



# You

July 2023

## Yarrunga Offerings & Updates

### **Welcome to Term 3**

Welcome back for term 3. As I write this, I am still at home recuperating after my hip replacement. While the surgery was successful, it has identified further issues that I am now managing. Hopefully I will be back soon.

With that said, I would really like to acknowledge Jen, Nadine and Connie in the office for handling the fort in my absence. They have been amazing, while still keeping me up to date with the important things. They have also been reminding me weekly that they miss me, by sending funny handmade cards that they have made (although they probably aren't missing me too much, but actually enjoying the peace without me interrupting their day with some idea, task or plan! But as Arnie says... I'll be back!). Thank you also to those that have checked in with me, sent me cards and messages, I feel blessed to know you.

We are halfway through winter, and while it has been cold, we have also had some beautiful days that remind us how beautiful winter can be. As Jen writes later in the report, it is easy to think of the negatives of winter, but the crazy thing about the seasons, is that they pass by very quickly, which also highlights how quickly the year passes and therefore time! So, enjoy every day, no matter what. Find something positive, that brings you joy. For me, it is that first cup of coffee in the morning. I never rush it and just savour the flavour, time and my thoughts – it sets me up for the rest of the day.

We have some fantastic programs on offer and if you have not been part of any of them, or would like to know more, get in touch with the office. You never know how it might change your life! Meet new people, open up further your social life, or opportunities to give back to the community, they are all chances that are waiting to be taken.

See you soon!

Sam Blackwell  
Manager

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## Blast from the Past



*We hope you agree that the foyer entry looks much better these days!*

## PEOPLE NEWS

### Goodbyes

A sad goodbye to our art tutor, Robyn, who is retiring. Robyn has done a fantastic job with her participants and we have seen some wonderful displays from the group. We may see Robyn back next year for workshops – fingers crossed.

### Welcome Back

It's great to see Birgit again after a term-long absence. Birgit returned to Germany to visit family and had a wonderful time. A huge thank you to the tutors who stepped in to fill Birgit's classes during her absence.

Sam is still recovering after her hip replacement surgery and we hope to see her back in the office very soon. While she is not doing cartwheels just yet we're pretty sure it won't be long.

### Our Newest Volunteers

Big thanks to Libby and Lindy who are stepping in as volunteers to help Nancy in her beginners Tai Chi class. Their assistance will allow the beginners to be split into smaller groups depending on their experience. Thank you so much ladies – We're sure the class will benefit greatly from your help.

Also, thanks go to Kaye who is stepping in as volunteer art tutor for our Painting with Acrylics program. Kaye is helping out until a permanent tutor can be found. Thanks for your generosity Kaye – we really appreciate it.

### Congratulations

Congratulations to our wonderful volunteer Anna who received a Deakin Community Award. Yarrunga nominated Anna for the award for her work here at the Centre – providing lunch for the Karen Elders – plus a host of other voluntary work Anna does on a regular basis including meal provision and foster care. Well deserved Anna.



# **EVENTS, ACTIVITIES, PROGRAMS AND NEWS**

## **New Program - Mastering Story Telling for Children**

We are in the process of putting the final touches on our brand new program – Mastering Story Telling for Children.

This will be a fun, interactive program to teach you how to tell stories – from enhanced story book reading to telling old classic stories like fairy tales to making up your own stories. Story Telling creates wonderful bonding opportunities with your children or grandchildren and helps children develop early communication and literacy skills. The program will also provide a valuable social network with other people caring for young children. Best news is that children can attend!

If you are interested in learning more please don't hesitate to ask, otherwise keep an eye out for more information when the program is finalised.

## **Annual Book Sale**

We will be holding our annual book sale during the week of 21 August – 25 August. Come in and grab a bargain. All proceeds from the book sale will be used to purchase food for the Winter Shelter Community Meals program. Books will be selling for \$2 each or \$5 for 4.

## **Thank You, Thank You, Thank You**

We were very humbled to receive so many donations for the Winter Shelter Community Meals from our community. We, and the Winter Shelter guests, are very grateful for your generosity. As food security continues to be a problem for many our work for the program is one of our most important community programs. Please keep the donations coming.

## **Funding Allocation**

If you read the July edition of Maroondah News you may have noticed that \$250K has been allocated in 2023/24 to improve Yarrunga Community Function Rooms. This is due to the hard work of our Ward member Cr Rob Steane and our committee members. The vision is to build a deck out across the lake and open up our coffee room to sell coffee and light refreshments. If all goes to plan, this will provide a great community resource to all the people who access Yarrunga Reserve and bring new people into the Centre. At this stage it is envisaged that the coffee hub will be a social enterprise so it will also provide useful training and employment opportunities. It dovetails really well with all the work we do for the Winter Shelter Community Meals program.

## Grant from Maroondah City Council for kitchen equipment to support the Winter Shelter program

We are fortunate to receive funding under the Small Equipment Grants Program to purchase a much-needed commercial food processor to support the participants in the Winter Shelter Cooking Program. This program has now expanded to two nights of meal provisions that require a great amount of work from the team. We often receive vegetables in bulk from various organisations that kindly donate to the program. The food processor will enable our teams to prepare these vegetables ready to be used in the meals. We are very grateful for this support.

