



## IT'S THE SEASON OF LOVE

With Valentine's Day on the horizon, we look at why creating gifts for your loved ones has benefits all 'round

## MOVING WITH PURPOSE

2026 might just be the year you make your move - for myriad health benefits

## AROUND THE GROUNDS

Catch up with what your Palm Lake Care neighbours are doing here and also further afield

# Here, you're always welcome



**Palm Lake Care**  
Bethania  
SERVICE MANAGER,  
BERNICE COWLEY

As we move through February and into March, I want to thank our residents, families and team for the warmth, patience and kindness that fills our community each day. At this time of the year, there's a real theme of 'love' around. With Valentine's Day on the horizon, love in its many forms can be celebrated for helping shape our lives - be that romantic love, friendship, family and the neighbourly bonds built here within our community. Love is not only found in grand gestures, but in everyday moments - a shared cup of tea, a gentle check-in, a laugh between friends, or years of standing side by side. Each of these moments is a reminder that love grows through patience, kindness and connection.

Our team continues to work hard to ensure every resident feels safe, respected and supported, and I am incredibly proud of the care and compassion shown across our community. Thank you to our families for your ongoing trust and partnership, and to our residents for the joy and wisdom you bring to us all. As always, remember that my door is always open. Your thoughts, stories and feedback are welcomed - you are each an important part of our thriving community.



**Palm Lake Care**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,  
DAN AITCHISON

After a very busy 2025 that saw our teams diligently focussed on transitioning into the new Aged Care Act's strengthened Aged Care Standards, we all enjoyed the earned celebrations that the festive season delivered. I feel I can speak for all seven of our care communities when I say that there's a wonderful new energy about the company right now, as we kick off a bright new year with gusto.

With the learnings of 2025 firmly bedded down, 2026 already feels like it will be a year of expansion and growth. We've seen this with the recommencement of admissions across our communities. Our company made a conscious decision to halt new admissions in the second half of last year so we could put laser focus on the roll out of the strengthened Aged Care Standards across our sites. With that transition successful, we've been welcoming many new faces right across our group. I encourage our longer-term residents to make sure they stop and say hello to any new faces they happen upon in the hallways of their community. It's been wonderful to watch the new residents get to know our staff and form friendships with their neighbours along the way.

From a growth perspective, our staff will continue to receive valuable training and education right throughout 2026. Our team of Clinical Practice and Risk Advisors (who operate out of our Palm Lake Care Central Support Office, within our Clinical Governance Team) have commenced the roll out of new staff education in all our communities, starting with Toowoomba and Caloundra. Staff there have received skills training and knowledge updates to ensure the delivery of good practice, which ultimately ensures great care and service outcomes.

On the topic of expansion, and in some very exciting news for our company, we'll also break ground on our eighth Palm Lake Care community in the coming months. Palm Lake Care Forster, in New South Wales, will be our first aged caring community outside of South-East Queensland. We look forward to supporting the local community at Forster with this brand new community.



## Palm Lake Care Bethania

Looking for more information about Palm Lake Care Bethania? Here's where you can find us:

**PHONE:**  
07 3086 3000

**STREET ADDRESS:**  
1 Goodooga Drive,  
Bethania QLD 4207

**EMAIL:**  
bethaniacaresm@palllake.com.au

**WEBSITE:**  
palllakecare.com.au

**GET SOCIAL:**  
Follow us on Facebook  
and on Instagram (@palm.lake.care)

### Key local personnel

**SERVICE MANAGER**  
Bernice Cowley  
bernicec@palllake.com.au

**SERVICE MANAGER SUPPORT**  
Currently recruiting

**CLINICAL MANAGER**  
Tina Le Claire

**HOUSEKEEPING TEAM LEADER**  
Jamie Romana

**LIFESTYLE TEAM LEADER**  
Karen Rayner

**CHEF MANAGER**  
Veijo Lehto

**MAINTENANCE**  
Scott Stevens



## News briefs

### Lend a hand?

One of the most rewarding roles across our seven communities is that of the volunteer. We have a small, yet mightily, band of volunteers who stop by to spend time with our residents and support our Lifestyle Team with the facilitation of activities, but we are always on the hunt to find more volunteer helpers, as our residents simply love interacting with them. If this sounds like a role for you, our contact details are on Page 2.

