

The Abbeyfield Observer

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A note from the Editor

Greetings, and apologies for this newsletter being somewhat late in production.

Many things have happened since the last Observer was published, so this edition will be reflective in its nature. It will also include two Chairman's reports, due to the retirement of Gay Gardner AM at the Abbeyfield Australia Annual General Meeting in November 2012.

From the chairman's desk: Gay Gardner AM

Dear Abbeyfielders

This is my last report as Chairman of the Abbeyfield Australia Board. I will not seek re-election for the forthcoming year. It has been a great privilege to serve Abbeyfield in this way.

Much has changed over the last few years. I believe that the Board 'runs' a much tighter ship in accord with current financial accounting requirements and the myriad of provisions with which there must be conformity in running Abbeyfield Houses and Hostels throughout Australia.

My greatest wish is that Abbeyfield should go forward in a measured way to increase the number of its Houses and Hostels so that more people may enjoy the comforts and security of the Abbeyfield way of life. Particularly I believe there is a need which Abbeyfield can meet in providing more housing for mildly intellectually disabled people. Most excitingly this is happening. During next year with the opening of the Narrabri House we will have four houses in which younger people with their particular needs will enjoy the Abbeyfield style of living.

In the future I hope there will be houses fully funded by their residents. Such houses will be a very attractive option for those who are able to make such contributions.

I believe the Abbeyfield concept is excellent and may be adapted to a variety of human needs in the future. In this way Abbeyfield will take its place as an important housing option for people in Australia.

I have the greatest possible respect and affection for all the volunteers throughout Australia who work so hard to provide Abbeyfield Houses which are "home" to so many people in this country.

It has been a great pleasure to chair the Board, and I wish it and all members and friends of Abbeyfield well in the future; but, above all, may the comfort, happiness and security of our residents always be maintained.

Gay Gardner AM, Abbeyfield Australia Chairman

From the chairman's desk: David Kay

It is with some trepidation that I begin the 2013 Abbeyfield year as Chairman. In November Gay Gardner decided to not seek a further term as Chairman of the national Board after some twelve years leadership of the organisation. During her term the organisation was restructured, a new constitution adopted and the provision of accommodation for people with mild disabilities instituted. On behalf of all involved with the Society I thank Gay for her contribution.

During the past year the Board has overseen the renewal of Abbeyfield Australia's status as a Registered Community Housing Provider, and with the launch of the Abbeyfield House Management Manual in November completed the transition from The Blue Book. The Manual will be implemented during 2013 and updated regularly as we keep pace with the changing community housing sector in which we operate, with its increasing governance and regulatory compliance obligations.

The Board is keenly aware of the need for Abbeyfield in Australia to evolve with the contemporary community housing sector, but to do so in such a way that ensures we retain all the positive essence of our current community-based Abbeyfield Houses, whilst also complying with our obligations to our regulators and stakeholders.

The two major issues that will confront us all in 2013 will be:

- the implementation of a new industrial instrument to replace the current Abbeyfield Housekeeper enterprise award which expires in December 2013, and
- changes to ensure that we conform to the requirements of the recently created Australian Charities and Not For Profit Commission (ACNC).

Abbeyfield Australia will work with all local societies to implement any required changes.

We must also continue to strive to increase the level of our investments so that we are able to continue to maintain the stability of the organisation into the future.

On a particularly brighter note, the Goulburn Abbeyfield House is now operating with eight very happy young residents, and our building contractor has commenced work on the Narrabri Abbeyfield House. We are also in discussions with a number of other parties which may lead to the construction of more houses.

Kind regards,

David Kay

Abbeyfield Australia Chairman

A Few Highlights from 2012!

Orange Abbeyfield Society:

The Orange Abbeyfield Society produced a booklet to mark its 20th anniversary in October 2011. It is an interesting reflection on 20 years of community housing.

Louise Blue, a foundation and long standing Committee member of Abbeyfield Curtin, was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the 2012 Australia Day's Honours List, for services to children and young people with a disability.



Louise's professional career spanned thirty years in special education, and was devoted to serving people with disabilities. Her commitment to the provision of quality educational opportunities for people with a disability, to assist them achieve their occupational, social and personal goals in life was the focus of her professional life.

