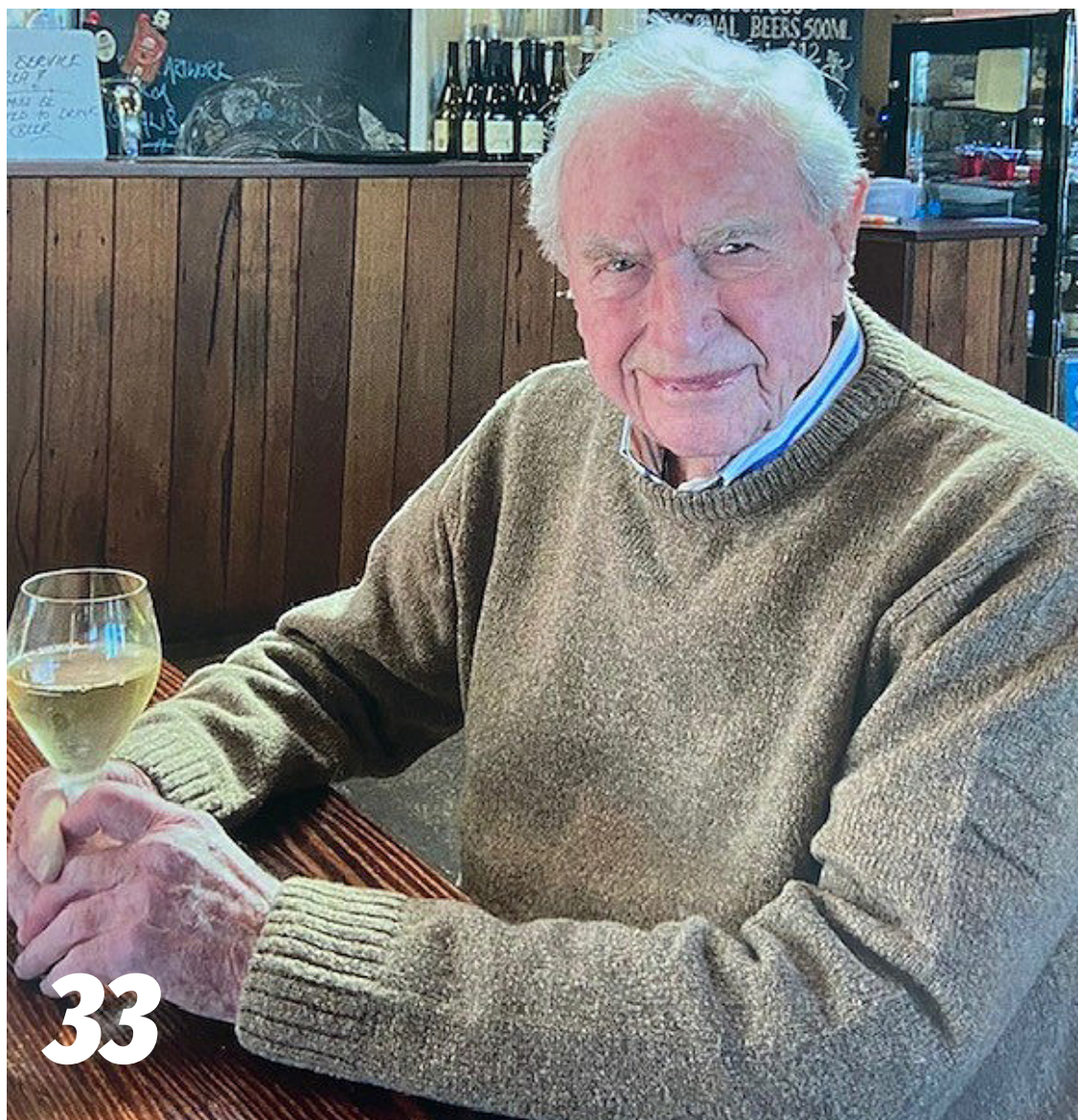
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YOUR FEEDBACK IS WELCOME!

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CONTRIBUTING WRITERS:

HEATH KENDALL

JOHN DOOLEY

GRANT MAYNARD

ZOEY ANDREWS; MONASH RURAL HEATH LA TROBE UNIVERSITY.

MAGAZINE DESIGN: SHAUN O'BREE.

ADVERTISING ENQUIRIES CONTACT:

JACK MADAFFERI

E. JMADAFFERI@MBPH.ORG.AU M. 0401 649 950.

GENERAL ENQUIRES:

E. FOUNDATION@MBPH.ORG.AU.

FROM OUR FOUNDATION CHAIR

WELCOME TO OUR 'HEARTBEAT' MAGAZINE

As we welcome 2024 I would like to reflect on the many wonderful achievements of the MBPH Foundation during the past 12 months. The opening of MBPH's Clinical Trials and Research Unit kicked off a great start to the year with the Foundation donating \$215,000.

In May more than \$150,000 was raised at the inaugural K C Society luncheon. Catered for by 400 Gradi and the team from Stefano's café, tables stretched along Deakin Avenue as guests enjoyed the best of both restaurants' menus as well as a selection of some of the region's finest wines.

The festivities continued in August when we partnered with the team from Mildura City Heart to host the first official event at the new Powerhouse building, a fashion parade featuring clothing and accessories from Mildura's best retailers.

Again the evening attracted a large crowd with a significant amount of money raised for the Lucas Foundation as we continue the legacy of this great charity which was disbanded, but continues to support families and sick children in the region through the MBPH Foundation.

October was again a highlight with the annual gala ball at the iconic Club DaVinci. Hollywood was the theme, and glitz and glam was on show for all to see as guests enjoyed catering by celebrity cook Stefano di Pieri and the best of Zilzie's wines.

More than 100 players teed off for the annual Foundation Golf Day at the picturesque Coomealla Golf Club. The day proved hugely successful thanks to the generosity of our sponsors and particularly the Coomealla Club and Coomealla Golf Club.

Another big year is planned for the Foundation during the next 12 months as we continue to strive to improve health outcomes for the people of the northern Mallee. From the Foundation committee and staff happy New Year, and let's make 2024 a memorable year.

Kind regards,
Ross Lake,
Foundation Chairman





A JOURNEY OF MILES AND MEDICINE

DR SINNALEBBE'S PATH FROM POLITICAL LEGACY
TO MEDICAL LEADERSHIP



IN THE MIDST OF SRI LANKA'S CIVIL UNREST, AND BORN INTO A FAMILY STEEPED IN POLITICAL SERVICE, DR. NABREES SINNALEBBE'S LIFE BEGAN ON A PATH FAR REMOVED FROM THE BUSTLING CORRIDORS OF MILDURA BASE PUBLIC HOSPITAL, WHERE HE NOW SERVES AS DEPUTY CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER. HIS JOURNEY, SPANNING CONTINENTS AND CULTURES, IS A TESTAMENT TO RESILIENCE, ADAPTABILITY, AND AN UNWAVERING COMMITMENT TO SERVICE.

Dr Sinnalebbe's early life in Sri Lanka was overshadowed by political turbulence. His family, with a rich legacy in politics and public service, faced challenges that ultimately led his father to seek political asylum in the United Kingdom.

"My mother didn't really want to stay in the UK and all the while my father worked to broker a peaceful resolution back to Sri Lanka," Nabrees recalls.

Despite these upheavals, a guiding principle remained constant in his life: the value of service to the community, a legacy passed down through generations.

"My father continued his role as a Member of Parliament until his untimely

death at the age of just 41. I was 10 years old at the time," he said.

His widowed mother, resilient in the face of adversity, instilled in him the importance of education and the pursuit of a greater purpose. It was this foundational belief, coupled with the desire to honour his family's commitment to service and opportunities to improve lives, that steered Dr Sinnalebbe towards the medical field.

Arriving in Australia in 2009, Dr Sinnalebbe embarked on an academic journey that would lay the groundwork for his medical career. His studies at Melbourne University and Deakin University in Geelong culminated in a

Bachelor of Medicine, but it was his deep-seated passion for patient care that truly defined his path.

For the first two years of his career Nabrees worked as a doctor in Geelong, and it was during this time that he decided he wanted to pursue a pathway to obstetrics.

"I felt humbled and privileged to be with the parents at such an intimate time and being able to help them through that moment," he said.

Initially drawn to obstetrics, Dr Sinnalebbe found joy in the miracle of childbirth and the profound impact of medical care on families' lives.



"I loved the idea of bringing healthy children into the world from a philosophical point of view," Nabrees said.

However, the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic unveiled a new dimension of healthcare that captured his attention. The crisis highlighted the crucial role of effective leadership in public health and the profound influence that Health system decisions have on patient care and staff welfare.

"It was at that point that I realised what an important role leadership plays in a public health crisis," he said.

"I saw how good leadership has a massive impact in terms of public safety and health and how that changed the dynamics of the community.

This realisation led Dr Sinnalebbe to transition towards healthcare leadership, a move that aligned with his innate understanding of the importance of leadership and system-level impact.

His tenure at Mildura Base Public Hospital began amidst its shift to public administration, presenting a unique opportunity to influence positive change and growth within the hospital.

"The amount of change that is taking place at MBPH, and to be involved in helping make those changes, I think is amazing," he said.

"I feel that MBPH as a hospital is rapidly changing and growing, and we are heading in the right direction.

"I feel very privileged to part of the journey here."

Nabrees said he is enjoying his administrative role and particularly being at the MBPH where "the organisation's Heart values are lived by all of the staff", and he still enjoys spending some time in the wards to keep his skills up.

"I do miss the clinical work and I take any opportunity to help. I look forward to that," he says.

"It is good for me to be on the frontline from time to time to share the lived experience of staff directly caring for our community."

In his role as Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Dr Sinnalebbe combines his clinical expertise with a strategic vision for healthcare delivery. He remains dedicated to patient care, drawing from his clinical experiences to inform his administrative decisions. His leadership is marked by a deep empathy for both patients and staff, shaped by his personal journey and professional experiences.

Dr Sinnalebbe's story is more than a narrative of geographical relocation; it's a saga of personal growth, professional evolution, and a continued commitment to the ethos of service ingrained in him since childhood.

As he navigates the complexities of healthcare administration at MBPH, his journey is a living embodiment of the hospital's core values and a beacon of inspiration for the community he serves.



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Summer Time

IS FUN IN MILDURA



THE months of December to February are when Mildura is at its best, with summer offering so much to do with many people on holidays and an influx of visitors boosting our local economy. Boating, fishing, skiing and swimming are all things that immediately come to mind, with water activities based around our iconic and majestic Murray River, at their peak.

This time last year Mildura was in the midst of a big flood, with high rivers levels waters receding, allowing water-based businesses to recover from the major disruption to their operations.

There's nothing better than going on a houseboat for a few days and of course there are the famous Mildura Paddle Steamers with paddleboats like the Rothbury, which conducts daily cruises and the Mundoo, which runs dinner cruises and public and private events.

Mildura Cruises also offers a range a great cruising packages as well, including trips to Trentham Estate, sunset cruises with live

music and food and beverages all onboard and they also have a party cruise boat.

Team all of that with the fabulous food and wine we have on our doorstep and it is no wonder our district is a destination favourite for couples and families alike during holiday season.

Locals are used to the heat with daytime temperatures often in the mid to high 30s and sometimes exceeding 40 degrees, but when the river is literally at your feet, the heat doesn't seem to matter as much and of course there are great local pools all around the district, including Mildura Waves or you can dive into your own pool if you have one!

Of course, there are plenty of things to do away from the river and playing tourist in your own town can be fun and educational. Orange World is worth checking out, as is the Gem Shop at Nichols Point, there are the Perry Sandhills, although best not visited in scorching weather, and the fabulous Riverfront Water Play Park is a favourite with young kids and families.

If you haven't been to Rio Vista and the Mildura Arts Centre (MAC) they should be a must. A highlight at the MAC is 'Twilight'. It's a free community event with live music on the lawns, family-friendly activities plus access to the Gallery and Rio Vista after hours from 5pm.

Drinks, platters and snacks by VISTA Cafe Bar, and food by The Van. Check their website for details.

There's nothing like a leisurely stroll along the riverfront and there are plenty bushwalks to do, and the original Chaffey Brother's pumping station at Psyche Bend is also well worth the visit. The periodically operate opening days.

A visit to the new Powerhouse Precinct on the Riverfront is a must do destination and there are several riverfront cafes both there and nearby. The Riverfront Art Gallery is next door where local artists works are on display. And of course, another must do is the Sunraysia Farmers Markets held in Jaycee Park on the first and third Saturday of each month.



For those who are sporting minded, twilight golf or bare foot bowls is a great way to enjoy daylight saving and even a hit of tennis during the day or late afternoon is a terrific way to relax and keep fit.

Everyone loves to shop, with the Mildura City Heart's Langtree Mall having something for everyone, from beauty, to clothes, to toys and much more. Mildura Central is also a popular destination for everything you are looking for. It's a cool oasis to spend a few hours with the kids while browsing around the shops.

And when you've checked out all of that, you'll be craving some delicious food and wine and Mildura and district has a fabulous array of first-class dining options from the lay-back casual to the intimate five-star experience.

To explore and enjoy what's on offer a visit to Langtree Avenue's Feast Street and Deakin Avenue dining precinct is a must, where there's something to satisfy and tantalise everyone's taste. There you find great bars, cafes, alfresco

dining and award-winning restaurants like the famous Stefano's.

Stefano's Restaurant is a must for our many visitors. The list goes on with 400 Gradi, Stefano's Café, Andy's Kitchen, The Spanish Grill, Verde at the Gateway, The Office, Langtree Inn, The Brewery, Thairiffic, the Corporate Moose and many more great bars and eateries to be enjoyed.

Sunraysia is also best known for some of the finest Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc wine and so there is sure to be a glass something for everyone's liking.

When it comes to boating, fishing, skiing and swimming, Apex Park is a popular spot for swimming, while boating, fishing and skiing can be enjoyed at a lot of places along the Murray, with plenty of boat ramps to launch your vessel into the water available throughout the district.

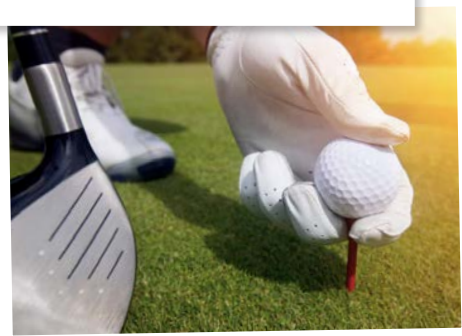
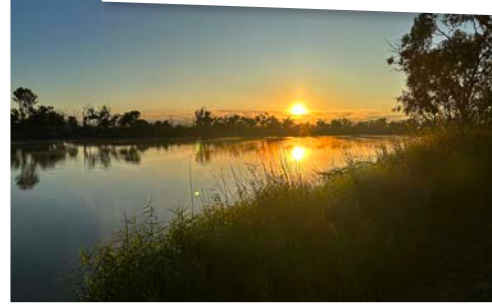
In recent times, fishing and yabbying have been a rewarding keen anglers with

lots of Murray cod, Perch and even a few Redfin being caught. When the yabbies are 'running' as the say, there are plenty to be caught. Unfortunately, European Carp are still aplenty in the river and while they are fun to have on the end of the line, they are considered a pest and cannot be returned to the water once caught.

If fishing in the Murray, make sure, where required, each angler must have a NSW fishing licence and adhere to the catch regulations.

Summertime is also when lots of engines roar to life in Sunraysia - with the region having two different race tracks - one for bikes and another for cars. There are some big meetings planned at both venues from January to March. Details can be found on the track's websites.

It doesn't matter whether you like to live life in the fast lane, or you are looking for a relaxing time, Mildura and the Sunraysia district has all bases covered, for locals and visitors alike-enjoy summers everyone!








