Welcome to the summer edition of Out of the Blue and my first since being appointed Interim CEO. Here, I wish to acknowledge Alan Lilly who stepped down as CEO in August. During his tenure, Alan provided strong stewardship around our business, always placing the wellbeing of residents, clients and staff at the heart of all decision-making. We thank Alan for his contributions and wish him all the best in the next stage of his career.

Many of you would be aware of the Federal Government's announcement of a Royal Commission into aged care. As a company that promotes high quality aged care services, we welcome this move and hope the Royal Commission will stimulate meaningful reform for aged care in Australia.

At BlueCross|SapphireCare, our staff work very hard to deliver essential services to residents and clients who rely on them every day and we are immensely proud of their commitment. Our approach to quality has seen us do extremely well in external accreditations during September and October with six of our residences undergoing re-accreditations and successfully meeting all 44 standards. In the Consumer Experience Reports carried out independently by the Australian Aged Care Quality Agency, the residences received an average score of 91 per cent for consumer experience on the quality of care and services, which is above the results of many competitors.

Box Hill’s newest aged care residence is now open and it is not the typical ‘nursing home’ that one might expect. Spanning three levels with exteriors that rival that of a boutique hotel, BlueCross Box Hill sets a new benchmark on the future of aged care.

Gone is the traditional model of care that focuses solely on clinical outcomes and standardised treatments, and in its place is a more holistic approach that puts the residents’ individuality and wellbeing at the centre of care.

The 216-bed residence boasts a basement carpark, three levels of functional living space, and a host of world-class facilities including a memory support environment for people living with dementia, several lounges, dining and sitting rooms, activity areas, consultation and treatment rooms, a library, hairdressing salon, private dining room, as well as a cinema and gym.

While the residence provides state-of-the-art facilities, the emphasis is to create a homelike environment for the residents, said BlueCross|SapphireCare Interim Chief Executive, Robert Putamorsi. “We understand it can be a challenging experience for an older person to transition from life at home to life in residential aged care,” said Robert.

“That’s why BlueCross Box Hill has been designed with lots of functional spaces such as multiple smaller dining and sitting rooms to make it feel more like home. There is also a private dining room for families who want to share a family meal.”

After a successful community Open Day that attracted more than 2000 people to the residence, BlueCross Box Hill welcomed its first resident on 2 October. Valda Johnston, in her 90s, loves her new home and did not take long to settle in. Her daughter Sharon said the family chose BlueCross Box Hill because of the close proximity to their family home in Bulleen, and also because of the good things they have heard about BlueCross|SapphireCare.

“It’s only 15 minutes away, it’s a new home and my mum is used to having a certain standard,” Sharon said. “When I saw this place, I thought it’s perfect.”

BlueCross Box Hill is the latest addition to the company’s growing number of 34 aged care residences in Victoria. Stage 2 of the $64 million purpose-built residence will be launched in 2019.
Poems and stories from the heart

While most people know of the wonderful effect a cuddly teddy can have on children and adults experiencing a traumatic situation, many do not realise they can equally have a positive effect on those who craft them.

In 1990, after witnessing the calming effect a teddy bear had on a child being treated by paramedics, then Ambulance Superintendent Richard Hamilton asked the Red Cross to help in providing bears for more children tended to by the service. Red Cross took up the challenge and Trauma Teddies were born.

Mary Smith*, a resident at Grossard Court in Cowes, has been making Red Cross Trauma Teddies for over two years. Mary has stuffed more than 200 teddies – an achievement possible thanks to the support and encouragement from the Grossard Court Ladies Group who meet weekly to make the teddies.

“I really enjoy the weekly sessions,” said Mary. “It’s fun and it makes me happy knowing I’m able to do something to help comfort people in distress. It means a lot to me.”

Mary is just one of the many residents – ranging from the age of 70 to almost 100 – who participate in the Ladies Group. With teddy skins and stuffing provided by Red Cross and other generous donors, the group makes up to 30 teddies each week.

