

Keystone

WINTER 2026

Always together

After 68 years of marriage, Presilia and Albert Bussac remain side by side at Monash Gardens

Decades of care and compassion

Nurse Nipuni Kodagoda reflects on delivering 21 years of holistic care at Elizabeth Gardens

Still caring, still connected

Former Springtime employee, Annette Cracknell, stays connected with residents through volunteering



Royal Freemasons'
quarterly magazine

Message from our CEO

Dear residents, clients, families and friends,

It has been a busy quarter at Royal Freemasons, with several of our homes undergoing registration renewal with the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission, alongside the sale of our Footscray residential aged care home to Nexia Aged Care, which is expected to settle in early September.

The sale of Footscray comes on the back of a strategic review, which the organisation undertook to consider the impact of social reforms and funding changes on our future operations, and our commitment to the community of Victoria.

While the sale has generated interest from potential buyers in some of our other facilities, we do not intend to close any services, and we commit to communicating any updates as soon as they become available.

As you may know, our Clothed with Compassion Appeal has been running since late May, and we have received many donations from the Royal Freemasons community and beyond. Thanks to your care and generosity, our residents who have limited financial means or little or no family support will be supplied with brand-new sets of essential clothing.

Now that we are well into winter, I would like to gently remind everyone of the important role we all play in helping to protect our residents, clients and staff from seasonal flu and other viruses. If you are feeling unwell, please refrain from visiting our homes until you have fully recovered.

Finally, I hope this edition of *Keystone*, with its inspiring stories from across the organisation, uplift and encourage you in this winter season.

Best regards,



Hugh Cattermole
Chief Executive Officer



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Sixty-seven years of love and devotion



When Presilia and Albert Bussac were choosing an aged care home, the one thing that mattered most was that they remain together.

“They say we are joined at the hip because we are always holding hands,” says Albert.

Originally from South Africa, the two of them met in the 1950s when they were just teenagers at a dance at Albert’s cricket club.

“It was love at first sight,” says Presilia. “We danced the whole evening and as soon as I got home, I said to my mum that I’d met the man of my dreams. She said, ‘Listen to me darling, you’re too young to make a decision like that.’”

Married in 1959 when Presilia was 19 and Albert

21, the couple have now been together for 67 years. Nearly seven decades on, they consider themselves blessed to still be side by side, living together at our Monash Gardens community in Mulgrave.

“It means the world to us that we can stay together here,” says Presilia.

“When you’ve been living together for so long, it’s

hard to be away from each other,” adds Albert.

They spend most of each day in each other’s company and have thrown themselves into the activities on offer at Monash Gardens, regularly attending bingo, exercise classes, happy hour and church services. Albert also plays golden oldies on the piano to the other residents every week.

“*It means the world to us that we can stay together here.*”

“We are very, very happy here. I just loved this place as soon as I walked in,” says Presilia.

They were also thrilled when the Lifestyle team threw them a special celebration for their 67th wedding anniversary earlier this year, complete with balloons, a beautiful cake and, most importantly, two of their daughters joining them on the day.

Family remains at the centre of Presilia and Albert’s life — their greatest source of pride and joy. Together, they raised four daughters, one of whom tragically passed away at the age of 21. “It’s one of the worst things a mother can go through,” says Presilia.

They also have eight grandchildren and eight great grandchildren, who they dote on and keep in regular contact with.

“We live for our family,” says Presilia. “We love them and



I’m phoning them every day or they are phoning me. It’s so important.”

After 67 years of love and devotion, they say the secret to their long-lasting marriage is simply the ability to give and take, and to never let the sun go down on arguments.

“Our philosophy in life is don’t go to bed being bad friends,” says Presilia.

“Every marriage has their ups and downs, but you come together again and it doesn’t last long,” says Albert.



A 21-year passion for holistic care



Clinical Care Coordinator and registered nurse, Nipuni Kodagoda has been working at our Elizabeth Gardens community — a place she calls home — for an impressive 21 years and considers herself privileged to have cared for so many people in that time.

“It’s special to be an aged care nurse and it’s very rewarding. You stay because you love it,” Nipuni says.

Nipuni always knew that she wanted to become a nurse — she comes from a long line of them and has always had a heart to help people.

“I’ve always liked to help people and had a passion for providing them with good care. My mother was a nurse, and my

grandmother was a nurse, so it runs through my blood. I like to see that people are happy and cared for.”