SunraysiaFarmers market

There's nothing better than brekkie at the Farmers Market!

We bring the region's finest quality produce to market on the 1st and 3rd Saturday's of the month. Relax, unwind and enjoy live music and our quality Farmer's breakfast.

* With Riverfront Boutique Markets joining us for a combined Farmers and Makers market with dates as marked.

-  Locally grown fresh produce
-  Scrumptious food
-  The best hot coffee in town
-  Beautiful arts & crafts
-  Fun entertainment
-  And so much more!

UPCOMING MARKET DATES:

Jan 20	Mar 16	May 4
Feb 3*	Mar 30*	May 18
Feb 17	Apr 6	Jun 1
Mar 2	Apr 20	Jun 8*



QUALITY PRODUCE - STRAIGHT FROM THE FARM TO OUR MARKET

JAYCEE PARK, HUGH KING DRIVE, MILDURA VIC 3500
ONGOING MARKET OPENS 8AM-12PM | 1ST & 3RD SATURDAY OF THE MONTH

GROUND BREAKING GREENLIGHT LASER TECHNOLOGY INSTALLED AT MBPH

MILDURA BASE PUBLIC HOSPITAL (MBPH) IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THE CONTINUATION OF ITS THEATRE UPGRADE PROJECT THANKS TO THE VICTORIAN HEALTH BUILDING AUTHORITY (VHBA), WHICH INCLUDES THE EXCITING INTRODUCTION OF THE STATE-OF-THE-ART GREENLIGHT LASER TECHNOLOGY.

This ground-breaking advancement in medical technology is set to revolutionise the field of prostate surgery.

With the GreenLight Laser, MBPH is taking a giant leap forward in providing patients with safer and more effective treatment options.

The GreenLight Laser is a cutting-edge tool that offers numerous advantages over traditional surgical methods. By utilising laser energy, this innovative technology provides precise and targeted treatment for

patients suffering from prostate-related issues.

With its high level of accuracy, the GreenLight Laser minimises the risk of complications and ensures better outcomes for patients undergoing prostate surgery.

Prostate surgery is a delicate procedure that requires utmost precision. The GreenLight Laser, with its advanced capabilities, allows surgeons at MBPH to perform complex surgeries with enhanced precision and control.





This results in reduced bleeding, less damage to surrounding tissues, and faster recovery times for patients.

The GreenLight Laser is known for its ability to effectively treat conditions such as benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) and prostate cancer. BPH is a common condition among aging men, characterised by an enlarged prostate that can cause uncomfortable urinary symptoms. Prostate cancer, on the other hand, is a serious and potentially life-threatening condition that requires prompt and effective treatment.

Heartbeat spoke to Dr Peter Wong, one of the surgeons using the GreenLight Laser and asked him what are some of the benefits of this technology which enables a new approach to performing prostate surgery?

“Laser surgery allows patients who are on blood thinning medication to still have prostate surgery, and not have to stop the medication,” Dr Wong said.

The greenlight laser allows men to still have a ‘TURP’ procedure, but remaining on blood thinning medication. There is less bleeding with laser compared to traditional TURP surgery. Trans-Urethral Resection of the Prostate gland, commonly referred to as TURP, is carried out primarily to relieve the obstruction caused by an enlarged prostate.

“It is not uncommon for patients with enlarged prostates to also have heart disease too. Some of these patients are not able to stop their blood thinning medication,” Dr Wong said.

“These patients would otherwise have to be referred to a hospital in Melbourne for surgery. Now, these men can have surgery in Mildura, and be closer to their family and home.

“In addition to less bleeding, there is also the benefit of improved safety for the patients. There is a known risk of a ‘TUR syndrome’ which occurs in about 1% of TURP surgery. The risk of this with greenlight laser is zero.”

MAIN: DR PETER WONG UNDERTAKING SURGERY WITH GREEN LASER. INSET: MACHINE AND PROTECTIVE EYEWEAR.



**MILDURA
CARDIOLOGY**

CONSULTATIONS

- One full-time Cardiologist that resides in Mildura
- Nine visiting Cardiologists that consult in Mildura on a regular basis
- Royal Children's Hospital - Paediatric Cardiology Rural Out Reach Service (quarterly)
- Three visiting Haematologists from The Alfred Hospital
- Cardiology Registrar from The Alfred Hospital - rotating on a six monthly placement
- 3rd year and 5th year Medical Student placement from Monash School of Rural Health
- One visiting Respiratory & Sleep Physician

DIAGNOSTIC TESTING

- Electrocardiograph (ECG)
- Echocardiogram (ECHO)
- Transoesophageal Echocardiogram (TOE)
- DCR Cardioversion
- Exercise Stress Testing
- Stress ECHO
- 24Hr Holter monitoring
- 3-5 day Holter monitoring
- Ambulatory Blood Pressure Monitoring
- Pacemaker/ICD/Reveal follow up
- Pacemaker/ICD/Reveal Implantation arrangements



**MILDURA
CARDIOLOGY**

Mildura Cardiology
230 Thirteenth Street, Mildura
P: 5023 8111
E: milduracardiology.com.au



FROM LITTLE THINGS BIG THINGS GROW

TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION HAS HAD A PROFOUND IMPACT ON AGRICULTURE FOR GENERATIONS. FROM THE CREATION OF THE PLOUGH TO GLOBAL POSITIONING SYSTEM (GPS) DRIVEN PRECISION FARMING EQUIPMENT, HUMANS HAVE ALWAYS DEVELOPED NEW WAYS TO MAKE FARMING MORE EFFICIENT AND GROW MORE FOOD. AND THE RATE AT WHICH THIS INCREASINGLY CLEVER TECH IS MAKING ITS WAY INTO THE MARKETPLACE DEMANDS THOSE WHO SELL IT MUST STRIVE CONTINUOUSLY TO KEEP UP, FOR THE BENEFIT OF THEIR CUSTOMERS AND THEIR BUSINESS. CASE IN POINT IS HAEUSLER'S GROUP -- A MAJOR AN AGRICULTURAL MACHINERY SUPPLIER WITH FIVE RETAIL OUTLETS ACROSS NORTHERN VICTORIA AND WITH AN ENVIABLE REPUTATION FOR QUALITY PRODUCTS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE.



THERE is a quiet revolution under way across Australia as farmers strive for the big three -- crop sustainability, on-farm productivity improvements and financial efficiency.

And if you're in the business of supplying farmers with the equipment they need to get the job done right, you too must keep up with what is becoming an increasingly hi-tech space.

"We're changing from originally once a tractor company, transitioning to a complete solution company," Haeusler's Group managing director Lou Haeusler explained to *Heartbeat* recently.

"The next evolution of agriculture is happening right now. You either get onboard or go out backwards!"

These days, Haeusler's strive to provide the farming advice that differentiates the company from its competition, supplying tailored solutions for customers that integrate specialised equipment, technology, and dealer services. This comes with a large focus on the digital data generated and required for growers and their connected machines to become more efficient and profitable.

To understand that unwavering commitment to primary production, and the people who make their living on the land, you must travel back in time, back to the 1950s.

In 1959 Colin and Joan Haeusler, operating

as CE & JM Haeusler, began a general cartage and grain handling business at Sea Lake.

The business thrived and in 1961 CE & JM Haeusler became agents for Chamberlain Tractors and Implements after buying the agency from fellow Sea Lake business Brewers Motors.

After much hard work by Colin, C E & J M Haeusler were named Victoria's Top Chamberlain Dealers for 1967 and after the merger of Chamberlain with John Deere in 1970, what had become Haeusler's Farm Supplies Pty Ltd was appointed as the official John Deere dealer for Sea Lake. The company continued to expand its operations over later years to include CRT (Combined Rural Traders) chemical and farm supplies; hardware and electrical business; fertiliser; freight transport; grain handling and a fuel outlet.

Haeusler's were growing and prospering through hard work, good business acumen and a customer service focus.

Up until 1993 the company had a broadacre focus but when it expanded its John Deere operations by embracing the Mildura dealership the focus was broadened to include Sunraysia's viticulture industry.

The company's broad acre business in the Mallee was outgrowing its original Sea Lake premises and a new, purpose-built facility was constructed.

It was a similar story in Mildura, with

the growth of the Mildura dealership necessitating a new build as well. That was completed in 1999.

It was about this time that the company realised that if it was to continue to prosper in the farm machinery industry, it must become larger and obtain further dealerships.

That led to the acquisition of its Shepparton dealership in 2001 and in 2002, with a growing market for smaller equipment at Robinvale, a new branch was set up in the town.

Late in 2007, Haeusler's embarked on yet another expansion, this time at Echuca.

At the same time and to better integrate the growth of the business at its now five sites, the company was re-structured and re-branded as Haeusler's Group.

Haeusler's combined service area across north-west Victoria and southern New South Wales encompasses more than 10,000 square kilometres, including 40 per cent of Victoria alone!

Today, the Haeusler's Group remains a family-owned company with almost 150 employees.

"We look back at our history and reminisce and that's fine. It's worthy of recognition. But it's now become more about the technological revolution that's being implemented across the agricultural sector," Lou says.

"With a greater focus on technology



SEA LAKE HAEUSLER'S STORE OPENED IN 1959.

comes opportunities for new careers in agriculture. In our company we have a number of people in IT and technological development positions who are driving this change together with companies like John Deere.

"For example, aerial mapping of crop plantings together with satellite imaging makes it possible for producers to monitor the status of their paddock growth."

Lou showed Heartbeat an example of how that technology works.

"I can open up an application on my phone and see how a paddock looks after it has been sprayed for example," Lou explained.

"Now we can see the area sprayed and quantify it. They sprayed 63 litres per hectare, applying 31,000 litres in total and we can also look at other inputs like amount of fuel used and time. There is a lot of other data we can collect too.

"We can monitor down to the square metre, and in a couple of years' time, on wheat for example, we will be able to take it down to the single plant.

"The big push now is for applied data so that when you get audited for example, you can demonstrate how you have treated this crop or plant."

The story of the growing digital age is enormous, Lou says, and huge amounts of data are being generated by the John Deere Operations Centre.

"The data allows for smarter decisions to

be made. Smarter decisions lead to better outcomes," he says.

"It also allows for third parties to take part in decision making like agronomists, bankers, accountants, equipment suppliers and many other stakeholders.

"Importantly, this information allows for greater control of inputs, with less wastage and less contamination."

Another great benefit, Lou says, is being able to demonstrate, through greater transparency, how the food was produced with the focus on paddock to plate traceability.

"With audits being conducted by environmental agencies expanding all the time, the increasing amount of data being collected provides the ability to better adhere to environmental regulations. For example, the control of run off into rivers and oceans, and in the case of Northern Queensland canegrowers better protection for the Great Barrier Reef."

Much of this data is generated by the 'smart' equipment farmers are using.

Today, he explained, a 'normal' grain harvester has 80 to 100 processors onboard.

"The farmer can ask the machine to do a task and it will work out the best way to do it!"

"And now our machines can 'talk' to each other. For example, a harvester will 'look' at the machine next to it – say a grain

chase bin – and the two machines will come together to work in unison without anyone having to drive them.

"We have also been fitting a lot of protein meters and so, not only are we getting a yield map of how much quantity is being harvested, but we are also now getting a map of the protein quality in the grain.

"And that is just on grain harvesters. Then you have the sowing and the spraying machinery that is also being fitted with smart technology.

"A sprayer, for example, will soon be able to be fitted with a camera that can identify a healthy plant from a weed and apply either nutrients or weed killer as needed. And that will be happening at 18 to 20 kilometres an hour!

But the data collected in the paddock can be useful beyond the farm gate.

"To that end we are engaging with third party people such as agronomists, bankers, insurance people and saying to them: 'Here's data, is this of value to you? And the answer is yes!'

"In a bank's case it can see a farmer's predictive income.

"Based on the data gathered you can see how much rain has been received so far during the season and what level of crop you have. The, based on past history and average rainfalls you enter a number on what you think you are going to sell the crop and out comes an income prediction.

"We have also been working with the SuniTAFE SmartFarm and play a huge part out there. We have deployed a lot of resources out there and that facility represents the future.

"I absolutely love SuniTAFE.

"Training some of the staff out there with this new technology has been a great experience.

"We put a basic rate controller on a sprayer – they have been around for years -- and the operator went out and did some spraying and came back and said: "I've still got all of this left... I've got to go and spray this somewhere!"

"No, you don't," we said. "What you need to do is apply the set rate and then you won't have to mix as much!"

"That's just a basic example of how technology can produce cost savings and efficiency."

"Data is also important because we are heading towards autonomy.

"A lot of people think we are just going to get robots and it's going to be 'happy days. That thinking simply doesn't recognise what is really coming and, in some cases, what's already here!"

So, can we still regard Haeusler's as predominantly a tractor company?

"Fundamentally we are," Lou said. "We sell them, service them and do repairs, but there is this big other side to the business now that we are working to develop and building the team up who are spearheading this new challenge.

"Our association with John Deere is pivotal in the technological future and they are a magnificently loyal company, and they place a lot of emphasis on, and take pride in, their history.

"The fact is they are absolutely brutal with how they hold us to account, and we hold them to account too. The fact is we are both striving to attain a level we will probably never get to in our quest to utilise the data that is able to be collected now.

"Every time we get are nearly there, things jump forward. So I don't think either of us get to the level we want to. That's how fast technology is moving!"

But that's a good thing, Lou says.

"I'm never satisfied and so we continue to trial new approaches so are successful others aren't—but it makes life interesting!" To cope with this deluge of data now available from increasingly smart machinery, Haeusler's has established 'Haeusler's Digital'.



"So, we are transitioning into another arm of the business that will be so much more about 'Precision Ag'," Lou explained.

What does Precision Ag mean?

"I challenge everyone to answer that. I even challenged John Deere on that, and they laughed at me and then four years later came back to me and said: "I think you might be right".

"Something people would be surprised to know is that farmers in the Sea Lake area, pretty well lead the world in the uptake of Precision Ag technology.

"We have problems there that they haven't heard of in America because they are so challenging. We take the problem to John Deere for a solution and the farmers apply it.

"We've had people come out from 'Smart Apply', which was recently acquired by John Deere, and they said you're asking us to do things that no growers in the US or dealers even talk about.

"In terms of its agricultural output Sea Lake is a magnificent place and leads the world on numerous fronts.

"Precision Ag is a state of mind," Lou

explains, "And having a willingness to change and improve.

"It's the same at the hospital. You don't sit still. You've got to have a plan to constantly improve – 'What's the next best thing? Let's go and try it. Let's do it.

"An example for me is the work being done by the Clinical Trials and Research Unit. They are doing trials and constantly trying to improve.

"That's why I readily contribute my money to the hospital Foundation."

Lou and his wife Janette are lifetime partners of the MBPH Foundation, donating generously every year to enable the hospital to continue to improve health care in the northern Mallee.

 **Haeusler's**

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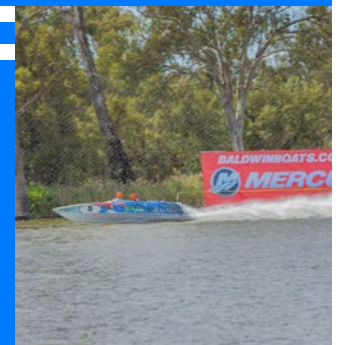
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DIALYSIS DRAWBACKS DEFEATED

ALAN & JUDITH FREE TO HIT THE ROAD

IN HIS BOOK '100 DAYS DRIVE: THE GREAT NORTH AMERICAN ROAD TRIP', AUTHOR AARON LAURITSEN WAXED LYRICAL ABOUT THE FREEDOM OF THE OPEN ROAD LABELLING IT "SEDUCTIVE, SERENDIPITOUS AND ABSOLUTELY LIBERATING."