### Show you care

Did you know you can show your appreciation for our staff and residents on our website? Our 'Thank a Care Worker' page makes it easy to share a kind word or message of gratitude with the dedicated team who go above and beyond every day. You can also brighten someone's day through 'Message a Resident', a simple way to stay connected with your loved one by sending thoughtful notes and well wishes. Both features help spread joy and connection across our Palm Lake Care communities. Visit [www.palllakecare.com.au](http://www.palllakecare.com.au)

### Your feedback matters to us

We'd like to remind everyone that your feedback is always welcome. Feedback forms are available throughout our community and you're always welcome to pop in and speak with our Service Manager or Clinical Manager when they're available. You can also find email addresses on Page 2 of this newsletter for your convenience.

We also strongly encourage residents and relatives to attend our various monthly meetings. Dates and times are always included in this newsletter. These meetings provide a great opportunity for participants to share ideas, raise concerns and help us work together to improve our services. The more people who attend our meetings, the better we can accommodate everyone's needs and preferences. Thank you for being part of our community and for contributing to making it truly special.

### Meeting dates, for your diary

**Our next Residents' Meetings:**

- February 6, 10.30am
- March 6, 10.30am
- April 10, 10.30am

These meetings are held in our Cinema and are an excellent way to stay informed about what's happening within our community.

**Our next Food Focus Meetings:**

- February 13, 11am
- March 13, 11am
- April 17, 11am

No RSVP required. All are invited to attend. We look forward to seeing you there and hearing your valuable input.



## Clinical Manager's note

TINA LE CLAIRE

As we welcome the New Year, I would like to extend my warmest wishes to all our residents and families. A new year is a time for fresh beginnings, reflection and looking ahead with hope - and we are honoured to continue caring for you and your loved ones in the year ahead.

February also brings Valentine's Day, a time that celebrates love, kindness and meaningful connections. In aged care, these values are at the heart of everything we do. Whether it's a friendly smile, a gentle conversation, or taking the time to understand what matters most to each resident, we are committed to ensuring everyone feels respected, supported and loved.

Our focus this year remains on providing safe, high-quality, person-centred care while fostering a warm and welcoming environment for residents and families alike. We value the trust you place in us and encourage open communication - your feedback, questions and involvement are always welcome.

Thank you for being part of our community. We look forward to sharing another year together, filled with care, compassion, and connection.

### Get social

Are you on social media? We are, too! You can find Palm Lake Care on Facebook and also Instagram. Make sure you like and follow our social media profiles to see even more news from all seven of our communities (and counting!).

**Facebook:** @palllakecare  
**Instagram:** @palm.lake.care

# Activities aplenty

**Pictured this page:** Our dedicated and fun Lifestyle Team is always keeping us busy indoors. Among other things, we've enjoyed playing games together (corn hole, Find-a-word and Bingo always delight!) and watercolour painting was also a popular activity on the calendar recently.



# Lifestyle Team's report

Welcome all to 2026! We bid a fond farewell to 2025 and have already given a big wave hello to 2026. And what a start it has been already.

Our residents have been busy with what has proven to be a 'crafty start' to the New Year. From colouring-in, to our Knitting Natter once again, our residents' fingers have been very active.

We also returned to the New Year with a bus outing. This time we hit Brisbane City for a scenic tour. What a shock our residents said they had, noticing how the city has changed since our last outing there. It's all about progress, I guess.

Also on the bus, our residents enjoyed a wonderful lunch at our local tavern, as pictured on this page. We, here at Palm Lake Care Bethania, always support local establishments as we know it is good for our community's economy and keeps us in the loop as to what's happening over the back fence.

Back here within our community itself, we've seen lots of games played and activities completed. The Cornhole equipment was pulled out for some games (it's always a favourite) and we played Bingo and whiteboard games like Find-a-word.