Lifestyle Assistant at Grossard Court, David Hall, attributes the success of the project to good team effort. “Since the Ladies Group was established two years ago, we’ve had residents’ daughters and granddaughters coming to our weekly sessions to give us a hand. We also have Edie, a volunteer, who takes the stuffed teddies home to sew them up and form their faces.”

David’s wife, Lynne, is also actively involved in the Ladies Group. In fact, she was the inspiration behind the formation of the group and now runs the weekly sessions.

“Lynne used to knit Trauma Teddy skins for the local Philip Island Red Cross. She donated 40 skins to help establish the Ladies Group and get the residents involved,” David explained.

The Ladies Group recently completed its 1000th teddy and is now awaiting the opportunity to hand over the new batch of teddies to Red Cross.

*T fictitious name used as requested by resident

Remembering me

An intergenerational program between the residents of BlueCross Livingstone Gardens and Year 5 students from Livingstone Primary School has formed many budding friendships among the young and old.

Funded by a grant from the City of Whitehorse, the 10-week program ‘Remembering Me: Living with Dementia’ ran from July to September, bringing together two generations with an age gap of more than 60 years between them.

Lifestyle Coordinator at BlueCross Livingstone Gardens, Joanne King, said that the program was aimed at creating an awareness and understanding of dementia among the young.

“As part of the program, the students visited our residents in the memory support unit and joined them in a range of sensory and physical activities such as singing, dancing, reading, playing games, gardening and creating memory books,” said Joanne.

“Through this program, we aimed to remove the stigma associated with dementia and promote respect, acceptance and social inclusion towards people living with dementia. At the same time, we want to give our residents the opportunity to connect with the younger generation,” she said.

This program marks the second collaboration between BlueCross Livingstone Gardens and Livingstone Primary School. Previously, both were involved in another intergenerational project involving residents from across the home.

“We were happy to see the wonderful rapport that has developed between our residents and the students over the course of the program,” said Joanne. “It’s really heartening to see how the students have embraced the program and brought so much joy and laughter to the home.”

To celebrate the successful conclusion of the program, an afternoon tea was held to thank the City of Whitehorse and the school. The residents were presented with their individual memory book and the students were awarded a certificate of participation.
Writing comes easy to 85-year-old Ettie Bryce, who began writing poems and short stories when her first grandchild was born. As more grandchildren came along, so did more poems and stories. Today, the mother of three and grandmother of eight has written over 2000 poems and has two published books to her name.

Ettie’s writing covers a number of themes, often inspired by real events, real people and her own life experiences. In fact, her passion for writing was driven by the desire to lift the spirits of young hospital patients, following her own experience when her son fell critically ill with pneumonia in the 1950s.

A late bloomer, Ettie became a published author at the age of 77, with much support and encouragement from family as well as good friend, 3AW’s Philip Brady, who wrote the foreword for her book of poems, Rainbows.

A number of Ettie’s poems have also been read on 3AW’s Nightline. Her other book, Teddy’s Wonderful Life, tells the story of a bear who becomes a friend for sick children and is also available in Braille.

Big-hearted Ettie also donates part of the proceeds from the sale of her books to charities.

“I dropped out of school at 14 and never dreamed that I would one day become a writer,” said Ettie. “Different people have said to me that I’m talented but I just write what comes to mind.”

A health condition caused Ettie to lose most of her sight six years ago, and she has not written a single poem or story since. However, this will soon change when she gets a new laptop and speech recognition software that translates speech to text. Funded by her Home Care Package from BlueCross, these new aids will enable Ettie to continue pursuing her passion for writing and publish her next two books, Teddy’s Cousin Horace, and Rainbows Volume 2.

“I just love the opportunity to share my poems, stories and prayers to bring a little joy and laughter to others.” ~ Ettie

Ettie lives in her own home with two nursing students and has been a BlueCross client since 2008. She values the thrice weekly respite visits by BlueCross personal carers, which she said are vital to her wellbeing.