A quick change of continents and the same could be said of a road trip in our wide brown land, and there is no-one more acutely aware of that than Mildura's Alan Rodgers.

Alan, 74, has been a kidney dialysis patient since 2018, but he hasn't allowed the thrice weekly, life-saving treatment to dent his love of travel, nor his desire to get out on the road.

Alan started conventional satellite dialysis at the Epworth Box Hill hospital in 2018 and the following month started home haemodialysis training with Royal Melbourne Hospital's Home Dialysis Service while waiting for a satellite dialysis spot closer to home.

Alan and wife Judith undertook eight weeks of home-based haemodialysis training with Judith learning set up the necessary equipment and the intricacies of the associated 'needlework' needed to complete each treatment.

Of that training Judith said: "While it may seem daunting to begin with, the training at RMH Parkville was excellent and you soon become confident and re-assured that help is only as far away as the phone." By June 2018 the couple commenced their haemodialysis sessions at home, and they became a routine – for six hours each time, three days a week.

But, faced with the prospect of never being able to stray too far from their home-based dialysis regime, the couple took matters into their own hands and constructed their own mobile dialysis facility.

Regular readers of *Heartbeat* will recall our article last edition about The Big Red Kidney Bus mobile dialysis service. Well, Alan has created his personal version of the same, decking out his classic Denning bus/motorhome with its own dialysis facilities.

"When I was told I was going to need dialysis three times a week I thought 'That's no bloody use to me. I want to be able to travel'," Alan recalls.

"I was lucky," he says. "I already had the bus decked out as a motorhome and I had the means to complete the modifications it needed to become a mobile dialysis facility."

For those not in the know, kidney dialysis is the process of removing excess water, solutes and toxins from the blood in people whose kidneys can no longer perform these functions naturally.

Also referred to as renal replacement therapy, the first successful dialysis was performed in 1943 and the technology has been improving ever since. Although great leaps and bounds have been made in the treatment process, it's frequency and the

length of time it takes to complete – in Alan's case anything between four and six hours per sitting – it generally places severe restrictions on a patient's ability to travel any great distance or spend any length of time away from dialysis facilities, either at home or in a hospital.

That is why Alan and Judith were keen to see what they could do to free themselves from the shackles of strictly home-based treatment.

They were aware of Kidney Health Australia's Big Red Kidney Bus program. In a nutshell, the program travels to different locations in Victoria and New South Wales each year, staying for up to six weeks at a time, allowing people to book short or long holidays without having to worry about missing dialysis treatments. There are up to six sessions available per day, and patients can book as many as needed throughout the duration of their holiday. (See our Spring 2023 edition for more on this service).

While the couple could appreciate the opportunities The Big Red Kidney Bus offered, they were keen to explore the viability of setting up their own equivalent. They were spurred on in this endeavour after meeting a former dialysis patient who had gone mobile with his equipment embedded into his caravan.



ALAN'S FIRST DAY DIALYSING AT HOME.

JUDITH ASSISTS ALAN TO COMMENCE HIS HOME HAEUMODIALYSIS TREATMENT.

That bloke, Alan told *Heartbeat*, had subsequently had a kidney transplant, and didn't need the 'dialysis caravan' anymore. "We thought about buying the caravan but decided instead to modify the motorhome we had," he said.

"They (Kidney Health Australia) had their Big Red Bus, and I had my Big Green Bus! "So, where I had a fold out double bed in the front, and a kitchen table and chairs, I rearranged all that to fit the dialysis equipment and a couple of reclining chairs and a different fold out table."

Alan and Judith are also grateful for the support they received from Royal Melbourne Hospital. The hospital supplied the equipment that has allowed the couple to travel virtually anywhere in the country while not sacrificing Alan's vital dialysis regime.

"When we went to see the hospital and told them what we wanted to do and ask how much it was going to cost they said: 'Not to worry, we'll give you another machine for the bus'," Alan said.

The hospital, of course, was already supplying the machine Alan uses at home. Since completing the home haemodialysis training, Judith has become Alan's full-time carer and says the couple tries to make use of the six-hour dialysis treatment times by catching up on their favourite television

shows; talking to friends and family on the phone, or sharing a meal.

Alan even enjoys a nap sometimes! Judith revealed.

She is reluctant to leave Alan's side, even to go out to the letterbox, while the treatment is in progress. It is, she says, a safety issue.

Home dialysis and dialysis on their bus is not without its challenges.

"Once we 'blew' a vein while needling and we had to ring the home dialysis on-call number and a nurse talked us through what to do. Putting ice on the vein and needling the fistula again," Judith recalls.

"Another time when we were away in the bus, we had trouble with the water quality and this time a home dialysis technician talked us through adjusting the water reverse osmosis system.

"And yet another time while we were away we had trouble with the machine, and we had to be referred to the nearest hospital where there were dialysis facilities."

But even with those hiccups, the couple counts themselves fortunate.

Their Big Green Bus gives them dialysis "freedom and flexibility".

"The motorhome/bus dialysis facility has enabled us to go on holidays and attend family celebrations out of town," the couple said.

"A wedding, a funeral, a holiday...we can go," Judith said.

"Whereas other people can generally only get away for a weekend at most."

Their bus-based freedom allowed the couple to head north to Cairns during winter this year for a couple of months.

And it will allow them to head for Mt Eliza to catch up with a mate of Alan's this month (January) and next month they are off to Cowell in South Australia to catch crabs!

Those are sure to be memories to treasure.

For those who like history, Alan has been in Mildura since the early 1970s.

He came to our city as a driver with Murray Valley Coaches, so driving his motorhome with its dialysis facilities, is second nature. When the coach service folded, he drove trucks for Wally Young and later started his own industrial waste disposal business which he sold to the Cleanaway group on retirement.

There may be readers who recall his distinctive Ford F100 utility with its even more distinctive 'Garbo' number plate.

Or the green Mini Moke he keeps under his bus to get around in when he is parked up somewhere across our wide, brown land enjoying life on the road.



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CHAT TO US





NEWU STUDIO

MAKES A COLOURFUL DEBUT

FOR THOSE LADIES WHO LIKE TO WEAR SOMETHING DIFFERENT
TO EVERY GLAMOROUS EVENT THEY ATTEND, THEN HERE IS A CONCEPT
THAT WILL BE SURE TO APPEAL.



MODELS: RACHAEL COSTELLO AND ZOE BURNETT. PHOTOS: ADAM PRITCHARD.

Now an exciting and innovative, fashion garment hire service with a difference, has made its debut in Mildura. 'newU Studio', located above newU Home in Tenth Street, is the inspiration of Zoe Burnett, who, up until recently worked at the Mildura Base Public Hospital (MBPH) as a Mental Health Clinician.

"I had been employed at the hospital since 2016. I completed a placement in ACIS in 2015, soon after I started in the Continuing Care Team, then moved across to the acute team and I had been there for seven years until deciding to concentrate on my new business venture," Zoe said.

Zoe's little 'side-hustle' as she liked to refer to it, has now seen her dream become a reality. "I have been dreaming about this for some years and spruiking about it – saying I would love to do this," Zoe said.

Then friends Hieu and Graeme, opened newU Home Wet Cleaning service, which conveniently has a studio apartment above it. From there, newU Studio became a reality.

Zoe's newU Studio will have ball gowns, exquisite dresses and outfits for hire for people who might have a special function like the MBPH Foundation Gala Ball, cocktail parties, weddings and other special occasions and it's a one-off hire, which is easy for the wearer and sustainable for the environment. Zoe buys her stock directly from the brands and designers who she has discerningly chosen.

"Currently I am buying garments from designers that I like and so it's a nice little curated collection of things that I love and are mostly Australian," she said. "I like to buy close to home and support our fashion industry, that's really important to me, but there are a few brands from the UK and I am looking at the US as well."

Up until opening her studio, Zoe had used an Instagram account and linked Facebook page to promote her range of gowns and dresses.

While there are others in Australia who do this, newU Studio is a Mildura based

business, tailored to suit the needs of any person who comes to the studio. Zoe plans to have an amazing array of dresses, for a whole range of sizes, which meets a different market to a lot of the traditional hire places, who tend to deal with smaller sizes.

"I am catering for sizes from six through to 18, with plans to extend the range, so that it's more inclusive," Zoe said. "I think everyone deserves to be and feel confident in beautiful clothing."

"Ideally, I'd like for people to have an experience up in the studio, they can reach out on Instagram or through the phone number to organise a time to catch up for a 'try on' and the times will be flexible to allow people to come after office hours," she said.

There is no doubt that Zoe has done her market research and intends to broaden her offering and ensure newU Studio's success. newU Studio is located at 1/160 Tenth Street, Mildura. Phone: 0439 225 731 - Instagram: newu_studio

GREEN LIGHT

FOR BLUE TOWELS REPURPOSING



SURGICAL BLUE TOWELS USED BY CLINICAL STAFF IN THE HOSPITAL'S THEATRE.

IN the 2023 Winter edition of *Heartbeat* we featured a recycling program initiated at the Mildura Base Public Hospital (MBPH) which involves the repurposing of surgical grade blue towels, that would otherwise see up to 8000 of them going into landfill each year.

This repurposing has been made possible with co-operation of The Christie Centre and their 'Life Skills' team who now have the program up and running. Life Skills team members package the towels into bundles of four with a wrap-around branded as Christie Centre 'HUK' all-purpose cleaning cloths which are being sold to be used as tea towels, cleaning cloths and other purposes.

The 100 per cent cotton towels are highly absorbent, lint and streak free and machine washable and are similar in size to a tea towel. Huk is a social enterprise of Christie Centre Inc. which provides support, employment and training for people of all abilities. Christie Centre Life Skills Team Leader Kim Primis said the repurposing program was working well with the

towel packs already being sold at selected outlets in Mildura including the Riverfront Powerhouse where they are also used by the Christie Centre's cleaning team each day.

"We also sold them at the Mildura Show where they proved popular and we are looking at supplying the towels in bulk quantities to the industrial sector in Sunraysia, where they would be great for use in factories," Kim said.

Prior to them being recycled, the towels are used in the theatre for surgeons, anaesthetists, nurses and other medical clinicians who are about to undertake surgical procedures, to dry their hands with after they have done a surgical scrub.

Once used, the towels are never used in the hospital again and are relegated to a 240-litre wheelie bin. Once the bin is at capacity, they are delivered to an off-site laundry service, 'newU Home' who wash, dry and fold the towels. Life Skills then collects the towels and its team folds and collates them in readiness to be packaged for sale.

newU Home co-owner Graeme Campbell said that his laundry was pleased to be involved the hospital's blue towel recycling program in association with the Christie Centre's Life Skills social enterprise.

"I think that is one of those great community projects where you have a situation where the hospital is involved, you have a cleaner involved, the Christie Centre and their social enterprise-that makes all of the community go around. It's great for sustainability, ensuring those towels don't go into landfill," he said.

"By recycling these in an efficient and sustainable way, MBPH is not only being environmentally responsible but also providing a valuable resource for the community and supporting the Christie Centre in the process who are providing a wonderful service to the hospital."



THE USED TOWELS ARE STORED IN 250 LITRE WHEELIE BINS BEFORE BEING LAUNDERED.



THE HUK PACK OF FOUR TOWELS.



LIFE SKILLS TEAM MEMBERS JAZMIN CLARKE AND MICHAEL MURNANE PACKAGING THE TOWELS.

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VALE GEOFF HARDING

31-12-1924 — 14-10-2023

A TRIBUTE TO A TRUE GENTLEMAN

WELL known former Mildura restaurateur and owner of the Restaurant Rendezvous for 60 years, Geoff Harding passed away aged 98, on September 14, last year in Anglesea.

Today, many locals would still fondly recall dining with their parents at the Rendezvous in the 1950s, 60s and 70s when Geoff was the principle chef, or in later years with their own families celebrating those special occasions such as weddings, birthdays and anniversaries.

Even in retirement, and up until the Rendezvous was sold in October 2010, the year of its 60th anniversary, a day did not go by without Geoff spending part of the day - usually in morning - in the kitchen, before the chefs arrived, making sauces, prepping cuts of meat and fish and all those other somewhat mundane but necessary tasks before service commenced.

After Geoff's beloved wife Pat, passed away in 2013, a short time later, his eldest son Graeme, who was the former manager of the Rendezvous and his pharmacist wife Deborah, decided to make a seachange and move to Anglesea. Geoff was encouraged to go with them, which he did. Many more happy and healthy years followed, with Geoff enjoying the change of lifestyle.

On Friday, October 6, last year a memorial service was held in Mildura at Willow and Ivie to celebrate Geoff's life.

Graeme Harding delivered the eulogy, excerpts of which *Heartbeat* is privileged to share with our readers.

Graeme told those assembled: "Geoffrey Adrian Harding came into this world on the last day, of the last month of 1924. He was the first of two sons, born to hardworking and industrious parents, Marcus and Alice Harding, World War One Soldier Settlers, forging a new life, from the harsh Mallee scrub, growing citrus and dried fruit at the irrigation settlement of Red Cliffs.

Dad, together with his younger brother Des, enjoyed a happy and contented childhood, playing cricket and tennis, swimming in the irrigation channels, taking music lessons and socialising with schoolmates, all within the embrace of a loving and stable family.

In 1940, Dad was sent as a boarder to The Geelong College to complete his final two years of secondary schooling where he excelled.

Matriculating in 1941, he was a member of the College 1st XI Cricket team, and runner up in the Open Tennis Championships. As a slow left arm bowler, he enjoyed an outstanding season in 1941 with a bowling average of 15.41 runs per wicket. This placed him 14th overall in the College bowling averages for the 100 years between 1861 and 1961.

NAVAL SERVICE

In December 1941, with the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbour, and the war now on Australia's doorstep, Dad was

encouraged by his parents to defer any university studies, return to Red Cliffs and apply for a position at the Mildura Branch of a Melbourne accounting firm Hancock and Woodward.

Armed with a good matriculation score and still too young to be called up, he applied, was successful and commenced in February 1943 as an accounting trainee.

During this period, waiting for his enlistment papers to arrive, he commenced formal accountancy studies as set by the Institute of Chartered Accountants and delivered by 'Hemingway and Robertson' by correspondence, what we would now call 'remote learning'. Obviously, his matriculation accountancy subject had been put to good purpose as in first year exam results and he topped the state.

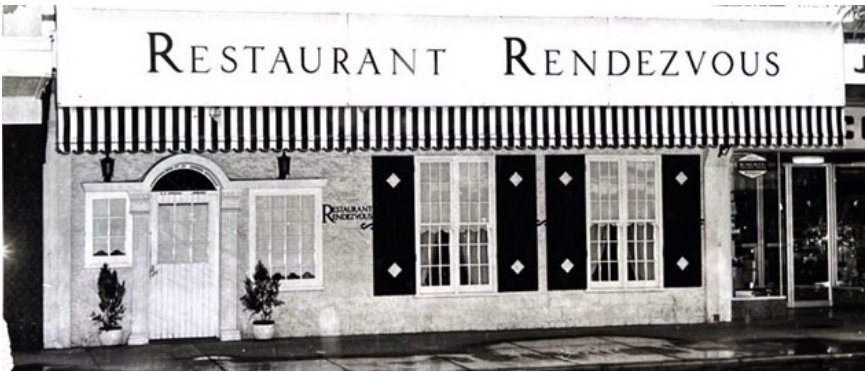
Dad also joined the air cadets, possibly not out of any patriotic fervour or a strong interest in aviation, as many here today would know, his mechanical or technical skills at best border on the inept. I can still recall Mum once commenting out of sheer frustration, "Your father would struggle to replace the staples in a stapler!"

His air cadet adventure was however to be short lived as during his medical it was discovered he was colour blind, automatically disqualifying him for pilot training.

His attention now turned to joining the RAN and on reaching call up age, he was off to Flinders Naval Base for training.

RESTAURANT RENDEZVOUS CIRCA 1960S.

