



# The Abbeyfield Observer

A regular newsletter  
from Abbeyfield  
Australia

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## Welcome to *The Abbeyfield Observer*

Welcome to your new Abbeyfield Observer! This will be a new regular newsletter from Abbeyfield Australia to all members, friends, residents and supporters of Abbeyfield. It will build on the strengths of the previous Bulletin and aims to improve communications between all 'Abbeyfielders.'

Edited by Jill Parker (Abbeyfield Australia director), we want to target the Observer to Abbeyfielders across the country. So please, let us know what you want to see in your Observer.

## From the chairman's desk: Gay Gardner AM

Dear Abbeyfield Members and friends,

Very exciting news! The Goulburn branch of the Abbeyfield Society has been granted \$500,000 by the NSW Government to buy a property in Goulburn to house people with a mild intellectual disability. The Minister for Disability Services in NSW, Paul Lynch, announced this excellent news very recently.

The patron of the Goulburn branch of the Abbeyfield society, Parliamentary secretary for Social Inclusion, Senator Ursula Stephens, welcomed the announcement as a great initiative and investment in the Goulburn community. "The Abbeyfield house in Goulburn will provide the right mix of independence and supportive environment for individuals with mild disability. This type of accommodation empowers individuals to live full lives within the community" Dr Stephens said.

Many congratulations to Tony Egan, Chairman of the Goulburn branch, and his committee for this very great achievement. It will be such an excellent addition to our Abbeyfield family of houses. Our first house situated in Canberra for young people with a mild intellectual disability is going very well. It is wonderful that our Abbeyfield model has met this need in Canberra and now another Abbeyfield house in Goulburn to be opened for this same purpose.

Congratulation again to Tony Egan and his most hardworking committee for this outstanding success and the very best of good luck in their future endeavours to opening day and beyond!

Gay Gardner AM, Abbeyfield Australia Chairman

## New Abbeyfield Australia logo

The Abbeyfield Australia Board has adopted a new logo for Abbeyfield Australia. To be introduced over the second half of 2009, the new logo is based on the Abbeyfield International logo used by many other Abbeyfield countries. The board wishes to roll the new logo out to all local societies to encourage a consistent Abbeyfield brand / logo across the entire country. This will greatly assist marketing, brand recognition and funding.

To assist local societies with the transition to the new logo, Abbeyfield Australia will offer an exterior sign for each Abbeyfield house/hostel and an electronic letterhead template. Further information about the new logo and options available will be circulated to all local societies during August 2009.



*Sample of new logo to be introduced*



*Sample of new logo to be introduced – with the addition of the locality name, in this case, Williamstown (Barossa)*

## 2009 Abbeyfield Housekeeper conference

Nineteen Abbeyfield housekeepers from across the country attended the 2009 Abbeyfield Housekeepers conference in Melbourne on 21 and 22 May 2009. Feedback from the conference has been very positive with particularly positive responses to sessions delivered by Luke Smith of Alzheimer's Australia (Identifying and responding to dementia in older residents) and Saadia Khan of Diabetes Victoria (Risk factors and prevention of type 2 diabetes.)

This year the 'Around the houses' sessions were very ably moderated by Leita Stewart (Richmond Housekeeper), Morva Gurney (Mt Gambier Housekeeper) and Kevin Bishop (North Melbourne Housekeeper.)

Other topics covered during the two days included:

- Abbeyfield in Australia and internationally
- Learning from the fire at Abbeyfield St Josephs Malvern
- Australian privacy principles – protecting residents' privacy.

The final component of the conference was awarding the inaugural 'best and fairest award for contribution' at the conference. In tight voting by the group, the eventual winners taking home the wine and chocolates were Mavis Hayes (Abbeyfield Hull Street) and Heather Hood (Abbeyfield Melton.)



*Housekeepers at the 2009 Abbeyfield Housekeeper Conference*

## Abbeyfield Aged Care (Hostels) conference

Based on feedback from our three Abbeyfield Aged Care Hostels [Mortlake (Vic), Charingfield (NSW), and Williamstown (Barossa SA)] initial planning has started on an Abbeyfield aged care (Hostels) conference.

A two stage format may be used, incorporating an Abbeyfield specific component in Melbourne, Adelaide or Sydney during 2009, to be followed by a second smaller event to coincide with the 2010 Aged care 'Tri-State' conference to be held in Mt. Gambier on 1 – 3 March 2010.

### **National chairman Gay Gardner receives Queens Birthday Honour**

On behalf of all residents, members and directors of Abbeyfield Australia, we extend sincere congratulations to our national Chairman, Gay Gardner, who was admitted as a Member of the Order of Australia in the June 2009 Queens Birthday Honours list. The AM award was conferred upon Gay in recognition of "service to aged persons through the provision of community housing and support programs and through the Abbeyfield Society (Australia)."