## Power Saving Bonus



Round 4 of the Power Saving Bonus is due to end in August.

If you haven't yet claimed and need assistance to do so please contact Nadine for an appointment.

## Health and Wellbeing Classes

Remember we offer a 15% discount for Yarrunga participants who purchase an additional health/wellbeing term program.

We also have a special \$5 deal available if you would like to come and try out a class to see if you like it. Places are limited – please contact the Centre for details.

## AVEO

We have been working with Craig Green, the Community Engagement Manager at AVEO to foster relationships between our community and theirs. Craig recently hosted a lunch and information session for the Yarrunga Retirees who received a \$500 community grant from AVEO. Here's what Craig has to say:

“With community spirit in mind, Aveo Retirement Living is represented by two dedicated Community Engagement Managers in Victoria. As your local Maroondah area representative, my role is to engage with local groups, clubs, and social networks where we aim to keep our existing residents engaged in the broader community, driving engagement opportunities for local groups to grow their membership. Ultimately creating a reciprocal benefit for community and community alike. It's less about the sales and more about sharing the experience. We also offer a community grant program offering a \$500 donation to groups if that was of interest. If you're part of a group or social network and would like to know more I would be happy to visit your next event or get together to have a casual chat about how we can support, you. Please reach out to Craig Green on 0438 474 578 or [craig.green@aveo.com.au](mailto:craig.green@aveo.com.au)

If you would like to enquire about the grant for use by your social group please either contact us in the office or contact Craig directly.



*Adrian Hamley from the Yarrunga Retirees accepting a \$500 community grant from AVEO*

## Thriving in Winter

*August is often the hardest month of Winter - the novelty of cooler weather has worn off and the greyness of Winter can feel like it's never going to end.  
Let's make a big effort to get through this last Winter month in good spirits.*

**Acceptance** – whining about Winter might make you feel better – but probably not! And the people around you might not want to hear about it either. Try re-framing what Winter means to you – there are some wonderful things about Winter – believe it or not!



**Preparation is key.** Keep your home cosy – flannette sheets, really comfy PJs, door sausages, couch blankets, candles or lamps for cosiness. Be well prepared to go outside – wet weather gear, hat, gloves, thermals. And keep your freezer stocked with plenty of warming hearty soups and meals. You might also need to consider Vitamin D supplements.



**Keep busy with food and drink experiments.** Try a range of yummy toppings for your porridge. Cook a new dish – pasta, savoury pies, stews, casseroles or curries. Cakes and puddings are a delicious way to get through winter! Or try some warming drinks – hot chocolate, chai lattes, port, hot toddies or even mulled wine. We hear that peppermint tea with whisky and honey helps keep you warm – either that or you won't care about being cold anymore!!

**Keep busy with indoor activities.** Try a long bath with candles and wine. Learn how to knit or crochet. Stock up with a selection of books. Stream some interesting movies or docos or treat yourself to movie tickets. Host a dinner party. Visit some of our wonderful art galleries or museums. Start writing your memoirs. Telephone an old friend you haven't seen for ages.



**Be brave and go outside.** Rug up well and visit some of our beautiful bushland areas or explore walking tracks in your local area. Get on top of the weeds in your garden or do some winter pruning. Explore the city or visit regional Victoria.



Remember that Winter will pass ... in no time at all you will be complaining about how hot it is!





## PROFILE

### Gilbert Van Hoeydonck



Gilbert is a member of our OM:NI group and has been part of that group for seven years. Gilbert was born in Belgium and became an Australian citizen in 1983. He worked for the Victorian Government as a policy adviser and project manager for child protection and public mental health services, where he participated in some high-profile child death inquiries and helped implement clinical outcome measurement across Victoria's public mental health services.

Retirement allowed Gilbert to focus on his lifelong dream of creative writing. He has published a number of short stories that draw on his youth in Belgium. In 2019 he published his debut novel – *The Best of Intentions* which draws on his experiences in working with child protection and mental health professionals over more than twenty years.

The novel is set in Melbourne's eastern suburbs at the time of the Black Saturday bushfires. It tells the story of Gecko, a boy who's been through foster care's revolving doors, and Libby a highly intelligent Year 12 student who struggles with depression and an eating disorder. Kurt - a disillusioned social worker struggling in an under-resourced child protection system, is also a Buddhist who wears leather, drinks cheap wine, is averse to chaos and plays violent video games! Kurt is determined to make a difference and keep Gecko safe. It is a sensitive and compelling portrayal of young people at risk and of the well-meaning but often ineffective child protection and mental health professionals charged with their care.

Gilbert took some time to talk with us and answer some questions:

*How long have you been a member of Yarrunga's OM:NI Group?*

I joined the men's group at Yarrunga seven years ago. We come from a variety of backgrounds and bring different perspectives to the meetings, which makes for interesting discussions. I enormously value the guys' honesty, friendship and support – it makes the dad jokes almost bearable...