GEOFFREY ADRIAN HARDING.



GEOFF & PAT WITH SON GRAEME OUTSIDE THE RESTAURANT.



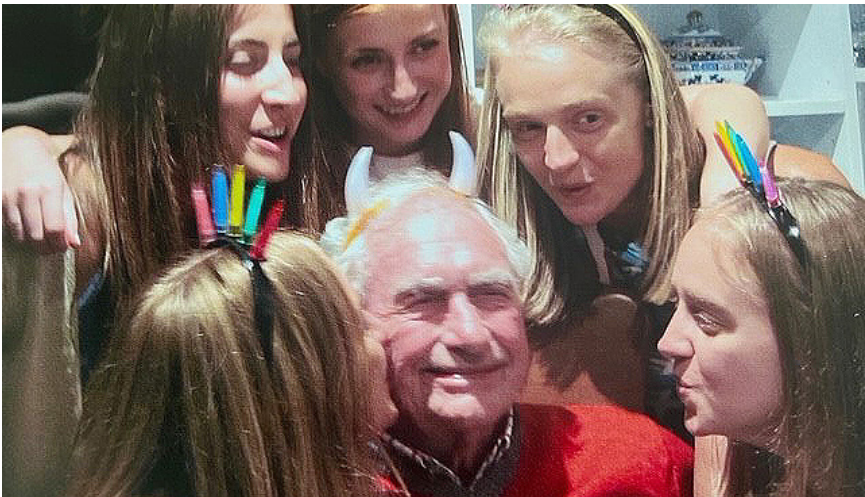
PAT & GEOFF HARDING RELAXING IN RETIREMENT.



GEOFF IN HIS CHEF'S ATTIRE IN THE MAIN DINING AREA.



MINE HOST TAKING A BREAK FROM THE KITCHEN.



GEOFF SURROUNDED BY HIS DOTING GRANDDAUGHTERS.

Again, his colour blindness rendered him unfit for active seamanship duties. Given the option of either a sick bay attendant or cook, he rejected both - in hindsight this was somewhat ironic. It was then suggested based on his accountancy studies, a good fit would be the paymasters division.

It would be fair to say that Dad had a pretty good war. On completion of his training, he was drafted to the Sloop, HMAS Warrego, a survey ship with the rank "Ships Writer", in effect the paymaster and PA to the Captain.

By and large, by the time his ship was ready for active duty in the Pacific the war had only six more months to run, and with limited opportunity to be in harm's way. His only real brush with death was coming face to face with a large saltwater crocodile whilst swimming with shipmates near a tidal delta off Darwin where the Warrego was undergoing a refit.

During this period, with plenty of time to spare and few distractions, he continued his accounting studies by 'remote learning' from the Petty Officer's Wardroom. This enabled him to complete several subjects needed for qualification as a chartered accountant.

TUBERCULOSIS DIAGNOSIS

Dad's run of good fortune however was about to end abruptly.

Returning to Sydney in 1946 for discharge and a return to 'civvie street' a full medical was required with an Xray indicating a shadow on his lung. Imagine his disappointment and anguish when told he had early-stage TB, more so as he had no outward symptoms and never felt as fit or heathy.

Fortunately, the 10 months at Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital was not entirely wasted. Influenced or perhaps corrupted by his fellow TB patients, he soon found an interest in SP Betting on the horse-races. Being studious and methodical by nature he discovered a talent for beating the odds and soon was able to show a very heathy return from his betting activities.

RETURNING HOME

On discharge from hospital in 1947 and with a clean bill of health he returned to Red Cliffs and to rejoin his old accounting firm now called Hancock Hollick and Woodward.

In addition to his work and studies these immediate post war years were a busy and exciting time for Dad, playing district cricket for Red Cliffs, catching up with old friends and making new ones as a member of numerous Service clubs, including the Red Cliffs Golf Club, Apex, The Settlers, and of course he continued to keep the local SP Bookmakers honest! More importantly in 1949, he finally met his future wife, Patricia Catherine Sutterby. It's hard to believe that they had not met until now, given that were the same age, Red Cliffs was a small community, both fathers were returned WWI Soldier Settlers and their respective fruit properties not far from each other.

Their courtship flourished, interrupted only by some time apart when Dad, disillusioned with his future career prospects at HHW, accepted a position as accounting officer with a large manufacturing firm in West Melbourne. Mum soon followed, although their time in Melbourne was to be short-lived as Dad by now had come to the realisation, he was more interested in using his accounting experience in his own business rather than for somebody else.

THE RENDEZVOUS IS BORN

Back in Mildura, and now engaged, it could have been expected that wedding plans would soon be announced. Not so! Instead, the young couple, against all convention decided to go into business together. Not any business, but a coffee lounge, recently listed for sale, known as Gilley's Coffee Lounge, but recently rebadged, Café Rendezvous.

In early 1950, pooling their financial assets for a deposit, including Pat's proceeds from the sale of her hairdressing salon in Merbein, and Dad's racehorse winnings, plus a bank loan, the papers were signed and Café Rendezvous was theirs.

By any standard, this crazy/brave venture was considered by their friends and family as foolhardy. Neither had any hospitality experience nor cooking skills as such, other than, as Dad described "a love of wining and dining". Hardly a sound business plan you would agree, and I'm certain his 'inner accountant' would have been horrified.

On the premise of this basic instinct, plus hard work, his accounting experience,

coupled with Mum's friendly and engaging personality as hostess, Dad was confident they would not fail.

I'm pretty sure however, he could not have anticipated that the journey they were about to start when the Café Rendezvous opened for the first time on May 1, 1950, would consume his working life for the next 60 years.

Dad, despite the challenges of starting a new business, also found time to continue his love of cricket, playing for Mildura West for nine years during the 1950s, including two trips away during Country Week as a member of the Sunraysia District team. He was also the club secretary for all this time, as well stints as vice president and president after his playing days finished. His other sporting interests included tennis, table tennis and squash as well as membership of the RSL, Mildura Club, The Setts and 'Carry On'.

FAMILY

The Rendezvous has been without doubt a lifetime passion; however, it has not been the only one, and certainly not more so than Dad's love for family

With such a busy business, sporting and social life, life for Dad as a young father in the 50s could be viewed by today's standards as somewhat one sided. This is not to say that he was a bad father, but rather a absent one and although at the time it didn't seem to matter all that much to us growing up, it must have been tough for Mum.

I can recall days on end as a young boy, and no doubt my brother Lee can as well, that unless you visited Dad at work or were having a meal at the restaurant with Mum, we rarely saw him.

However, whatever Dad may have lacked in the 'parenting stakes' as a young father, he certainly repaid, in spades, as a grandfather.

Mum and Dad warmly welcomed Deborah and Gaby to the family in the 80s and soon with the arrival of our twins Sally and Emily in 1986, followed by Alison and then Rebecca and Poppy to my brother Lee and his wife Gaby, his granddaughters took centre stage.

Dad's love and devotion to his grandchildren has been repaid many times over, as I know how much all of them loved and adored their Gramps to the very end.



POLITICS

Politics was another interest of Dad's in the 60s that ate into 'family time' Through his involvement with Mildura Tourism Association, he was approached by the local branch of the Victorian Liberal party to stand for the seat of North West Province which took in a huge area of the Mallee and Wimmera, in the 1961 State Elections.

The sitting member was the Country Party stalwart, Arthur Mansell who had a huge majority, so Dad chances of an upset win were slim.

Despite this he still polled reasonably well and although the Country Party won the seat, he did reduce its margin.

WINE AND FOOD

With his love of wine and food it is not surprising that Dad had a long association with the Mildura Wine and Food Society.

Apart from the Society proper, in 1990 Dad formed a small group of friends - all Mildura Wine and Food Society members - to meet monthly in the Cellar Room of the Rendezvous and share a gourmet dinner with each bringing a special bottle of wine to enjoy and discuss. These dinners would continue for many years.

RETIREMENT

In 2010, three major events occurred in Dad's life. He and Mum celebrated their 60th Wedding Anniversary, as well as the 60th Anniversary of the Rendezvous, and finally in October 2010, the business was sold.

No doubt it was the sale of the restaurant that potentially could have left a huge hole in his life. Despite being officially retired, a day did not go by without him spending part of the day, usually in morning in the

kitchen, before the chefs arrived, making sauces, prepping cuts of meat and fish and all those other somewhat mundane but necessary tasks before service commenced. The restaurant kitchen was in fact, his 'happy place' and the time he spent there and enjoyment it gave would be difficult to replace.

This in fact was not the case, as time previously spent at the restaurant could now be spent as a full-time carer to Mum, following a leg amputation several years earlier. Together, despite Mum's disability they were able to enjoy many years of close companionship, entertaining friends, and family at home, shopping expeditions and visiting new places.

DAILY EXERCISE

Always a keen swimmer his mornings at the Mildura Olympic Pool was now a daily routine, and although taken at a leisurely pace, the 20 to 30 laps swum each morning was credit to his fitness. He also enjoyed the friendship and morning gossip sessions with other fellow lap swimmers, many of them less than half his age. This morning routine was often followed by an afternoon walk around the Mildura Golf Club, at the back of their home.

Whilst Dad's fitness and health, was never better, Mum was experiencing new health challenges. 2012 was a difficult year as she battled poor health with the likelihood that she would require another major operation. This was later the case and unfortunately due to complications arising from this procedure, Mum passed away peacefully on June 3, 2013.

SEACHANGE TO ANGLESEA

Obviously devastated, Dad resigned himself to a life in Mildura without his beloved Pat. Certain events, however, were soon to change this.

Firstly, with previous business interests no longer a factor, both Deborah and I, were now free to explore other lifestyle opportunities should they arise. This came when a position for a pharmacy manager in Anglesea on the Surf Coast became available. Deborah applied, more out of interest than anything, but when accepted we were suddenly faced with some big decisions, and quickly, including whether Dad would wish to join us. He had no hesitation and enthusiastically agreed to

making a seachange and a new life for himself in Anglesea.

Dad's last couple of years at Anglesea were a time of contentment and routine, following a fairly predictable timetable, centred around his morning newspaper and the daily crossword puzzle, a nap in the afternoon, before completing 30 mins of mobility exercises set out by his exercise physiotherapist, a pre-dinner sherry, perhaps two, a glass of red or white with dinner, some TV, usually The Chase, and the football especially when the Swans were playing.

Healthwise, 2023 had been a difficult year for Dad. Clearly frustrated, the things he once managed only six months earlier were more difficult. His appetite had waned and even enjoyment of his nightly glass of red had all but evaporated, blaming me for buying cheap wine as the reason!

An infection in his leg, whilst in respite care in Torquay, when we were overseas in June led to several falls, eventually with a loss of ability to walk. On our return and now needing full-time nursing care, we moved him closer to home at Cordelia Grove Aged Care Anglesea. He was there for just four weeks before his passing.

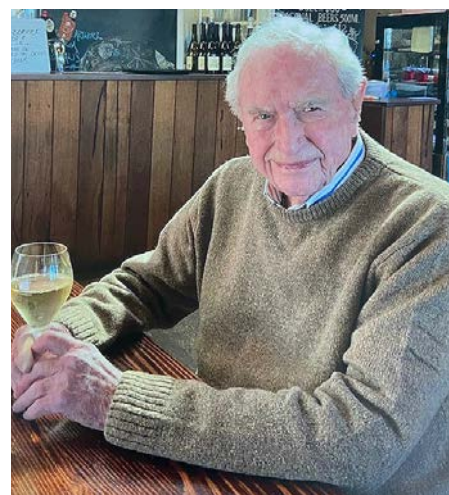
So how do we sign off on a man who in his long life of 98 years touched so many people.

Dad, was a real gentleman, in every sense of its meaning.

True to form, this sentiment, continued right up to the end of his life, as when Deborah and I were leaving Cordelia Grove, with the last of his belongings, one of the many caring staff who had nursed Dad, pulled us aside to pay her respects,

"Geoff was a lovely man," she said. "He was such a gentleman."

By any measure, I reckon that's a pretty good legacy to leave behind.

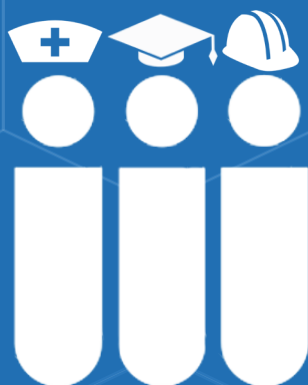


GEOFF RELAXING WITH A GLASS OF WINE



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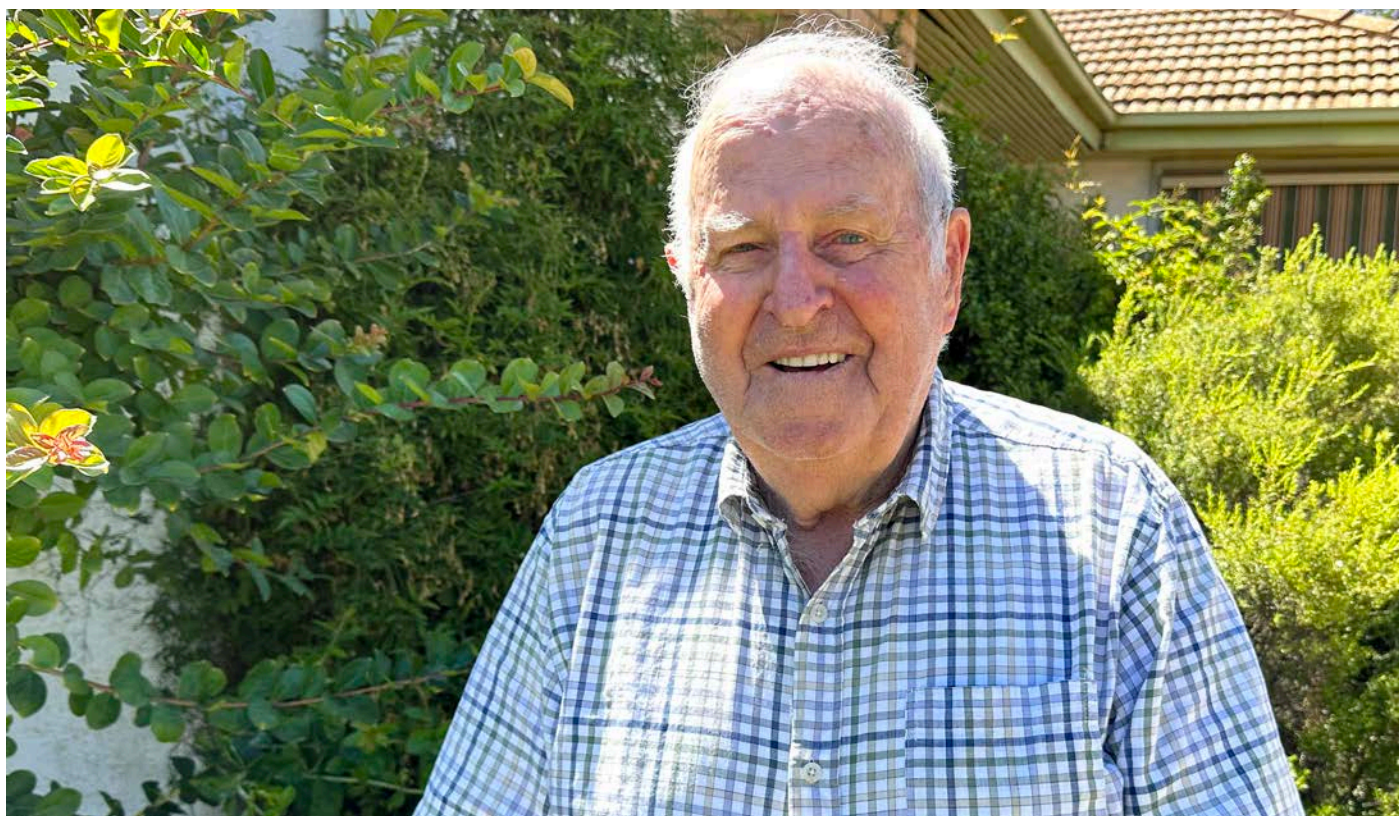
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NONAGENARIAN SHEDS NEW LIGHT ON HOSPITAL MYSTERY

THERE is a good chance the former Werrimull Hospital highlighted in a previous edition is, or was, at Robinvale. According to long-time Millewa resident Jim Douglas, after its closure in 1947 the hospital building was purchased by the then State Rivers and Water Supply Commission in 1952 for the princely sum of one hundred and thirty five pounds and transported to Robinvale. Jim is correct and has a copy of a letter sent by the commission which confirms the details of the sale.