“The students take care of me when they are not at school, but they need a break too. I wouldn’t be able to get by without BlueCross’ support,” said Ettie.

The Italian Escape

An innovation by the hospitality team has won them the top spot at the coveted 2018 OSCAR Hospitality Aged Care Awards. The team was named a joint winner for the Catering Innovation of the Year award, in recognition of its Tuscan-inspired Olivigna dining experience for residents and staff.

It all started when General Manager of Hospitality, Liz Goldsmith, came across an advertisement in a magazine by Olivigna Restaurant offering masterclasses in Italian cuisine. What followed was a tailored full day of training by Olivigna’s Head Chef for BlueCross chefs to provide them with a range of quick, easy and delicious cooking techniques.

“Our chefs also received the Olivigna recipes to recreate what they learned in their chef-to-chef training,” said Liz. “With our chefs trained and inspired, we went on to host Olivigna Day at 23 of our aged care residences over a three-month period to give residents and staff a taste of Italy.

“While the menu showcased dishes and techniques our chefs learned at Olivigna, such as its signature lasagne and pumpkin cannelloni, our chefs added their own creative twists to the final presentation.”

Due to the positive feedback received, various Olivigna dishes have now been added to the residences’ seasonal menus.

To find out more about our range of HomeCare services, please contact our HomeCare team on 1300 133 414 or email homecare@bluecross.com.au

Interim Chief Executive’s Message ...

<continued from page 1>

Following the opening of our new residence in Box Hill, our redevelopment at Malvern East has progressed significantly and will be on track to open in September 2019.

When finished, the residence will provide high quality accommodation for 103 residents.

With the coming holiday season, we wish you safe travels and all the best for the coming new year. I hope you enjoy this issue.
Let the party begin!

It is the time of the year again when our residences get creative and host their own unique annual extravaganza parties. Inspired by the Victorian Seniors Festival, these colourful events bring together residents, family, staff and volunteers for a day of fun and camaraderie.

With their thinking hats on, our residents and staff were never short of ideas. And the results were some of the most spectacular extravaganza parties ever. This year, we have seen themes such as The Sound of Music, Wizard of Oz, South Pacific, Australian Outback, Wild Wild West, Retro 60s and 70s, and many more.

Let us know what you think

Your feedback is important to us as it helps us continuously improve the care and services we provide. Below are extracts of some lovely feedback we have received recently:

“I would like to express my gratitude to all the staff at Hansworth. Mum has been in care for four years and I am grateful for the kindness, care and friendship shown to her on a daily basis. As an ex-aged care manager, I understand how hard it is to deliver quality care and the commitment required from all staff.”

Linda, daughter of Hansworth resident

“The lifestyle staff at Ivanhoe deserve much credit for the very comprehensive and creative hard work put into organising ‘The Great Ivanhoe-down’ extravaganza party for residents.”

Olwyn, Ivanhoe resident

To share your feedback, please email feedback@bluecross.com.au

A fiver for a farmer

Charity is infectious. After seeing 10-year-old Jack Berne and his classmates on Channel 7’s Sunrise program with their fundraising appeal to help drought-stricken farmers, two of our aged care residences – Ruckers Hill and Westgarth – decided to chip in as well.

Aussie farmers are struggling with the worst drought crisis in centuries, and our residents and staff were keen to make a difference. Both homes ran their own charity day with lots of fun entertainment and staff dressing up as farmers for the day as part of the Fiver for a Farmer campaign. More than $600 was raised by both homes.

Appreciating all that we have

On World Gratitude Day, The Gables put up a gratitude tree for all staff, residents and visitors to place a note for the things they were thankful about. Taking a moment to reflect and think about the little blessings we have in life goes a long way in making every day a happy one.

L–R: Resident Pam Mason with staff Tamara Dobinson and Divya Sangami; Pam was among the first to place a note on the tree

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For all enquiries call 1300 133 414

www.bluecross.com.au
www.sapphirecare.com.au

BlueCross merged with Sapphire Care in December 2017, creating one of the largest private aged care providers in Victoria