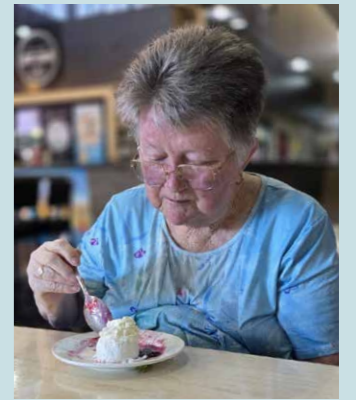
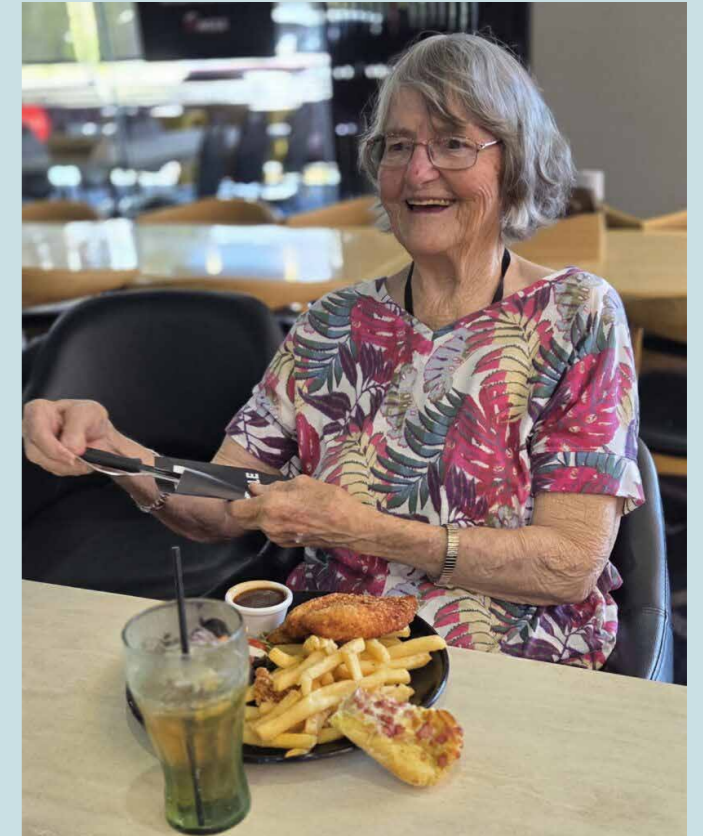
Our Lifestyle Team also hosted a little pop-up shop which was a success. Blankets and such items, donated from local community groups, were among the items in the shop. We thank you all for contributing to make the event a success (see Page 6 for more)

As this newsletter goes to print, we will be celebrating Australia Day and shortly afterwards it'll be Valentine's Day, National Tim Tam Day (yes, it's an actual national day on February 16!) and Chinese New Year.

We've also got cultural days and events such as Waitangi Day on the calendar for both residents and staff to partake in. There's also Shrove Tuesday, Harmony Day, International Women's Day and St Patrick's Day on the list, just to name a few. Keep your eyes peeled for our calendar updates as they roll out during 2026.

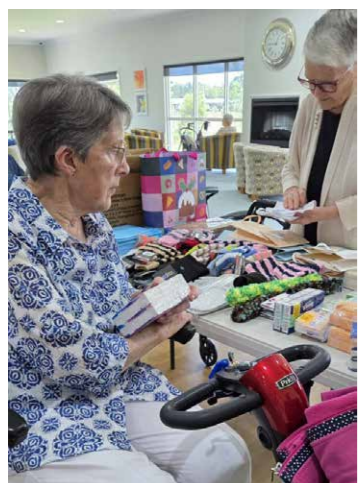
All in all it is full steam ahead for Palm Lake Care Bethania and our wonderful team are looking forward to another fulfilled year ahead.

**Karen Rayner,**  
Lifestyle Team Leader



# Retail therapy

**Pictured this page:** Our residents were excited to dig through all the treasures available at the recent pop-up shop event. Everyone loved a spot of retail therapy, searching through the boxes for unique finds and great bargains!



# Moving with purpose

Staying active doesn't mean pushing yourself or keeping up with others. Instead, it's about choosing the right kind of movement for the right purpose – and doing what feels safe, comfortable and achievable. Let's get moving in 2026!