It had been suggested that the Werrimull Bush Nursing Hospital building was still with us, having been moved to Mildura sometime after the hospital closed in 1947. In our Spring 2023 edition of *Heartbeat* we reported that the hostel accommodation building on the corner of Seventh Street and Pine Avenue, opposite the Seven Pines Motel, may have been the former Werrimull Bush Nursing Hospital.

But, recalling the hospital building from his youth, Jim said it bore little resemblance to the Seventh Street and Pine Avenue building featured in our Spring 2023 edition.

Instead, the sprightly 95-year-old told *Heartbeat* that he was working for the SRWS in the 1940s and recalls that after the hospital closed the building became home to SRWS 'ganger' Percy McNamara and his family "for a couple of years".

"He then went to Nandaly, and they (the SRWS) moved the building to Robinvale."

For those who came in late, the Werrimull Bush Nursing Hospital served the pioneering families of the Millewa from 1927 to 1947.

The town's police station now occupies the site on which it stood.

And Jim chuckled as he revealed he was "one of those select few you mentioned in your story" being born at the hospital in 1928!

Those born there, like Jim, numbered in the hundreds -- the offspring of the area's farming pioneers.

While in the big scheme of things the Werrimull Bush Nursing Hospital may have been short-lived, it certainly packed some history into its two decades of operation.

For the record, Jim's interest in the hospital was shared by his wife Irene, co-author of a research paper we highlighted and quoted in our previous edition.

That paper was prepared for a back-to celebration held in 1995, and Jim chaired the organising committee.

At the celebration Jim read out all the names of those who had been born at the Werrimull Bush Nursing Hospital during its two decades of operation.

It was a long list!

Jim has lost track of what happened to the building after it was shifted.

"I realised that I have been to Robinvale a few times over the years but never thought to look for the old hospital," he said.

"But of course, it's probably not there now!" Jim has shed new light on the old hospital's whereabouts, but to some extent the mystery continues.

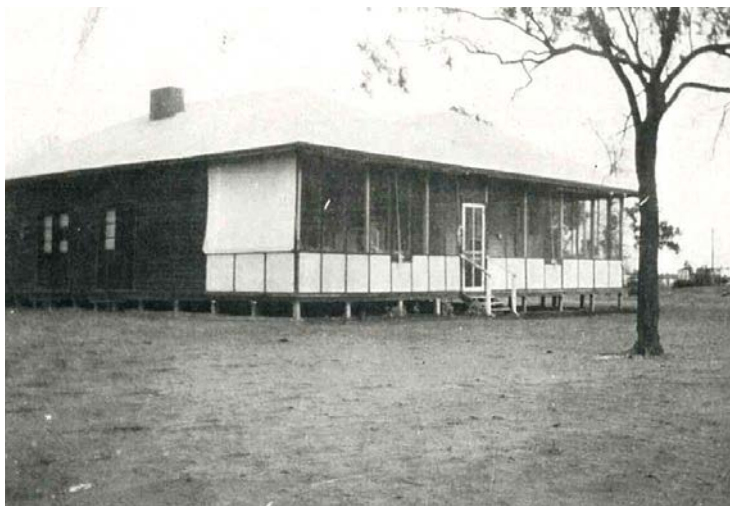
Is it still standing in Robinvale?

If so, where?

And what is it now being used as today?

If anyone has further information about the old building please contact John Dooley on 0404 475 687

e. jdooley@mbph.org.au.



de kept file
COPY. 54/595/40

THE STATE RIVERS AND WATER SUPPLY COMMISSION

3rd July, 1952.

Dear Sir,

re Site of Former Werrimull Bush Nursing
 Hospital
 Allotments 1, 2, & 3, Section D,
 Township of Werrimull. Your Ref. 54/595/40.

With reference to your letter of the 3rd June, 1952, I am directed to inform you that this Commission is prepared to sell the above-mentioned allotments (being the site of the Former Werrimull Bush Nursing Hospital), together with the existing fencing, septic tank and piping situate thereon, for the sum of One Hundred and Thirty Five Pounds (£135).

I am to point out that the hospital building and the fee simple of the site were purchased by the Commission in 1949 from the Victorian Bush Nursing Association. The Commission is therefore in a position to execute an unencumbered freehold transfer of the said allotments to your Department, at their assessed value as stated above.

I would be glad to learn whether the Department is prepared to accept the offer herein.

Yours faithfully,

(sgd) L. DUGGAN.

SECRETARY.

The Chief Commissioner of Police,
 Box 2763Y, G.P.O.,
MELBOURNE.

THE LETTER SENT FROM THE STATE RIVERS AND WATER SUPPLY COMMISSION IN 1952 OFFERING TO PURCHASE THE HOSPITAL.

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A man and a woman are standing together, smiling, at a formal event. The man is wearing a dark suit, a light-colored shirt, and a dark tie. The woman is wearing a black strapless dress. They are standing in front of a background of warm, out-of-focus lights, suggesting an indoor evening event. The title 'GLITZ, GLAM & GOLF' is overlaid on the left side of the image in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

GLITZ, GLAM & GOLF

GLITZ AND GLAM WERE CERTAINLY THE THEME AT THE SECOND ANNUAL MBPH FOUNDATION GALA BALL WITH ALMOST 400 PEOPLE ATTENDING THE HOLLYWOOD-THEMED EVENT AT CLUB DA VINCE.

Fire jugglers and acrobats greeted guests as they arrived at what many describe as the Northern Mallee's hottest ticket. Inside guests enjoyed an amazing assortment of local produce prepared by celebrity cook Stefano di Pieri in conjunction with the incredible team from Club DaVinci. The wines which accompanied each course were supplied by the Forbes family from Zilzie wines, while the generosity of the local business community saw the silent and main auctions again exceed expectations. An appearance by former Hawthorn champion and media star Dermott Brereton highlighted the Foundation golf day held at Coomealla Golf Club. Dermott entertained the crowd at the completion of the day with stories of the past and an insight into the modern game.









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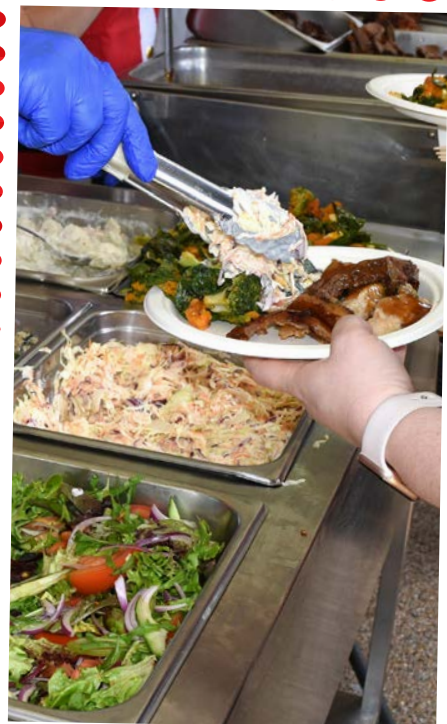
W E E K O F J O Y



MILDURA BASE PUBLIC HOSPITAL TURNED ON THE JOY FOR STAFF AGAIN IN THE LEADUP TO CHRISTMAS AT ITS ANNUAL WEEK OF JOY.

Started three years ago, the event has grown into a staff favourite with over 700 meals served daily. Staff were joined by celebrity cook Stefano di Pieri who again volunteered his time to cook and serve an amazing assortment of culinary delights. MBPH CEO Terry Welch said the Week of Joy was an opportunity to acknowledge the wonderful contribution staff make to serving the community of the northern Mallee. "When we started Week of Joy three years ago we wanted to provide an opportunity for staff to celebrate together instead of the traditional individual ward and administration Christmas parties," Mr Welch said. "Honestly I had no idea it would become as successful as it has. "The atmosphere at the hospital during December is just wonderful and you only have to look at the decorations around the entire place to see how engaged staff have become." Stefano said it was his opportunity to give a little bit back to the people who help care for our community. "The hospital team is really amazing and my contribution is only small, but I hope it brings a smile to the staff."







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CHRISTMAS TIME AT THE MILDURA BASE PUBLIC HOSPITAL IS A FESTIVE OCCASION WITH ALL DEPARTMENTS PUTTING IN A SPECIAL EFFORT WITH THEIR DECORATIONS WHICH LOOKED AMAZING AND SPREAD HAPPINESS AND JOY ACROSS THE HOSPITAL AND PUT SMILES ON THE FACES OF OUR STAFF AND PATIENTS.





Creating a Magical Christmas



IF YOU'VE NEVER VISITED SANTA'S MAGICAL WORKSHOP YOU HAVEN'T SEEN THE BEST CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS IN SUNRAYSLIA. IN FACT, IT WOULD BE HARD TO SEE ANY OTHER STORE SURPASSING THIS HUGE VARIETY OF BEAUTIFUL, FESTIVE SEASON COLLECTION, GUARANTEED TO FILL YOUR HOME WITH THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS!





Celebrating 10 years in business, Heartbeat visited the colourful shop, located at 17-19 Indi Avenue, Red Cliffs, where proprietor Lisa McNabb and her team of energetic helpers are at their busiest prior to the months leading up to Christmas, serving their many customers, in between stocking the shelves and filling the floor space of the store with every decoration imaginable. One of the many features of the 'magical store' are the 'Elves & Fairies' who welcome you into their garden gazebo. "They are idling away the hours until they can bring a dusting of joy and sprinkle of magic to your home," Lisa said. "The fairies look after the gnomes, birds, butterflies and lots of other forest and woodland creatures, making sure the elves don't get them into too much mischief!" This gallery of photos shows just a sample of what was on display in Santa's Magical Workshop. For opening times post Christmas check their website: www.santasmagicalworkshop.com.au or call 0411 194 663.



CITY HEART ALWAYS MAKES IT A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS!

MILDURA'S City Heart becomes a focal point at Christmas time and as always, the Langtree Mall was buzzing with a hive of activities and adorned with decorations! Festivities kicked-off in earnest on Friday, November 24, with a Twilight Market held in the mall, a highlight of which, was Santa making his big arrival, much to the delight of the kids and their families who turned out in large numbers for the fun-filled occasion. On the following Monday, Santa's Workshop opened, with the jolly old fellow being inundated by children wanting to have their photo taken with him and to make out their Christmas present lists! Mildura City Heart also ran their fabulous Christmas Gift Card Giveaway, which had \$25,000 in prizes up for grabs! With City Heart's message to shop locally, traders in the CBD experienced buoyant sales and all-in-all a very merry time was had by all those who visited the precinct.



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LA TROBE CELEBRATES MILESTONE

NOVEMBER 2023, WAS A VERY SPECIAL MONTH FOR LA TROBE UNIVERSITY'S MILDURA CAMPUS. THE CAMPUS CELEBRATED 20 YEARS OF ITS MAIN CAMPUS BUILDING -- THE BRIAN GROGAN BUILDING, TURNED THE SOD TO COMMENCE THE BUILDING OF NEW NURSING CLINICAL LABS, AND ANNOUNCED A TRIBUTE TO A PREVIOUS HEAD OF CAMPUS. IN ADDITION, THE UNIVERSITY ANNOUNCED A GENEROUS DONATION HAD BEEN MADE BY THE MCCALL MACBAIN FOUNDATION TO LA TROBE'S MILDURA CAMPUS, THAT WILL SUPPORT A PROGRAM TO HELP BRIDGE THE HIGHER EDUCATION GAP FOR MILDURA SENIOR SCHOOL STUDENTS.

On November 23 last year La Trobe further celebrated the 20-year milestone of the Brian Grogan Building in Mildura with an evening event on campus. Members of La Trobe's senior executive, local alumni, staff, students, and industry partners joined together to hear about La Trobe's history and achievements in Mildura. At the event Vice-Chancellor Professor John Dewar AO paid tribute to Brian Grogan OAM and the impact he had on La Trobe's Mildura campus.

The event was also an opportunity for Professor Dewar to reveal the building plans for two new state-of-the-art clinical labs. The new nursing clinical simulation suite will be an extension to the Brian Grogan building and will feature two state-of-the-art clinical laboratories built to hospital standards.

The \$4.97million project will provide students with an immersive and realistic experience where they will obtain job-ready skills that will increase their employability. The clinical laboratories will deliver improved teaching and learning experiences by creating a hands-on, technology-enabled environment.



BRIAN GROGAN AT THE OPENING OF THE BUILDING NAMED IN HIS HONOUR IN 2003.



La Trobe University Vice-Chancellor, Professor John Dewar AO, said the university was proud to take a leadership role in providing tangible pathways to an ever-expanding regional health workforce.

“We are committed to contributing to the growth of a skilled workforce and more regionally-based qualified healthcare professionals,” Professor Dewar said.

“This project will be the most advanced clinical training environment in the Mildura district, providing an opportunity to bring health organisations onto the campus for professional development activities.

“This is part of a \$170million program of investment we are making across all our campuses to improve the quality and capacity of our health education facilities.” The extension will double the capacity of the La Trobe Rural Health School to accommodate student growth, with two separate clinical laboratories comprising of four beds each and be complete ready for teaching semester 1, 2025.

The new clinical simulation suite will be named after Dr Deb Neal, who contributed to the University for more than three decades spending her final nine years, between 2013 to 2022, as the Mildura Head of Campus. Dr Neal was La Trobe Mildura’s first employee starting in 1991.

La Trobe University Chancellor, the Honourable John Brumby AO was also in Mildura for the 20-year celebration event and provided guests with an overview of the success of the Make the Difference fund raising campaign.

La Trobe launched its first ever fund



LA TROBE'S NEW ALUMNI TRIBUTE WALK FEATURES ALONG THE WINDOWS OF THE BRIAN GROGAN BUILDING.

raising campaign, Make the Difference, to coincide with its 50th anniversary in 2017, with a target of \$50million by 2020. This target was reached well ahead of schedule in early 2018.

The second phase of the campaign was launched in June 2018 with a more ambitious target of \$100million by 2022. This was reached this year and the campaign has now been extended, with a \$200million target to be reached by 2027. Thanks to the generosity of La Trobe alumni and supporters around the state, funds have been raised for scholarships, outreach programs and research, some of which is directed to the Mildura campus and region.

In more recent developments, Mildura will now benefit from the La Trobe University

Pathways Program following a generous donation by the McCall MacBain Foundation.

The program currently exists at La Trobe’s Albury-Wodonga and Shepparton campuses and aims to raise aspirations and increase educational engagement in further and higher education for senior school students in partner schools. The program provides academic and learning support, including a mentor program with local La Trobe University students.

Whilst in Mildura for the 20-year celebrations, the Chancellor led a roundtable discussion on Thursday, November 23, with industry leaders across various sectors, including councils, businesses, schools, and government agencies.



The discussion focused on broader conversations about what the community and economy need for graduates of the future and what they see as the barriers to higher educational attainment.

Sandy Connor, Head of Campus, said it's been wonderful to approach then end of 2023 with exciting developments for La Trobe University Mildura. A nurse academic herself, Ms Connor said the new nursing simulation suite will further cement the university's reputation for providing world-class rural health education.