*You worked for the Victorian Government as a policy advisor and project manager in child protection and public mental health services. Your book is based on your experiences working in these areas - what is the main message you wanted to convey through your book?*

The book's title announces its message: despite the best of intentions, professionals are hamstrung by underfunding and unrealistically high workloads. After years of policy work I wanted to move away from analytical approaches and tell a story, show the real-world impact of budget constraints upon children and young people: Gecko, Libby and of course Jade. But my novel is also a tribute to the strength and resourcefulness of survivors – for several years its working title was Resilience. Libby and Shaun turned out to be my favourite characters in this regard as the writing progressed.

*Are there any aspects or characteristics of yourself in the main character – Kurt?*

Kurt has some of my habits and mannerisms. Lining up your pencils, that's me. Leather jackets, that too. I am also prone to the same crazy daydreams that spin out of control, often at the most inappropriate moments. And yes, like Kurt, I migrated from Belgium and had to rush back to help ageing parents. Most writers draw on their experiences I believe, and despite several similarities the novel is not autobiographical. For example, Kurt has no children; I never worked as a practitioner in child protection or mental health; and I hope I made fewer blunders.

*Besides finishing it, what did you enjoy most about writing your novel?*

The joy of creation. As a writer you start with a blank page and the 26 tokens of our alphabet. With those simple tools you set about creating a new world, which your readers hopefully find credible and engaging. The task is both daunting and exhilarating, but when I write I feel in the zone, happy.

*If someone was to ask your advice on writing a novel, what would you tell them?*

Read a lot, across different genres. Try to write something every day, to keep your skills sharp. Don't share your draft too early – it will dent your confidence. Be kind to yourself. Never give up. And don't do it for the money...



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<https://gilbertvanhoeydonck.com>

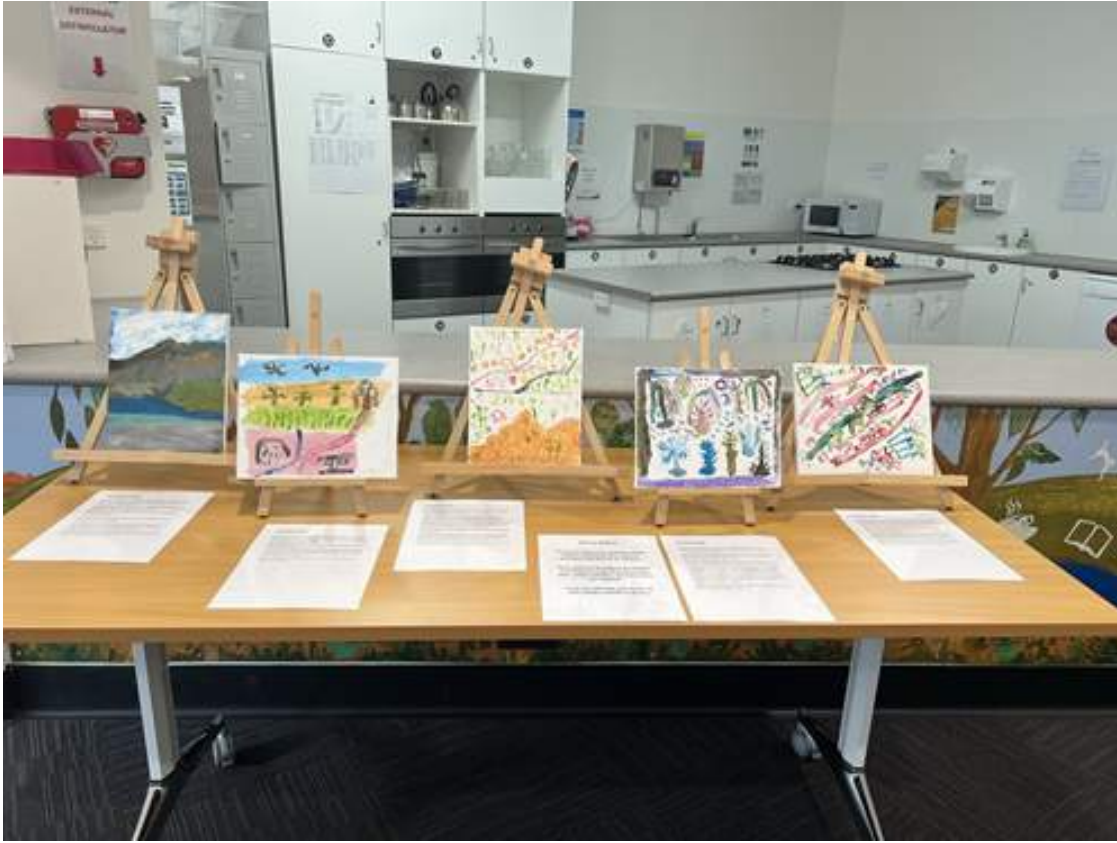
# PHOTOS

Celebrating Neighbourhood House Week in May



## PHOTOS cont.

A display of painting and stories from our Karen Elders about life growing up in their homeland.



Jen and Anna at the  
Deakin Community Awards Ceremony