During her career and after she retired in 2001, Louise has made a significant contribution to the welfare of people with disabilities.

In 2000, Louise joined with the group of parents who had been long-term carers of their adult disabled children, whose dream was to establish a supported house for their sons and daughters to enable them to live happy, safe and independent lives. In 2006, the dream became reality with the opening of the Abbeyfield house in Curtin, ACT.

Louise played a major role in the genesis and establishment of the house.

She chaired the Policies and Procedures Manual subcommittee, and is a past Secretary of The Abbeyfield Society disAbility (ACT) Inc.

Louise continues as a member of the Management Committee and as a facilitator of the Residents' meetings. Her role in these committees is much valued, as is her experience and wealth of knowledge. The residents have been and continue to be encouraged and empowered by her interaction with and mentoring of them.

Louise's commitment and enthusiasm is remarkable. We congratulate her and wish her all the best.

Curtin House happenings:

The Curtin Abbeyfield House featured on the ABC's 7.30 program in a news story about housing for young adults with an intellectual disability. Adam Shirley and Ian, the cameraman, spent 2.5 hours with the people of Curtin House. Adam was very friendly and supportive. He interviewed Jacqui Landos as well as two

residents, who both did very well. They filmed both inside the house and outside, a round table discussion with Darlene (their housekeeper) and residents planning menus, as well as the formal interviews.

Glenorchy Proposed Community Garden project:

A plan to develop a new Community Garden in Glenorchy specifically designed for the disabled and disadvantaged attracted substantial community support.



L –R Michael Pennicott, Laurie Fitzpatrick, Treasurer Alderman Peter Ridler, Kath Morris, Housekeeper Mrs Cheryl Browning, CEO Southern Water Mike Paine, Freda Terry, President Alderman Steve King and Sally Robinson

The Abbeyfield Society of Glenorchy is developing the gardens next to their house complex.

The gardens will enable residents of Abbeyfield House to grow their own fruit and vegetables, as well as raising chooks for free-range eggs. The site will include disabled access garden plots, a hothouse, fruit trees, a garden kitchen and a playground. The gardens will also be accessible to the community, providing space for them to grow their own produce.

The site also has room for a Men's Shed to be constructed, providing a space for men of all ages in the community to work on projects in a safe, friendly environment.

The Glenorchy City Council has been very supportive of the proposal and negotiations are underway for a licence to the land for the community garden project, while Southern Water has awarded the Society a \$1,000 Community Grant, which will be used for the construction of a hothouse for the gardens.

Visit by David and Louise Coe:

During the year we were privileged to have a visit from Mr David Coe, International Director of The Abbeyfield Society in the United Kingdom, and his wife Luisa. In a busy program David visited Charingfield in Sydney, and the Curtin and Ainslie Abbeyfield Houses in Canberra. He also held meetings with Abbeyfield Australia's CEO and directors. David's trip was a mixture of business and pleasure, as he was also on his honeymoon with his wife Luisa.

David and Luisa commented on the warmth of their reception in Australia.

The visit will allow Abbeyfield Australia to work more closely with Abbeyfield in the UK and leverage off its much greater size and resources. This may include assistance in the areas such as:

- Quality - Implementation of the Gold Standard. Working to implement the international Abbeyfield quality standard as it moves from voluntary compliance to inspected compliance
- Fundraising - Providing 'packaged' fundraising themes and materials



L-R: Terry Weir (Chair, Abbeyfield Curtin) Eddy Bourke (Abbeyfield Australia Director), Luisa Coe, David Coe (International Director, TAS), Jacqui Landos (Abbeyfield Australia Vice Chairman)

- Marketing Materials - Providing templates and pre-written copy for brochures, and other marketing purposes
- Building Designs - Development of an international 'art bank' of the best designs from around the world (Abbeyfield and non Abbeyfield)
- Funding Models - Sharing knowledge on the funding models e.g. life lease /membership and how these are being developed
- Policies / Procedures - Access to Abbeyfield's policies and procedures bank
- Awareness Raising - Providing campaign themes e.g. companionship at Christmas in a pre-packaged format that can be used directly with local Societies
- Directly Managed Housing Model - Working to help develop a directly managed housing model and to increase the equity of Abbeyfield Australia.