"Regional communities are crying out for more nurses and midwives. This investment in cutting-edge facilities will complement our strong links to partner healthcare organisations like Mildura Base Public Hospital meaning when these students emerge as professionals, they will be in an ideal position to ease some of that pressure," Sandy explained.

"Staff on campus are now excitingly watching on every day as our new nursing labs are being built. La Trobe University has a long and proud history in Mildura and we simply cannot wait for the new labs to open in 2024 and mark this next chapter.



"Another great feature to our campus that we also launched last month was our new alumni tribute walk. The window display features images of 30 La Trobe Mildura alumni, who have graduated since the Brian Grogan building opened in 2003.

"The alumni tribute walk is installed along the windows of the Brian Grogan building and also encompasses artwork by Sian Harris, a Kurnu Paakantyi woman from

Wilcannia, in far west New South Wales.

"This was an initiative we set out to do to celebrate La Trobe's impact in Mildura, because our alumni are a wonderful reflection of why we're here and why we do what we do.

"I invite everyone to visit us on campus and check in out, when you do, you will notice quite a few Mildura Base Public Hospital staff members feature!"



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Dot drives, walks, knits, reads, gardens, runs the Village library, keeps record books and diaries, travels with family and attends family gatherings, and is constantly thoughtful and kind. In summing up what Princes Court Village means to her, Dot said "I'm the happiest I've been since I was first on my own." **Dot Baker, Princes Court Village**

"We have also benefited greatly from the support staff allocated to meet our needs with current services, enabling Nola to continue to access the community and maintain her social connectedness. Nola always looks forward to her weekly support service and enjoys planning the weekly outing with the support worker." **Barrie and Nola Macmillian, Princes Court At Home**

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SUNITAFE'S NEW CEO SETTLES IN

FOLLOWING THE DEPARTURE OF SUNITAFE CEO GEOFF DEA IN JUNE 2023 AFTER SEVEN YEARS IN THE TOP JOB, HIS NEWLY APPOINTED SUCCESSOR, BRETT MILLINGTON TOOK OVER AND HAS BEEN WORKING AWAY QUIETLY EVER SINCE.

Mr Millington was formerly the CEO of Mildura Regional Development (MRD), a position he held from 2019. Whilst not seeking a career path change, Mr Millington was approached by a recruitment firm who was seeking candidates to fill the vacant CEO role at SuniTAFE.

Heartbeat asked Mr Millington what had attracted him to the role when Mr Dea announced his retirement?

"It was interesting, because I hadn't really considered that (as a career move). I had worked with Geoff on the board of MRD, but I hadn't really positioned it in regard to what my next career step may be," Mr Millington said.

"However, I was approached by a recruitment consultant in regard to applying for the position and that prompted my interest.

"I looked at what skills I had and what contacts I had within our region based on the role I was performing with Mildura Regional Development and that close connection with industry and understanding - what the drivers were for skills growth and needs in our region - and how that fitted in with the delivery aspects of SuniTAFE.

"That led to my interest and I was fortunate to be selected."

Mr Millington was asked how he was settling into his new role.

"I'm loving it actually," he said.

"In my previous role at MRD, I had some interaction with parties from SuniTAFE as many other people do, but it's not until you are inside the organisation that you understand the full-gamut of the things they do here.

"A classic example of that is 'Dulka Yuppata', our Indigenous training centre.

"It serves to provide educational support for young people who have potentially fallen out of the system or are transitioning to a senior secondary/pre-employment environment, to be able to deliver that additional focused training in Indigenous arts or conservation land management for example and to continue to create those opportunities.

"I refer to it as 'concentric circles of cultural safety'. Dulka Yuppata is in the centre of that concentric circle and outside of that is the broader SuniTAFE campus and La Trobe. We want students to feel culturally safe to be able to transition into those environments - and beyond that, employment in the broader community.

"That creates the challenge of how do we help to cross those various circles, so that people start off in one area and then develop the confidence and the skills to be able to move into other areas as well?"

Mr Millington was proud to share news of an event held on October 26, where SuniTAFE's Chris McGinty, from the Dulka Yuppata school, won the Koorie Educator of the Year Award in the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Wurreker Awards.

"The annual Wurreker Awards night celebrates the people and organisations that passionately contribute to Koorie training, education and employment," he said.

The night also highlights how high-quality learning and experience can open new pathways for Koorie people.

Mr Millington intends to build on the legacy of Mr Dea and arrived at SuniTAFE at a time when a number of major enhancements and upgrades to the campus have been completed.

A visit from the Gayle Tierney, Minister for Skills and TAFE and Minister for Regional Development in October, marked the official opening of the SuniTAFE 'Nexus Space', a \$1.6million project which was part of a \$4.4million upgrade of the 30-year-old campus.

Speaking at the occasion, Mr Millington said: "SuniTAFE was very grateful for the support of the Minister and the State Government in delivering this space which enables us to also showcase our students' efforts and celebrate their successes".

"The students and staff at SuniTAFE are delighted to have this great new activation space as a welcoming point to our Mildura Campus," he added.

"Not only does it help serve a functional purpose of displaying the training opportunities that exist here, it also draws people to the Skills and Jobs Centre and the potential careers that could be on offer from studying at TAFE." The Nexus project involved an entire overhaul of the main SuniTAFE building.

Prior to these renovations, visitors to SuniTAFE were greeted by a hallway of administrative offices when they walked through the front doors of the Institute.

Now, those same front doors lead to a bright, modern, and open-plan engagement space. In addition, the administrative offices were relocated to a refurbished section upstairs, so that the

main entrance could be more welcoming and, most importantly, student-centred.

The new space was first opened to the public in May, after nearly two years of planning and construction. The name 'Nexus' was chosen for its definition, meaning a connection or focal point.

The Nexus includes an exhibit space, an IT hub, a chill out zone, and an updated café. The inclusion of the Skills and Jobs Centre in the Nexus space, positions them in a central location to offer their services to even more members of the public.

MOBILE SKILLS & JOBS CENTRE

Mr Millington said that SuniTAFE has three mobile Skills & Jobs Centre vans that travel out across the Mallee region as far as Charlton and across to Swan Hill.

"Our area runs across a wide region, with campuses in Swan Hill and Mildura, as well as our SMART Farm located in Cardross and we also do some delivery of courses at Robinvale Secondary College," he said.

"The Skills and Jobs Centre is a little bit outside of TAFE but it is situated within SuniTAFE and we effectively host the centre as a delivery arm for government." Mr Millington said the centre also helps people who might not necessarily need to go to TAFE.

"These are people who are looking to gain new skills or a job and we can help to direct them," he said.

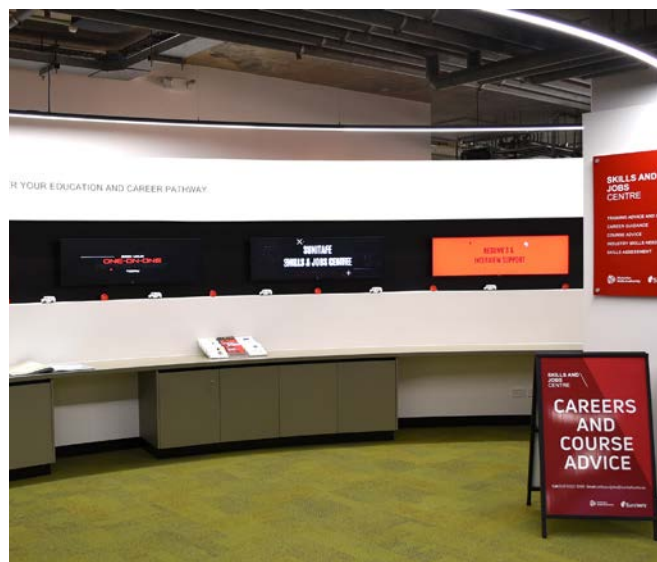
"We will also assist students who are undertaking Vocational Educational Training delivered in secondary colleges in Years 10, 11 and 12.

"Today for example, we have dozens classes of these students at SuniTAFE from the different colleges who may be undertaking plumbing, electrical, beauty or whatever the space they may be looking to go into, learning about the opportunities in those and other career paths."

SuniTAFE currently has more than 4000 students, who comprise a mix of full-time, part-time or short courses students and projections are that this number will increase to more than 4100 students in 2024.

"Obviously programs like 'Fee-Free TAFE' are helping to grow that cohort as well," Mr Millington said.

"It's important to continue to maintain the relationships with secondary colleges and to help young students in particular, feel comfortable to move into the TAFE environment.



SKILLS AND JOBS CENTRE.

SUNITAFE NEXUS LOUNGE AREA.

“We also continue to focus on maintaining relationships with the community to understand what skills needs and job opportunities there are and being able to offer the courses that deliver those skills sets that align with Victorian Skills Plan, a part of which, is identifying where those jobs shortages are likely to be.”

SMART FARM - DEVELOPING THE PEOPLE OF TODAY INTO THE WORKFORCE OF TOMORROW

The horticultural industry is diverse and central to the national economy. In Sunraysia alone, horticulture is forecast to double over the next 10-plus years. Despite job prospects increasing in the sector, jobs in farming aren't what they used to be.

While traditional labour skills are still required to operate farms today, we are now at a crossroads between industrial-era farming and SMART Farming. These farms of the future will use cutting-edge technology and equipment to make

horticulture farming more efficient and productive.

A generation of farm workers with skills to transform the horticulture industry.

Mr Millington said that he hopes to see further investment in SuniTAFE's SMART Farm campus at Cardross, which is continuing to look at the opportunities and innovations for our local agriculture and horticulture industries.

“The Mildura LGA is the largest producing local government area in Australia for agriculture. \$1.1billion last year, across the river in Wentworth is another \$700million and the Swan Hill LGA which takes in Robinvale contributes another \$700million to the region's agriculture value,” he said.

“If you add onto that, the value-add piece of manufacturing, that is close to another billion dollars.

“Therefore, if we're not helping to develop and deliver the skill sets, we're not helping to prepare our communities for the future.

“And part of that, is creating that awareness

and we are currently working with Chaffey Secondary College, they have a small farm at the back of their campus. “They are now starting to deliver some integrated work and we have provided the teachers at Year-10 level, so that when they are transitioning through into further VCAL studies, they can then move out to our SMART Farm campus and study agriculture and learn about the great technologies that we are using on farm now.”

Mr Millington expanded on the importance of skills training.

“At the moment this a significant focus especially with the National Skills Agreement being recently signed between Victoria and the Federal Government and the Victorian Skills Plan for 2024 also launched,” he said.

“These are indicators of not only what are the skills needs and shortages that we are going to have in our region and across the state, but also the opportunities that exist with that and where the work of the future comes from.



“There is another reform currently being undertaken to create the Australian Universities Accord, for transformation of the higher education sector, and this talks about the relationships between vocational education training, what TAFE delivers, and stronger links to the university sector.

“And so for SuniTAFE it’s about how we continue to strengthen those positions – our relationship with La Trobe as a precinct partner here on Benetook Avenue, and in combination with La Trobe and the University of Melbourne in the Mallee Regional Innovation Centre (MRIC).”

There is also another program being developed called the Northern Victorian Education Partnership, which is between La Trobe University and the four TAFEs across the northern part of Victoria, working together to create ‘pathways’ for people in regional Victoria to increase participation in higher education - a TAFE qualification and then potentially a transition into university. That means ensuring that we work together to deliver the skills needed in our communities locally.

WORLD STANDARD SKILLS TRAINING

SuniTAFE’s Swan Hill campus is well

renowned for its heavy automotive component as is the Mildura campus as well, but Swan Hill attracts people from all over the state to do their trade development there.

Every two years, World Skills Australia have an event which brings together vocational education training trades-based students from across all of the states who compete in a skills competition.

“I attended the last one held at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre and there was 17,000 square metres of different trades and skills activities being conducted,” Mr Millington said.

“A number of our teachers were involved as coaches and a number of our students were competing.”

SuniTAFE won two gold medals at that event, Thomas Bevan in Heavy Automotive and Tristan Bulger in Plastering, Heavy automotive student, Thomas Bevan from Mildura, works at Mildura Truck Centre as an apprentice while he completes Certificate III in Heavy Commercial Vehicle Mechanical Technology (AUR31120) at SuniTAFE.

“He is a great example of the calibre of students we have and the relationship we have with local industry,” Mr Millington said.

“Thomas and Tristan are now potentially

going on to France next year to represent Australia at the World Skills Games as part of the ‘Skillaroos’ team who will be competing.”

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS RETURNING POST-PANDEMIC

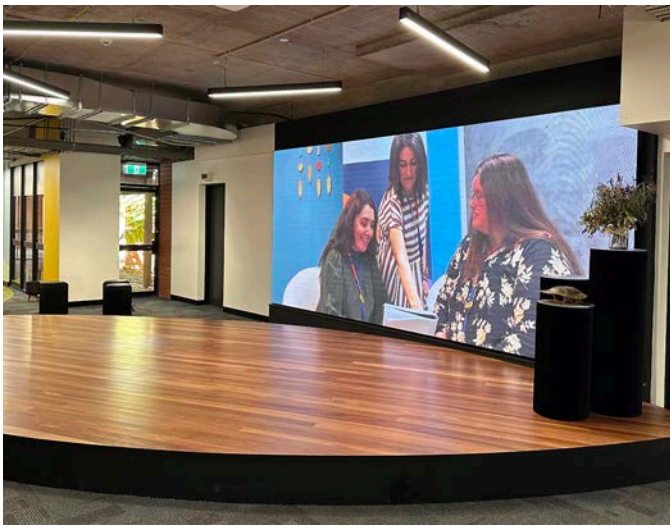
Mr Millington said that the number of international students attending SuniTAFE are slowly returning to pre-covid numbers.

“This year we have 91 students and we are looking at 110 by next year. Previously, we had up to 180 international students. Our on-campus accommodation, which has 50 rooms, is currently fully occupied.

“We recently had one of our international students win the Victorian International Student of the Year (Vocational Education and Training) Award

SuniTAFE student Yuying ‘Linda’ Ding was named International Student of the Year – Vocational Education and Training at the Victorian International Education Awards, the second consecutive year that a SuniTAFE student has received this accolade.

These awards form part of the Study Melbourne initiative and aim to congratulate students who champion international education and make the most of their move to Australia.



SUNITAFE DULKA YUPPATA INDIGENOUS TRAINING CENTRE.

SUNITAFE BRETT MILLINGTON STARTING THE DAY.

"Linda is a deserving winner of this award, using her time in Mildura to give back to the community," Mr Millington said. "She promotes Mildura on social media platforms by posting photos and reviews, encouraging increased tourism. "Linda also uses the knowledge she has gained from her accounting course to better understand local business and the operational and sustainability issues they face."

NURSING AND ALLIED HEALTH COURSES

SuniTAFE provides a number of Allied Health and Enrolled Nursing courses that help to deliver staff to the Mildura Base Public Hospital.

"We know the shortages, particularly in nursing for example, and as part of that career development, you need to have that level of placement and so having a close relationship with the hospital means that we can place our students and know that you have qualified staff onboard who are able to do some of the assessments as well," Mr Millington said. "Some of our nursing teachers have either

been in the hospital system or still do some shifts at the hospital, and so there is that combination of maintaining current knowledge and to help the students transition into the actual work place because they know it themselves.

"A great recent outcome has been the success of one of our Nursing students being recognised as the Victorian Koorie Student of the Year award at the Victorian Training Awards. Pearl Dunn has now progressed to be a finalist at the National Training Awards, a reward for her dedication and hard work, but also recognition for what she is now delivering back to her community as a nurse.

"In the allied health space it's exactly the same. It's being able to help those students be prepared and be able to confidently deliver those skills they are trained for.