Our congratulations to Gay for a very deserving award.



Gay Gardner AM  
National Chairman

### **Marion Abbeyfield House in transition to a secure future**

Following two years of very low occupancy (as low as four residents for 12 – 18 months) the Marion Abbeyfield House in suburban Adelaide closed on 5 June 2009. However, planning is underway to re-open it later in 2009 on a financially sustainable footing.

Having taken the very hard decision to close the house effective 5 June 2009, the Marion Abbeyfield Society is now working closely with Abbeyfield Australia to transition the house into an Abbeyfield disAbility House, based on our very successful disAbility House in Curtin ACT. A Marion disAbility house will be financially sustainable because there is a large unmet demand for quality disAbility housing for adults with mild intellectual / physical disabilities in Adelaide.

The Down Syndrome Society of South Australia has also committed to support the house by assisting with residents and participation on the Marion society's management committee.

### **Abbeyfield Australia – name change**

Following the special resolution by members at the 2008 AGM, the name of our national body has now changed to 'Abbeyfield Australia Limited'. The change does not impact existing contracts, affiliation agreements or management agreements.

### **Proposed new Abbeyfield Australia Constitution – open for comment**

Gay Gardner AM, Chairman of Abbeyfield Australia has written to all members inviting comment on the proposed new Abbeyfield Australia constitution. The proposed Constitution is an important document and member feedback is very welcome. All comments will be fully considered by the Board with a view to the document being voted upon at the 2009 AGM.

Benefits of the proposed new constitution would include:

- a stronger voice for Local Societies – which would become voting Members in their own right
- the introduction of a skills based Board in which any Member may be elected to the Abbeyfield Australia board, regardless of their State of residency
- the continued ability for any person to become an individual voting Member in his or her own right.

### **The phoenix rises! Reconstruction of St Josephs Abbeyfield Malvern**

Destroyed by fire at 5.45am on Monday 16 February 2009, St Josephs Abbeyfield Malvern is set to reopen in late July / early August 2009. The 'new' house will be almost identical to the destroyed

house, save a few minor improvements which the local Committee of Management has identified in the reconstruction process.

At the time of the fire, the house was occupied by nine residents, plus one guest from the Ainslie House (ACT), who was staying at the house in transit to a holiday with family in East Gippsland. Thankfully there was no loss of life!

The St Josephs Abbeyfield Committee of Management, led by Chairman John Boland, has done a truly remarkable job in managing the crisis, responding to residents' needs and getting the reconstruction underway. Abbeyfield Australia has provided ongoing direction and support to the local committee, particularly for the initial very intensive 30 days.



This is the first Abbeyfield House in Australia to be destroyed by fire (and anecdotally the first house internationally), so it has presented many opportunities to learn and improve. A Critical Incident Debrief was held in the weeks following the fire, which identified several opportunities for improvement. The Abbeyfield Australia board has also considered the debrief outcomes, and referred several matters to its Standards Sub-committee

(Blue Book) for further investigation.

As a summary, issues to be further investigated and which may result in Blue Book amendments are listed below. A more comprehensive list of issues will be sent to all local Societies for comment.

1. Ensure a back-up copy of residents' records is kept off-site, in a readily accessible location.
2. Ensure comprehensive counselling services are available for all affected.
3. Appoint a Committee member as Communication Officer.
4. Recognise the time demand / stress upon local committee members responding to the crisis.
5. Where safe to do so, consider the post-crisis ability for residents to return to the house to salvage personal belongings.
6. Consider requirement to test and tag of resident's electrical equipment upon commencement of residency.
7. Consider a ban on quartz halogen lamps or other potential fire hazards (such as bar radiators).
8. Encourage monthly / bimonthly inspections of residents' rooms to ensure fire safety is maintained.
9. Reinforce need for evacuation drills to be conducted at unusual hours.
10. Reinforce rule that all residents must be reasonably able bodied and capable of quickly evacuating the house unassisted.

When the Blue Book Sub-committee, lead by Abbeyfield Australia Vice Chairman Colin Haines OAM has completed the review of the Blue book, more detailed information will be circulated to local societies.

### **From the Editor: Jill Parker - What's happening at your House?**

I would like all Local Societies to send me some information about their House including a brief history, committee activities, volunteers (if you wish to profile someone who you think is worthy of a special mention – and they are happy to be included in an article – please feel free to forward me something), activities in or at the House, special projects being undertaken – or proposed. Or even if you have an idea to share, or a question to pose, please let me know so that others can benefit from your experiences.

Regards,

Jill Parker, Hon Editor.