While Nipuni provides excellent clinical care, she is particularly passionate about caring for the whole person and values the relationships of trust she has built with the residents that make them feel at home.

“I love providing holistic care to our residents,” she says. “As a nurse I deal with their clinical issues, but my happiness is about making their life comfortable and making sure they feel valued.”

“When I started here when I was younger, I thought, this is an area where I can make a difference in people’s lives and make them smile.”

“

To see the residents smile — that’s my ultimate goal.

”

While Nipuni highly recommends aged care nursing, she says you need to have certain qualities and skills to succeed in the role.

“You have to have lots of patience and empathy and understand that every resident is different and provide care according to their particular needs”, she says. “Teamwork and good

communication skills are also very important because you are dealing with lots of different people in order to provide that personalised care, such as families, allied health, doctors and personal carers.”

In her 21 years as a nurse at Royal Freemasons, Nipuni says making residents happy has always been the highlight.

“To see the residents smile — that’s my ultimate goal,” she says. “I want them to feel that coming into aged care is not a sad place. I want them to feel that it’s a transition from home to home.”



Just like family

After 25 years working for Royal Freemasons’ In-home Support Services, Personal Care Attendant Judy Thuraisingham still finishes every shift feeling fulfilled by the care and connection she gives to her clients.

“I love my job. I love meeting new people and caring for them. I love the different stories they tell about their lives. It’s a very rewarding career and flexible also,” says Judy.

Over that time, Judy has forged many trusting and long-lasting friendships with her clients, including Wilma and Bill, who she has known and supported for nearly ten years.

“Wilma and Bill are like my mum and dad,” says Judy. “They are really lovely people to work with and very easy going.”

Because Wilma has lived with nerve pain in her foot for years, the couple needs extra support. Each week, Judy helps by preparing meals, assisting Wilma with personal care, taking her outside for some fresh air and gentle exercise, and playing Scrabble.

“Wilma can be in a lot of pain, but you would never know it — she is always smiling and positive,” says Judy.

Married for an impressive 67 years, Wilma and Bill immigrated from the Netherlands in 1960 and enjoy their family of two children and four grandchildren.



“They are lovely, lovely people,” says Judy. “It’s nice to be in their company because you can see how loving and caring they are for each other. Their family is also great.”

With Judy’s weekly help, Wilma and Bill are able to keep living in the place they have called home for 29 years.

“It’s ideal to still be able to live at home,” says Bill. “Life would be pretty miserable without Judy. She is our sunshine and like family to us.”

“*She is our sunshine and like family to us.*”

Do you need assistance at home with everyday living? Call our In-home Support team today on **1800 756 091.**





Students from Mazenod College pay residents a visit



Celebrating National Volunteer Week



Elizabeth Gardens residents plant out their garden beds with the Bunnings team



Residents enjoy a trip to Caldermeade Farm



Celebrating International Nurses Day



Springtime residents enjoy fruit picking



Monash Gardens resident Ken celebrates his 100th birthday



Celebrating Mother's Day at Coppin Centre



Residents enjoy African drumming classes at Coppin Centre

Bringing generations together



Twice a month, residents from our Mount Martha Valley home in Safety Beach visit Green Leaves Early Learning Centre in Rosebud for fun and games with the children. These visits are a highlight for everyone involved, giving both generations the chance to connect and enjoy each other's company.

Together the residents and children happily while away the time colouring in, reading books, creating arts and crafts, drawing and playing outdoors. The residents spend time with children ranging from 12 months to four years old and pop into different classrooms during each visit.



With his daughter attending Green Leaves, Noah Benton, Mount Martha Valley's Lifestyle Coordinator, thought the partnership would be a wonderful way to bring young and old together, and he was right — the visits have been a hit, and the positive impact the children have on the residents is undeniable.

"The impact the visits have on our residents is, honestly, incredible," says Noah. "They come back smiling, talking about the children they met, and sharing stories with other residents who weren't able to attend. The excitement and happiness they bring back with them is something really special.

"I've seen residents laugh, cry, reminisce and completely light up during these visits. Even residents who struggle with their memory often remember the children and the experiences they've shared together."

The visits have proved to be a wonderful opportunity, especially for residents who don't have grandchildren of their own or who don't get to see them very often, giving them the chance to share their affection and create special connections with the children they may miss in their own lives. Likewise, those children who don't have grandparents or extended family are also enriched through the experience.