Different types of movement support different areas of health, and even gentle activity can have benefits:

### Movement for bone strength

Bones respond to movement that encourages them to carry weight. Standing exercises, supported walking and light resistance activities help signal to the body that bones are still needed. Over time, this can help slow age-related bone loss and support strength. These movements can be adapted using chairs, rails or mobility aids to ensure safety and confidence.

### Movement for balance and fall prevention

Balance relies on coordination, muscle strength and awareness of body position. Slow, controlled movements – such as tai chi or guided balance exercises – allow the body to practise stability in a safe way. Improving balance can reduce the risk of falls and help residents feel more confident moving through their day.

### Movement for heart health

Gentle aerobic activity supports circulation, heart health and blood pressure. Walking, dancing or participating in light exercise sessions can raise the heart rate slightly without strain. Regular movement helps the heart work more efficiently and supports overall endurance – not just for exercise, but for daily activities.

### Movement for flexibility and mobility

Stretching and range-of-motion exercises help keep joints moving freely. Maintaining flexibility can make everyday tasks – such as dressing, reaching or turning – feel easier and more comfortable. These movements can be done seated or standing and are especially helpful when performed regularly.

### Movement for cognitive health

Movement benefits the brain as well as the body. Activities that involve learning sequences, following instructions or coordinating movements stimulate multiple areas of the brain. This brain-body connection supports memory, focus and mental agility, while also encouraging engagement and enjoyment.

Pictured: Don't forget it's Valentine's Day on February 14. Maybe you could create some gifts for your loved ones?

# The love of creating

This time of year reminds us of love in its many forms – not just the grand gestures, but the small, meaningful moments. And there's no better act of love than creating by hand.

The stroke of a brush. The threading of a needle. The folding of paper to create something new. When you make something by hand, each movement – however small – becomes an act of love. Not only for the person you may be creating it for, but for yourself, and for the joy of creating, too.

And it turns out, the creative process loves us right back. Hands-on activities have long been linked to improved wellbeing among seniors. Studies show that engaging in creative pursuits can help reduce stress, support cognitive function and lift mood. But beyond the health benefits, making things offers an even greater gift – a sense of purpose and identity.

For many Palm Lake Care residents, when they look back on the decades that led them here, a love of creating is a common thread. Sewing, knitting, drawing and repairing – not to mention gardening, building and cooking – were once everyday parts of life, often done for loved ones or the simple satisfaction of doing something well. Returning to these activities can trigger memories, restore confidence and provide comfort through familiar movements and routines.

There is also a strong social element to creating together. Group craft sessions, gardening clubs or shared projects encourage connection without pressure. Conversation flows naturally, stories are shared and friendships form. For those who prefer quiet company, creating side by side can feel just as meaningful.

At Palm Lake Care, creative activities are designed to be inclusive and flexible. Residents are encouraged to take part in ways that suit their interests, energy levels and abilities. There's no expectation to produce something perfect – only to enjoy the experience.

As the year unfolds, perhaps the most meaningful act of self-love isn't about change at all. It's about continuing to create – to use your hands, express yourself and find joy in making something, simply for the love of it.

# OUR COMMUNITIES



## Your rights, your choices, your voice

The strengthened Aged Care Standards put the power in your hands.

### Central Support Office

**At Palm Lake Care, we believe that every resident has the right to feel respected, heard and in control of their everyday life. These principles sit at the heart of the Statement of Rights, one of the new Strengthened Standards that guide how aged care services are delivered across Australia.**

Recently, the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) highlighted the importance of embedding these rights into daily practice — not just as words on paper, but as lived experiences. This includes recognising the important role of registered supporters, family members and advocates who help residents make decisions when they need support to do so.

Supported decision-making means that residents are encouraged and assisted to make your own choices wherever possible — about your care, routines, preferences, and the things that matter most to you. It recognises that needing support does not mean losing independence or control. Instead, it's about working together so your wishes, values and voice remain central.

Whether it's deciding what time to get up, how care is provided, what activities to join or who is involved in important discussions, you have the right to be included and respected. Palm Lake Care's role is to listen, to explain options clearly, and to ensure decisions are made with you, the resident — not for you.