"Our Vision is to inspire people to believe and grow through learning, so my focus will be how we continue to grow our relationships with industry and the community to understand their needs and the desires of our potential students. We will work on that collaboration piece to ensure that our relationships remain strong and deliver on those needs."



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FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

SHINES THE SPOTLIGHT ON INDIAN CULTURE

SUNDAY, October 8, last year the Mildura Arts Centre (MAC) was the focal point where the Indian Festival of Light was celebrated in perfect weather conditions. India Day as it was 'billed', was attended by more than 800 people, with the four-hour festival commencing at 5pm with a two-hour stage production in the MAC's auditorium, which was a sell-out, with more

than 450 people enjoying the colourfully, spectacular performances of traditional dance, music and other entertainment. In India, one of the most significant festivals is Diwali, or the Festival of Lights. It's a five-day celebration that includes good food, fireworks, coloured sand, and special candles and lamps. Observed by more than a billion people

across faiths, this five-day festival of lights brings prayer, feasts, fireworks and, for some, a new year. Diwali is India's most important festival of the year — a time to celebrate the triumph of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, and good over evil. Diwali, or Dipawali, is India's biggest and most important holiday of the year.

ENJOYING THE FESTIVAL AT THE MAC WAS LUCAS FOUNDATION CO-FOUNDER BREE WHITELEGG AND HER FAMILY INCLUDING 10-YEAR-OLD LUCAS FOR WHOM THE FOUNDATION WAS ESTABLISHED FOLLOWING HIS LONG BATTLE WITH AN EARLY CHILDHOOD ILLNESS. THE MBPH FOUNDATION CONTINUES TO MAINTAIN AND GROW ITS LEGACY FOLLOWING A MORE THAN \$200,000 DONATION FROM THE LUCAS FOUNDATION.



The festival gets its name from the row (avali) of clay lamps (deepa) that Indians light outside their homes to symbolize the inner light that protects from spiritual darkness. This festival is as important to Hindus as the Christmas holiday is to Christians.

Over the centuries, Diwali has become a national festival that's also enjoyed by non-Hindu communities

Following the on-stage festivities, the celebrations continued in the grounds of the MAC adjacent to Rio Vista, which included more dancing and music, and a variety of exotic Indian food being enjoyed. The event concluded with a spectacular fireworks show which lit up the night sky.

Clinical Director of Paediatrics at Mildura Base Public Hospital (MBPH) Dr Hariprakash joined with the many hundreds of other local and visiting members of the Indian community, as well as large cross-section of the general community to enjoy India Day.

Dr Hari as he is known, has been in Mildura for 12 years and is among the more than 55 doctors and nurses who are part of the MBPH clinical staff.

Heartbeat spoke with Dr Hari at the event and he described what the Festival of Light signifies for the Indian community.

"It is a great festival which is like Christmas, with Diwali being a festival that reflects the spirit of light and darkness - good versus evil," Dr Hari said.

"Today is a day of happy celebration and we have a lot of Indian people who have



made Mildura their home in recent years, including many of whom are working at the hospital.

"We aren't just talking about doctors alone, we have many nurses as well and people who have established businesses in a range of enterprises, including agriculture.

"Our local Indian population has found Mildura to be a very welcoming place to live and they are integrating into the community well."

Dr Hariprakash said the festival provided a great opportunity to unite the whole Indian community and showcase what the culture is all about.

"Importantly it is also about integrating into the broader community because we are now all one and Australasians," he said.

"All though we are a long way from our homeland, we call Mildura home and are comfortable living and working, while still being free to celebrate their culture here on days like this.

"And so we welcome everybody, not just Indians but people from a variety of ethnic

groups and religions and together we all enrich the local culture."

Member for Mallee Anne Webster spoke to the audience expressing her enthusiasm for the Festival of Lights event and its enrichment of the Indian community's contribution to the diverse culture in Sunraysia.

"There are lots of festivals that are celebrated around the world, but for us here in Mildura, to have the Sunraysia Indian Association come together to stage this event is wonderful and it is really about bringing people together across religions," Dr Webster said. "Today is about celebrating light over darkness - good over evil and to be here to celebrate this with our Indian friends is just a wonderful, wonderful thing.

"I think this an opportunity to celebrate our differentness and to come together and appreciate the things we share commonly together and to be Australians together. Whether we are of Indian background or whatever background we might be from, we are all Australians."

FOLLOWING THE ENTERTAINMENT IN THE MAC'S THEATRE, THE CROWDS CONTINUED TO ENJOY THE OUTDOOR ENTERTAINMENT AND INDIAN FOOD. MANY OF THE GUESTS WERE DRESSED IN TRADITIONAL INDIAN ATTIRE ADDING TO THE FESTIVAL'S COLOURFUL ATMOSPHERE.



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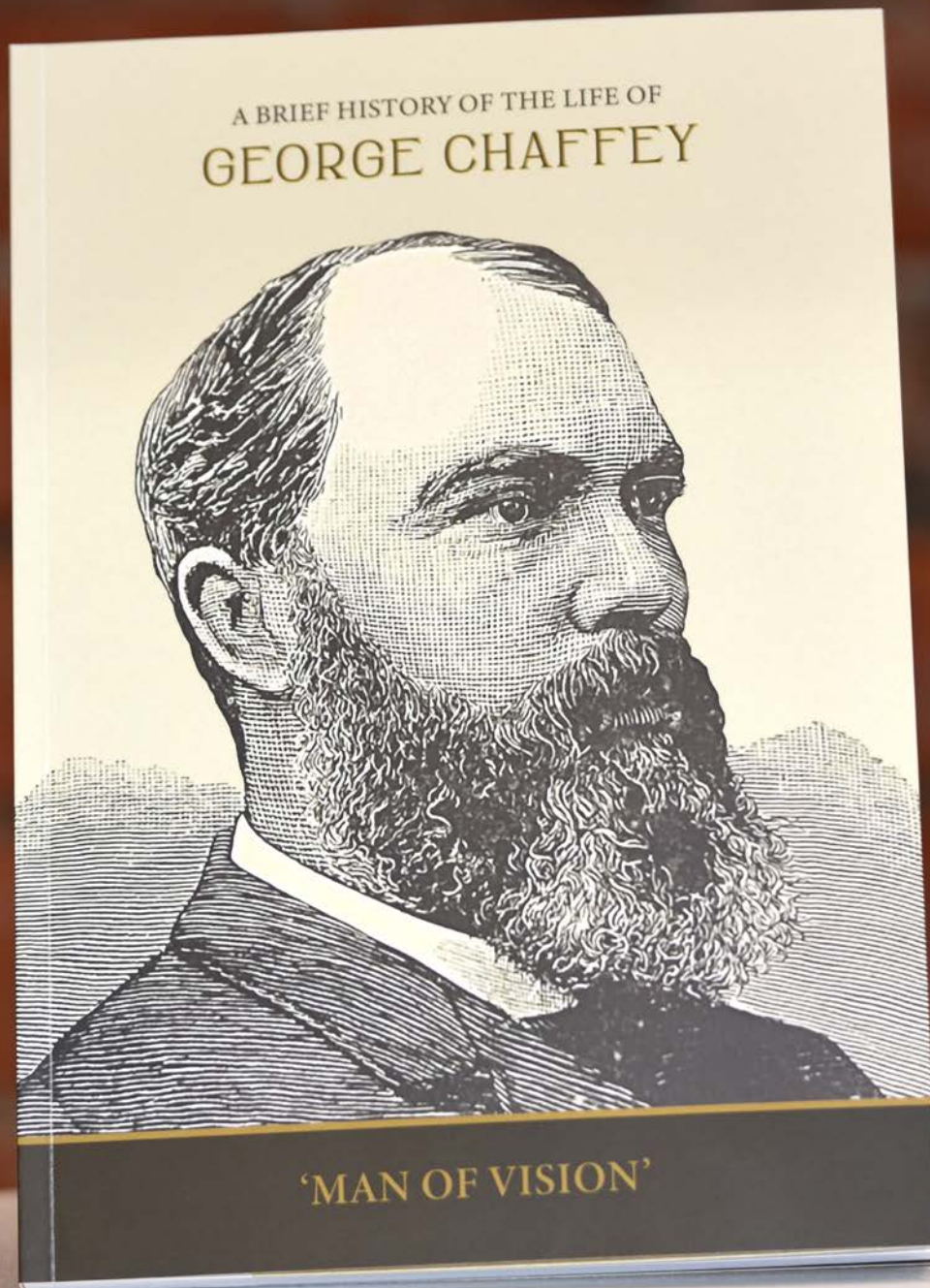
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GEORGE CHAFFEY

A MAN OF VISION

It was standing room only for some at the Powerhouse on Saturday, December 16, 2023 for the launch of a book written by Mildura resident Bill Dolence on the life of George Chaffey.

A year in the making, but long planned, Bill's book details important insights into the ingenuity of a man who was a pioneering influence in maritime architecture, engineering, hydrology, and electricity.

While largely focused on his irrigation exploits in Sunraysia, the Riverland and California, Bill reminded those present that it was George who brought electricity to Los Angeles making it the first town in America to enjoy street lighting.

Launching the book, local historian and education officer of the Chaffey Trail Reference Group, Bob Walton praised the book for some "meticulous research ... It has answered many of the questions I had previously, as it will yours," Bob said.

"I don't think we can deny that he was a person of great vision even if some of the visions didn't work out the way he would have wished.

"He saw his pumps lifting the water to sufficient height to flow by gravity to every block in the district.

"He also saw the plan for Deakin Avenue joining both ends of his Mildura Colony as with the twin cities in California.

"The book is not only a brilliant chronicle of George Chaffey and his struggles and achievements but how important it is for future generations to understand George's vision."

When asked what he saw to be George Chaffey's greatest achievement, Bill referenced numerous exploits.

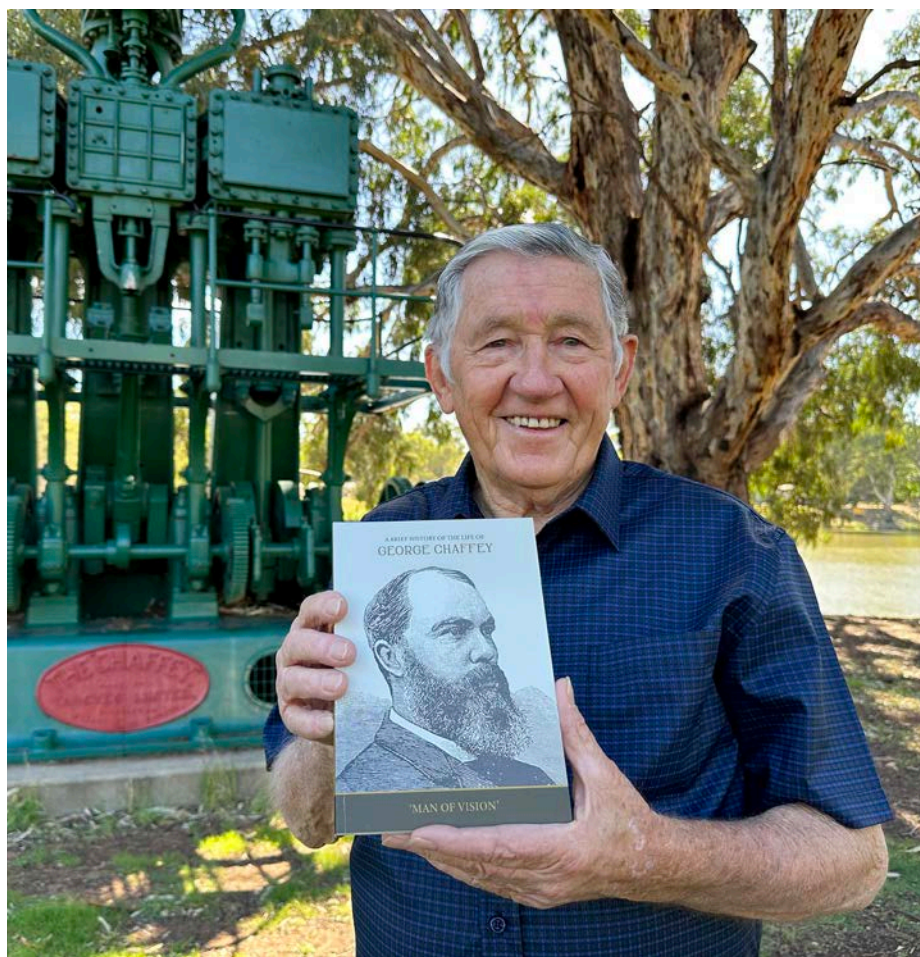
"Few would know of George Chaffey's achievements in ship building, or his design of a new form of propeller which increased ship speed without the need for more fuel". "By age 30, he had designed or built about 20 ships".

"The Geneva and the Sunbeam were the fastest ships of their type at the time".

"As a youngster he was obsessed with mathematics and science and in later years, not surprisingly, he was professionally associated with Alexander Graham Bell".

"No doubt this would have led to the development of telephone connections between the Mildura Homestead, Rio Vista, the Chaffey offices and the Chaffey workshops".

Bill concluded by acknowledging Louise



Austin who has penned the foreword to his book.

Louise is the great granddaughter of George Chaffey.

Heartbeat also spoke to Bill Dolence and he discussed some of the facts surrounding the Chaffey Brothers and the establishment of the irrigation district in Mildura. He is some of what he detailed.

"In 1885 Alfred Deakin, just 28-years-old, and Chairman of the Royal Commission on Irrigation, with four others, went to America to study irrigation methods over there. They visited a number of states, but were most impressed with the irrigation colonies that George and W.B. Chaffey were setting up in Etiwanda and Ontario, California – about 70 kilometres east of Los Angeles.

"In time, the Chaffey brothers were invited to come to Victoria, and set up a similar irrigation colony here.

"When we talk about the Chaffey Brothers, there were in fact three brothers that came out here. George, the eldest brother, arrived here first, William Benjamin, who was mostly known as W.B., and Charles Francis, who came out to manage the Renmark area. Some of you may have visited the home that Charles built for his family, in Renmark, called Olivewood.

"Their sister Emma, and mother, Ann Maria, and their children also came out here.

"I have for a long time been concerned with the fact that relatively little is known here about George Chaffey, as opposed to his younger brother, W.B. Chaffey. One reason of course is that when the Chaffeys went into liquidation, George Chaffey returned to America, whilst W.B. stayed on in the community, and was in time considered, the 'Father of Mildura'.

"It should be remembered, that W.B. considered returning to California as well, but stayed on, despite as he put it, 'living among a group of people who were intent on wrecking the Chaffey's fortunes'.

"Initially, I never set out to write a book, but rather, as a member of Mildura /Upland Sister Association, my intention was just to compile some notes on some of George Chaffey's achievements, including his time in Canada, California and Australia.

"In 2019, after a visit to Upland, Mildura's Sister City in California, my wife Jude and I went on Brockville, in Ontario, Canada, to where the Chaffey brothers were born, to learn a little bit about their early life. However, I was rather surprised how little was known, and celebrated, about the young Chaffey Brothers, in their birthplace."

Bill was asked if he learnt a lot more about George Chaffey during the researching for his book.

"Absolutely. Particularly about his time in Canada and California. He left school at just thirteen and became a self-taught engineer, starting his working life in his father's ship yards. At age 17, he designed a ship's propeller which made ships go faster, without using more fuel, and this was done without the benefits of a computer, as would happen today. That was at age 17!

"By age 30, he had either designed or built about 20 ships. Two of them, the Geneva and the Sunbeam were the fastest ships of their type at the time, and the Geneva was written up in an American magazine, the Scientific American. Someone once remarked that George Chaffey's ships could float on dew!

"In California, apart from setting up two irrigation colonies with his brother, W.B., he organised the Los Angeles Electric Company, and gave Los Angeles its first electric light and power system.