As Noah says, "Bringing the residents and children together is such a simple idea, but it creates so much

happiness for everyone involved. Watching these friendships form between people who are at completely different stages

of life is something pretty special, and I'm so grateful we've been able to build that connection with Green Leaves."



“Bringing the residents and children together ... creates so much happiness for everyone.”



Decades of care, continued



After 38 years of working at Royal Freemasons Springtime Residential Aged Care community as a personal care and laundry assistant, Annette Cracknell simply couldn't say goodbye to the residents she had cared for and supported for so many years — so she stayed on as a volunteer after her retirement.

"I just love the Springtime community," says Annette. "I've been working at the home for so long that I'm really just part of the furniture."

Annette has been volunteering for two years now and visits the home every week to check in and see how the residents are. She works her way around the home, chatting to everyone and always

makes a special visit to the memory support unit where she has close friendships with a number of residents there.

"Usually, I talk to them or take them for a walk and help with lunch. I just spend time listening to them," says Annette.

All the residents know and love Annette and look forward to her visits. Springtime is like home to her and, being a longstanding staff member and familiar face, her presence makes the place feel even more like home to them.

"I think they are comforted by me being there and visiting regularly," she says. "When I retired, I missed that connection with the residents; I missed talking to them."

Each day she visits Springtime, Annette leaves with a sense of fulfillment, knowing that she has brightened the residents' day — and that's her greatest reward.

"The satisfaction I get when I'm here helping people makes me feel good, and I think it helps them as well."

Annette has no plans to stop visiting — she intends to volunteer for a long time to come and be an extra support person and friend to those residents who need someone to talk to.

"I think it's Important for people in the community to give company and comfort to residents," she says. "Just the thought of no one visiting them really saddens me, and

I plan on continuing my volunteering for as long as I can."

If you would like to join our wonderful volunteer team and make a meaningful difference to the people in our care, please scan the QR code:



“

I plan on continuing my volunteering for as long as I can.

”



Pursuing a person-centred approach

Mount Martha Valley resident, Rose, is excited to be part of Royal Freemasons' Consumer Advisory Body (CAB), a committee that provides a source of meaningful engagement with our consumers and their representatives.

She is one of the 11 members that make up the CAB, which includes other residents from our homes, In-home Support clients, representatives who have expressed an interest in being an advocate for their sites, and management.

The CAB meets quarterly, giving members a forum to raise issues and suggest improvements across care and services, food, activities, daily living, safety and communication. It also serves as a consultative

group for management decisions and plays an important role in helping ensure our organisation remains person-centred and accountable.

Rose has been on the CAB since the beginning of the year and brings to the group five years of lived experience as a resident as well as experience as a family member from when her mother was also a resident at Mount Martha Valley.

"Most of my ideas that I bring to the CAB are based on my experience as a resident — my care, the food, and how the home is managed," says Rose. "I'm quite an outgoing person who likes to be involved in things, especially if it includes the betterment of our village; I like to be part of it."



Royal Freemasons' Chief Quality and Innovation Officer Joanne Cross, who heads the CAB, has a clear vision of what she wants to achieve through the group, which is to strengthen the consumer voice to create

improvements that benefit residents and In-home Support clients.

"What we strive to achieve through the CAB is continuous improvement and ensuring our services are responsive, inclusive and consumer centred. At Royal Freemasons we foster a culture where feedback is valued and acted upon, and the CAB provides an opportunity to continue building trusting, transparent and strong relationships between management and consumers."

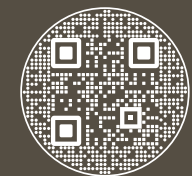
So far, the CAB has made many positive changes in response to resident feedback including introducing improved menu options and activities that are more aligned with resident interests. They have also established better communications systems with regular resident newsletters, updates and meetings. Changes have also been made to the environment at many of our residential aged care sites with upgrades to seating areas, signage and lighting.

While Rose is still relatively new to the CAB, she is passionate about enhancing the care experience for the Mount Martha Valley residents who she represents.

"I hope that my ideas are practical and will help residents at Mount Martha Valley and our other homes to live well. For example, I would like to update some of our equipment — anything that will help the residents is a plus."

"I hope that my ideas are practical and will help residents to live well."

If you would like to find out more or join our Consumer Advisory Body, please scan the QR code:



Consumer Advisory Body

Our Consumer Advisory Body is a forum for meaningful engagement with you – our residents and consumers.