Staff Matters:

During 2012 Abbeyfield Australia was pleased to welcome Libby Heath to its small office team. Libby is our Administration and Member Services Officer and works part time on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 10.00am to 4.00pm. Libby can be emailed on libby@abbeyfield.org.au

Chris Reside has been very busy updating the Abbeyfield house Management Manual, and working to obtain Abbeyfield Australia's status as a Registered Community Housing Provider.

The Abbeyfield Australia National Conference

The Abbeyfield Australia National Conference was held on Saturday 17 November at the Downtowner on Lygon, Carlton (Melbourne). The popular event was attended by representatives from most Abbeyfield local societies and branches across the country, and received very favourable reviews.

National Conference sessions

The Conference commenced with a key note presentation from Eddy Bourke, Policy Officer at the Community Housing Federation of Australia. Eddy spoke on the increasingly regulated community housing sector in Australia and the move toward a single registration scheme for the national community housing sector.

Other sessions over the day included:

- *Abbeyfield House Management Manual* –the Abbeyfield House Management Manual is to be implemented over 2013. Chris Reside, CEO of Abbeyfield Australia will contact each Local Society early in the New Year and Chris hopes to meet with as many Committees of Management as possible to make the transition to the Abbeyfield House Management Manual as smooth as possible.
- *Cash is king* –The session addressed several aspects of Abbeyfield local society finances including:
 - The potential impact of the Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission (ACNC)
 - The benefit of sharing high level financial information between each local society
 - The scope to pool investment resources to achieve greater returns
 - Asset Management Plans
 - Provisioning for liabilities (including LSL liability).
- *Moving towards a new housekeeper award* –the current Abbeyfield Australia Housekeeper Enterprise Award is set to expire on 31 December 2013 and Abbeyfield Australia is planning for an orderly transition to a new instrument which will continue to satisfy the needs of Abbeyfield and its Housekeepers into the future. Abbeyfield Australia will circulate further information to local societies and Housekeepers early in 2013.

Annual General Meeting November 2012:

- **Abbeyfield Australia service awards**

Several 'Abbeyfielders' from across the country were formally recognised at the Annual General Meeting. Life membership was conferred on Dimitri Kiriacoulacos.

Certificates of Meritorious Service were presented to Philip Watchman (Marion Abbeyfield Society, SA), John Boland (Abbeyfield St Josephs Malvern, Vic), Marion Harriden (Dingley Village Abbeyfield Society, Vic) and Doug Parker (Mortlake Abbeyfield Society, Vic).

- **Gay Gardner AM**

A presentation of a beautiful engraved clock with an inscription recording appreciation of Gay's service as Chairman was made to outgoing Chairman Gay Gardner AM.

- **Amendment to the Abbeyfield Australia Constitution**

The AGM considered and passed a special resolution to change the Abbeyfield Australia Constitution by setting an upper limit on the size of the Abbeyfield Australia board. Specifically, clause 18.6 of the Constitution was amended so that the board may have no more than 10 directors. The Constitution as amended is available on the Abbeyfield Australia website.

Board meeting outcomes – Sunday 18 November 2012

The Board started its meeting by electing the Company officers for 2013 and the officers of the company elected by the Board for 2013 are: Chairman – David Kay; 1st Vice Chairman – Jacquelyn Landos; 2nd Vice Chairman – Jill Parker; Secretary – Eddy Bourke; Treasurer – Andrew Moylan
David Kay may be contacted by email to: chairman@abbeyfield.org.au

The Board then worked thru a large agenda which included:

- Adopting an investment policy for the Abbeyfield Australia Investment Fund
- Approving the Abbeyfield House Management Manual as previously lodged with the Registrar of Community Housing, and a Notifiable Incidents Policy
- Adopting a new meeting cycle for Board meetings and tasking its Governance Subcommittee to investigate and report on an annual system of Board performance appraisals, Board succession planning, and formalised delegations of authority to the CEO.
- Appointing Board subcommittees and Local Society Liaison Directors for 2013.

Best wishes to everyone for a happy and healthy 2013.

Jill Parker, Hon Editor.