While the Federal Government's Statement of Rights offers a long and detailed list of strengthened rights and principles under the new Aged Care Act, OPAN has provided an abridged version. All Australian aged care providers and aged care workers are legally obliged to deliver services in line with these rights:

- **Autonomy and freedom of choice:** I have the right to make my own choices about my care, relationships, lifestyle and taking risks, with support if I want it.
- **Equitable access:** I have the right to have my needs assessed in a way that works for me including having my cultural background, past trauma or cognitive conditions, such as dementia, respected.
- **Safe, quality care:** I have the right to be treated with dignity and respect by experienced aged care workers who value my identity, culture, spirituality and diversity.
- **Privacy and confidentiality:** I must have my privacy respected and my personal information kept confidential, and be in control of who this information is shared with.
- **Communication and complaints:** I have the right to be informed in a way I understand and to raise concerns without fear of reprisal. My feedback must be dealt with fairly and promptly.
- **Support and social connections:** I can stay connected to important people, pets and culture including independent advocates. As an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander I can stay connected to Country and Island Home.

By embedding the Statement of Rights into everyday interactions, we continue to build communities where dignity, choice and genuine partnership are part of daily life — because your voice matters.



## Volunteers get rewards

Volunteering is rewarding because it boosts mental health by releasing 'feel-good' chemicals like dopamine and oxytocin, reduces stress, and fosters a sense of purpose and accomplishment. Not mention the reward that the recipient receives! Volunteering enhances self-confidence, connects us to our community, and provides opportunities to learn new skills while making a genuine, positive impact.



### Mt Warren Park

**Our recent highlight for our Mt Warren Park community was attending their local community centre to volunteer for "Kids 4 Kids".**

This local charity provides school supplies to families in the area who might need a financial hand. Our residents loved packing the stationery kits and giving back to their community in this way - it was, in fact, their second year of volunteering with Kids 4 Kids. Such a rewarding day for everyone involved!



### Toowoomba

**Our Toowoomba community is blessed to have a special relationship with its neighbouring Palm Lake Resort.**

For example, the Palm Lake Resort Toowoomba Ukulele Group delighted us on Australia Day by dressing up in costumes and performing a lovely concert. With a sausage sizzle and Happy Hour drinks to follow, it was a great day. Oi, Oi, Oi!



# OUR COMMUNITIES



## Your sunny helper

Sunlight triggers the skin to produce vitamin D, which is essential for calcium absorption, strong bones and immune system support. As we age, the skin becomes less efficient at producing this vitamin so it's a great idea to get some sun on your skin - but not too much!

## Beachmere

**What's more Aussie than Christmas by the sea?**

Our Palm Lake Care Beachmere residents are very lucky to have Moreton Bay as their immediate next door neighbour, so it's little wonder that our festive season celebrations embraced the bayside alfresco energy. Fresh air, sunshine, great food, family and friends... Summer festivities are a delight at Beachmere!



## Deception Bay

**One of our lovely Deception Bay residents, Beverly, aged 89, has just found a new calling in life: as her community's resident DJ!**

Bev first started collecting records in 1972. Last year, while tending to her home, Bev's nephew saw the record collection and decided to bring them in to Palm Lake Care for Beverly. Bev purchased a new record player to listen to the records and with so many positive comments from neighbours, she realised just how much those others of her generation would love to hear her records and the popular songs of their time. Bev decided to become a DJ and was thrilled to hold her first concert here in our community on January 21! She had so many residents turn up and enjoy the music, filled with so many memories. She plans to continue holding concerts where her friends and neighbours can join in to listen to her collection of wonderful golden songs over a morning tea.



## Long time love

As of June 2025, Delma and Frank Murray are recognised as having Australia's longest marriage. Married in 1945, the Newcastle couple met in 1939 and last year marked 80 years of wedded bliss. They have two children, five grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren and are acknowledged by The Australian Book of Records.