As a member of the Consumer Advisory Body, you will have the opportunity to:



Provide a lived-experience perspective about the quality of our care and services.



Advise on opportunities for improvement in our care and services.



Review resources, from a consumer perspective, that will be used by residents and families.



Give feedback to our Executive and Board that will be considered in organisational decision-making.

Interested in joining our Consumer Advisory Body?

Register your interest today by scanning the QR code or contacting us.



1300 176 925
quality@royalfreemasons.org.au

Clothed with Compassion Appeal

Help provide essential clothing for our aged care residents in need



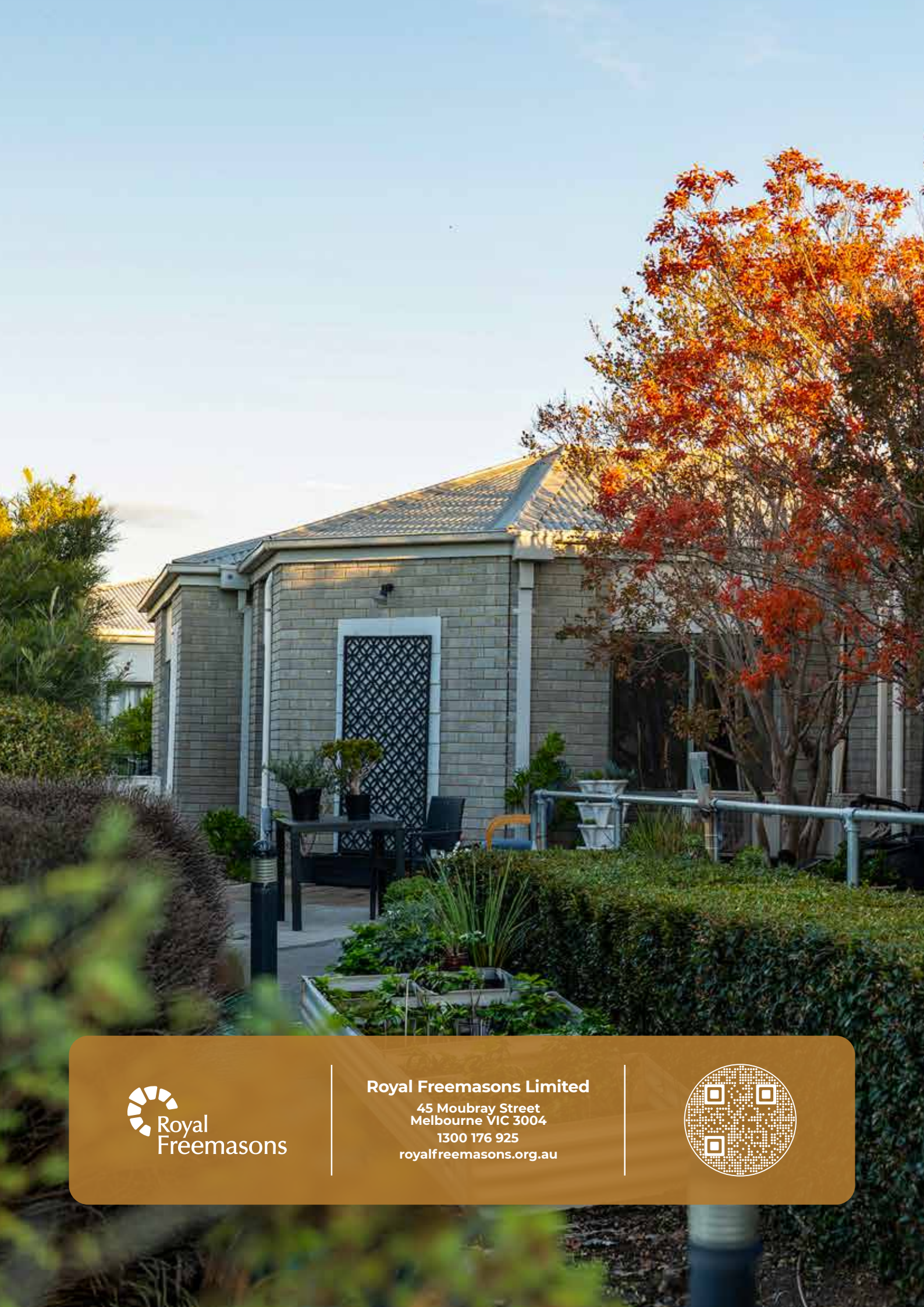
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