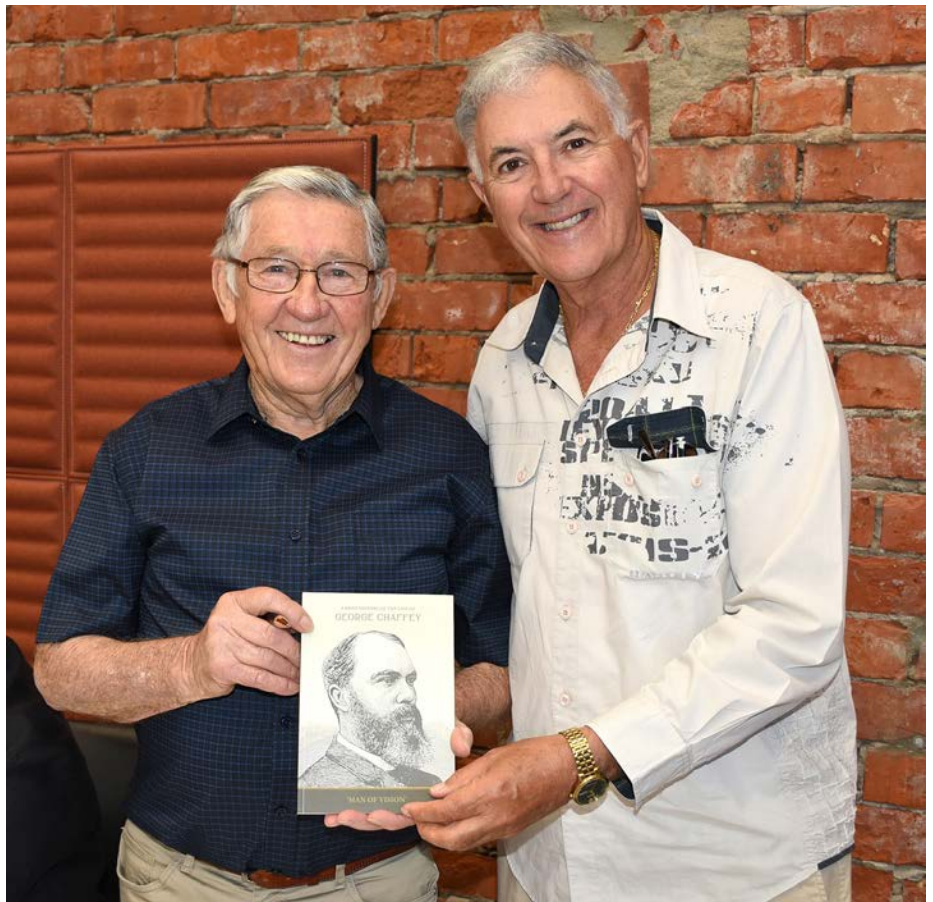
"In 1876, he met Alexander Graham Bell who was able to demonstrate that human speech could be conveyed by electricity over distance. Six years later, he installed a private line from San Bernadino to Etiwanda, and later extended it to Ontario – a total of about 36 kms. and that was, at the time, the first long distance telephone line in California.

"When he returned to California from Australia, he brought water from the Colorado River, to what was then known as the Colorado Desert – about 500,000 acres. There he also founded two cities, Calexico on the American side, and Mexicali on the Mexican side. The population of Mexicali is now over one million people. On the U.S. side, there are now a number of smaller towns, El Centro being the main town with a population of around 50,000.

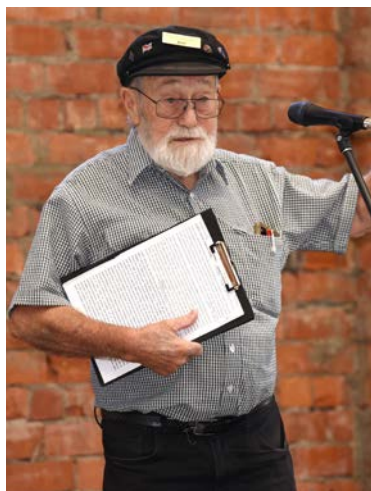
"During WW2, the Americans built 304 Liberty ships, and even though George was not an American citizen, the 96th ship was named the George Chaffey. In Upland there is a full-size statue of him in the main avenue."

Bill spoke further about what he thought George's biggest achievement was?

"That is a very difficult one to answer as he had many great achievements, in Canada, California and of course here in Australia. One of his biggest achievements here in Sunraysia I think, was probably the



CHAFFEY TRAIL HISTORIAN BOB WALTON.



engine and pumps that he organised to be manufactured in the UK, and installed here to irrigate the area. He would have had to calculate how much water would be needed to irrigate the area when everything was in production. What size engine was needed to drive the pumps etc. That certainly was a major feat. The triple expansion steam engine that was used was actually based on steam engines that were being very successfully used in ships in America.

"For those of you who have seen the pumps, you would have to be impressed with George's vision and confidence. Interesting also, that that type of engine was used in the Titanic, although the engine in the Titanic was much larger.



"My understanding is that George didn't actually design the engines, but that he was the first to experiment with coupling that type of engine to centrifugal pumps, and they were used successfully here for about 70 years, when they were eventually replaced by electric-motor driven pumps in 1959.

"These pumping systems were not without their faults however, and did have problems during their lifetime which required considerable maintenance, and sometimes caused irrigations to be delayed."

The George Chaffey book is a must read and can be purchased directly from Bill by calling him on 0408 171 566.



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MADDIE'S MAKING IT IN MILDURA

MORE than 90 per cent of Victoria's psychiatrists currently work in metropolitan Melbourne, according to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. It's well established that while many junior doctors want to work and train rurally, in some specialties, the opportunities or supports to do this simply aren't there. Thanks to one of Victoria's first end-to-end regional psychiatry training programs in Mildura and a strong, active program to attract and keep junior specialist doctors in the region, fourth-year psychiatry registrar Maddie Leung is breaking that stereotype. A born and bred city girl, Maddie's life changed when she came, as a young medical student, to Mildura Base Hospital in 2015. Now, following undergraduate studies and five years of specialty training in Mildura, Dr Leung is not leaving the region any time soon.

"I didn't even know where Mildura was when I left Melbourne (to come here), but I

have found that the pace of rural life really suits me, and the training I am getting here is more personalised and collegial than I think I would be getting in a metro hospital," she said.

Maddie thought life as a medical student in Mildura would be "like a scene from the film, *The Dressmaker*, on a farm with 20 other doctors in a shed with some cows," she said.

Instead, she found that she soon felt part of the town, "with everything just five minutes away – the river to relax by, able to cook at home and return to the hospital if needed. I soon learnt that busy city life doesn't suit me."

Importantly, she feels connected to her patients, because she sees them in the community, not just when they come into the clinic. "Everyone is so supportive of patients. It's not uncommon for a clinician to drive a patient home, or to organise a fuel voucher for someone who can't afford

a trip to hospital, or food for families that have to stay overnight or longer in town," she said.

"You just don't get that sort of community engagement in the city."

Maddie is the first psychiatry trainee to do all of her training in Mildura and there are now 11 registrars working this pathway, set up by Professor Tom Callaly and Monash Rural Health's Associate Professor Hieu Pham, which has become a model for other specialty training pathways in regional services.

During her time at MBPH, Maddie has had a key role in establishing a Consultation Liaison (CL) service at the Mildura Base Public Hospital (MPBH), delivering and coordinating a mental health service to the general hospital wards, which her supervisor, Monash Rural Health's Associate Professor Hieu Pham, who is also Deputy Director of the North West Victorian Regional Training Hub, says "has been recognised as a major contribution to the quality of patient care."

"In addition, Maddie has contributed by leading a pilot program, and based on the success of this, MBPH appointed a behavioural nurse, identifying that over 12 per cent of cases referred to the service are substance-related, leading to the



appointment of an alcohol and drug-withdrawal nurse. She has improved the value and impact of these new services, in turn improving the care available to the community,” the Professor said.

“This year, Maddie established an outpatient eating disorder clinic at MBPH, bringing her learnings from visiting an eating disorder unit at a tertiary Melbourne hospital to her community, “ensuring patients with complex emotional and behavioural difficulties can access care locally.”

“She also provides psychological support for renal transplant and dialysis patients, allowing them to receive quality mental health care during a period of stress and uncertainty, close to home. In addition, Maddie has been involved with providing psychological support for children with insulin-dependent diabetes.”

Maddie was also an Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Program registrar with Mallee District Aboriginal Health Services in 2020, where working in a partnership model, she contributed to delivering culturally responsive mental health care for Aboriginal people experiencing psychological and wellbeing concerns, along with other complex health and social support needs. She has completed additional training and accreditation in cultural competence, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Competence course (TAFE); Trauma-informed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability (Centre for Cultural Competence Australia); and Aboriginal Mental Health



MONASH RURAL HEALTH'S ASSOCIATE
PROFESSOR HIEU PHAM WITH MADDIE LEUNG.

Assessment and Suicide Prevention in Aboriginal communities with accreditation in Westerman Aboriginal Symptom Checklist in both youths and adults.

Maddie says she has come to understand that past experiences of trauma can make Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients reluctant to attend hospital for mental health issues. “Particularly for fear of involuntary treatment, which can mirror past intergenerational traumas,” she said. “These are issues that other junior doctors in the city rarely, if ever, have to deal with and it makes for such as rewarding training experience.”

“Seeing all patients in Mildura is so much more than just treating the issues they present with. You do more than just listen to their stories, you get involved in them. There’s no sitting at the back of a lecture theatre listening to someone discuss a difficult case. At MBPH, it’s possible to do

things you would not have even dreamed of in metropolitan hospitals.”

Associate Professor Pham said: “Maddie’s strong belief in distributive justice, innovative approach to providing holistic mental health care and commitment to Mildura and the surrounding Northern Mallee area have ensured that our patients - which include some of our most vulnerable populations - are able to receive exceptional and culturally appropriate mental health care close to home. As the first end-to-end psychiatry trainee in Mildura, Maddie’s intention to practice regionally long-term and develop a sustainable workforce and systems in the region is clearly demonstrated.

“Maddie consistently demonstrates an innovative approach to mental healthcare delivery in Mildura and provides services that are culturally safe and responsive to the health and wellbeing needs of her broader community.”

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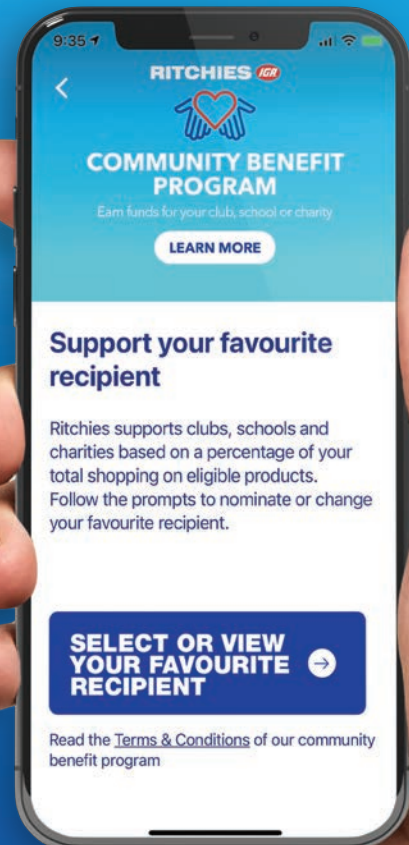


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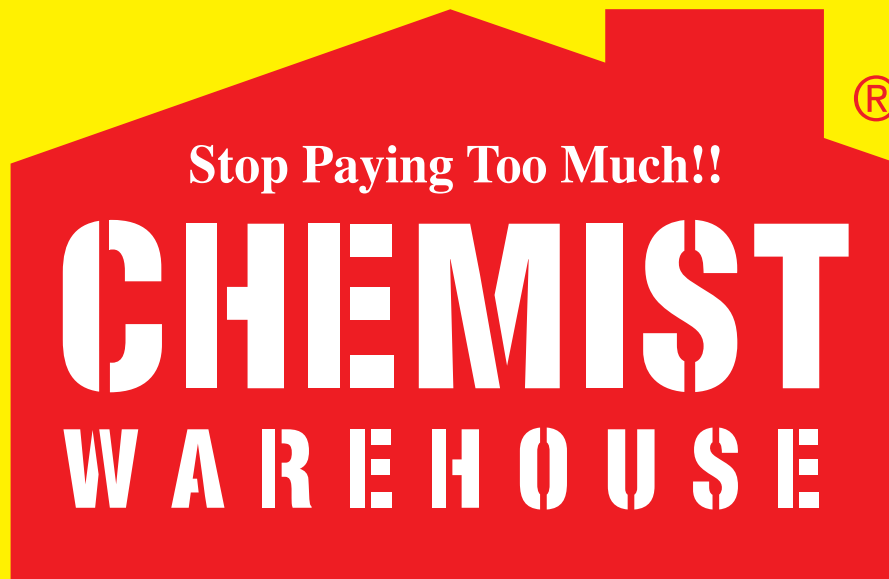
A close-up photograph of a thick, grilled steak on a white plate. A stream of dark brown sauce is being poured over the steak. To the left of the steak are golden-brown french fries. In the foreground, there are colorful vegetables including red and green bell peppers and zucchini.

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"The season was generally rewarding, with crop yields pretty handy and commodity prices okay," Daniel said. "Not without its challenges, as every year presents, we have had some erratic weather conditions to contend with, including a hail storm on Melbourne Cup day, and further rain events since."

Daniel and his family farm a 25,000 hectare property located in the Trentham Cliffs area, where they grow a variety of grains and pulse crops including wheat, barley, lentils and chickpeas on 10,000 hectares. The balance of the property is conservation land.

"By the end of November, we had completed the harvest of all lentils, wheat and barley, and just had the chickpeas to go," Daniel said.

"I have been farming now with my family since returning to Mildura in 2008 and absolutely love it! There have been many ups and downs - as there always have and always will be in agriculture - not unlike most industries I suppose.

"Whilst factors beyond our control such as weather have a big impact on our business, it makes it all the more important to plan carefully and be diligent in doing all the things that we can control, to ensure the best results possible each year.

"Collaboration with our colleagues, consultants, and community all feature in this process."

Daniel said the close proximity to Mildura has many advantages for his family's farming operations.

"Except for when it refuses to rain, we are fortunate to farm so close to Mildura, where we have convenient access to suppliers, technical support and labour," he said.

"I am grateful for the great team we have on farm to support the harvest operation, including family members, friends and contractors.

"Not unlike a hospital environment, everyone knows their role, and when the inevitable challenging situation presents, everyone pitches in to get the job done." Daniel said he is pleased to be able to support the Mildura Base Public Hospital's Foundation that he said holds some great fund raising events throughout the year.

"I was fortunate to be the winning bidder for a round of golf with Dermott Brereton for the 2023 MBPH Foundation Charity Golf Day held in November last year at the picturesque Coomealla Golf Club," he said.

"As a Hawthorn devotee, I was disappointed to miss the event as it turned out, but easily found some replacements who had an absolute ball and by all accounts another very successful MBPH Foundation event!

"Given the flooding experienced during the early months of 2023, the fact this event was possible is a testament to the resilience and commitment of organisations like Coomealla Memorial Sporting Club!

"I wish the MBPH Foundation and all of our wonderful cross-border communities a wonderful and safe and healthy New Year!"

Daniel Linklater is also Wentworth Shire Council Mayor.

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The Clinical Trials & Research Unit

A game-changing facility that will enable people to undertake life saving, ground breaking treatment in Mildura.

Foundation House

A home away from home in Mildura for families and loved ones of patients undertaking extended treatment at the MBPH.

Foundation Black Tie Gala Ball

An opportunity to showcase your business's branding at this prestigious gala event.

Corporate Golf Day

A great event that you and your business can be at the forefront of.

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