## Caloundra

**Caloundra residents William and Florence Hitchen have a love story that dates back almost seven decades, to a grass paddock airstrip in regional New South Wales...**

According to Flo: "After completing my midwifery training at Crown Street Hospital in Sydney, I was eager to begin my career. Although I hoped one day to work in the UK, I accepted a temporary posting in rural NSW to gain experience. My journey began aboard a DC3 aircraft, landing on a grass paddock airstrip. Stepping off the plane, I felt a mix of excitement and uncertainty as I looked for the taxi arranged to take me to the hospital."



According to Bill: "I had grown up in Gilgandra, working in my family's taxi and bus business. That Sunday, I was needed at the airfield to collect the hospital's relief staff. When the DC3 came to a stop and Florence stepped out, I noticed her immediately. She was very pretty, and her warm smile turned a routine job into a moment I would never forget. As I helped her into the taxi, neither of us could have known that this chance meeting would begin a 69-year love story."

Bill and Flo were married in 1956 and built a life shaped by partnership and hard work. Together, they ran a fuel distribution business across country NSW before moving the business on to Rockhampton, where they settled and raised two children, David and Deborah. The Hitchen's family now includes three grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

"We have travelled widely, but our greatest joy has always been the life we built side by side," Flo says.

"Since retiring to the Sunshine Coast nearly 30 years, we remain deeply grateful for that DC3 flight that brought us together seven decades ago," smiles Bill.

## Bargara

**The love stories continue up the Queensland coast to tropical Bargara where we found another Palm Lake Care couple proudly celebrating their love.**

Kel and Ngari's love story began at a small-town dance in Mount Morgan, where a chance meeting quickly turned into a whirlwind courtship. Before long, the pair was married in Maryborough, starting a journey that has now spanned an incredible 61 years together.

Anyone who knows Kel and Ngari will agree – their relationship is built on trust and respect, but has always been defined by plenty of humour and laughter. They also agree that a love like theirs is the kind that only grows richer with time.



# Important information

## Meet our Central Support team

**Chief Executive Officer:**

Dan Aitchison

**Operations Manager:**

Katie Cooley

**Executive Manager – Clinical**

**Governance:** Lisa Patterson

**Executive Manager – Quality and**

**Risk:** Patricia Heke

**Operations Support Lead:**

Caroline Bosnic

**Support Services Manager:**

Steve Wheeler

**Customer Experience Manager:**

Carmel Morgan

## What should I do in an emergency?

**FIRE:** Spotted a fire? Let a staff member know and press the alarm, if I can.

**EXITS:** I need to remember my closest way out. Leave things behind and get out quickly.

**CRISIS:** If something else happens, I'll stay calm. I'll help my neighbours if it's safe to.

**PREPARE:** I'll remind myself of safe places and the best way to leave, if needed.

Note to self: If I'm unsure, I'll ask a staff member.

## Care is a noble profession

If you've been looking for a career that is meaningful and rewarding, maybe aged care is for you? We have an ever-changing list of vacancies across a variety of positions, from housekeeping and admin to carers and grounds staff. To find out what vacancies are currently available in each of our Palm Lake Care locations, go to our website and click on "Join us". We look forward to welcoming you to our team.

## We love your feedback!

We highly value all types of resident and family feedback - it enables us to continually improve our already high standards. There are so many ways you can provide feedback but the easiest way is to complete a feedback form. Blank forms are available from our Reception desk and, once complete, can be submitted in the Feedback Box, also found at Reception. You can also email your feedback directly to [plcfeedback@palllake.com.au](mailto:plcfeedback@palllake.com.au) And, of course, our Service Managers are also available to chat at any time. Their door is always open.

## Volunteers are the best people

We are always on the lookout for volunteers to stop by and support our community. You might like to help our Lifestyle Team facilitate their regular group activities? Or you might like to spend some one-on-one time with our lovely residents? Many love to share a cuppa and a chat! Maybe you have a specific skill you can share? If you'd like to volunteer in our community, and enjoy the reward that comes with it, simply contact our team via the details on Page 2. You can also go to our website and click on "Join us".

## Your meals, your choice

At Palm Lake Care, your choices shape our menu. Our dedicated chefs create meals that not only nourish but also cater to your tastes. Through our Food Focus Group meetings, your feedback directly influences our culinary direction. We value your voice, ensuring that your dining experience is truly tailored to our residents' preferences. Share your thoughts and savour the difference!