

## Thanks to those who care for our elderly

MEL OTTAWAY



YESTERDAY was Aged Care Employee Day – a time for everyone in the community to celebrate the employees involved in providing care to older people.

Aged care comes in many forms – from a simple annual gutter clean through to more intensive services delivered to those at end of life.

It also involves a wide range of people, like maintenance staff and gardeners, hospitality workers, nurses and carers, lifestyle teams, allied health staff, administration and more.

They work in residential aged care, community centres or supporting our loved ones to live independently at home.

Aged-care staff have been on a rollercoaster ride over the past few years. They've dealt with the ups and downs of the pandemic – with ongoing changes to restrictions, negative media stories and staffing pressures.

It's a workforce filled with a diverse range of individuals from many backgrounds – some who have been separated from their own families for a long time.

In 2020-21 the government spent \$23.3bn on aged care – it is a big industry.

In 2020, there were nearly 450,000 people working in the sector and many more are needed as our population ages.

It is an industry that has its challenges but there are so many rewards – and one of these is working with the people who provide a richness of experience, unlike many other industries.

Aged-care employees are an amazing group of people who provide crucial support to allow older Australians to live well, or to be with them in their final days of life.

Let's all show how grateful we are for their tireless efforts and commitment – these do not go unnoticed. Thank you for all you do today, yesterday and into the future. You truly are a special group of individuals.

**Mel Ottaway is Uniting Communities' executive manager, services for older people**



**Aged care workers deserve recognition for the crucial support they provide.**



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# Bells and whistles: The sounds

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According to local tram and bus historian Tom Wilson, trolley buses were nicknamed "silent death" because they were extremely quiet – the principal sound being their rubber tyres on the road.

The skates on the trolley poles may have made a very slight noise as they passed through junctions (known as "frogs") in the overhead wires.

Meanwhile, the promise of some weekend respite and a Sunday sleep-in was often a forlorn hope. Our local milkmen, Harry and William (Bill) Thain came rain or shine, including Sunday Sabbath and Christmas Day, while early on Sunday morning, the bell of Woodville's St Margaret's Church of England would peal loud enough to wake the dead.

Long-time St Margaret's parishioner Noriel Tarca (nee Masson) discovered at young age a youthful late night out was no excuse for missing a Sunday service. Noriel still recalls her mother saying: "If it's good enough to be out 'til 2am young lady, it's good enough to be at church by 7.30 in the morning."

And if locals survived that bell, there was an even-money chance the Salvos would suddenly turn-up mid-morning from their church headquarters in Kilkenny.

Yet behind all this

clockwork-like cacophony were stories of self-discipline, solid work habits, generosity and kindness.

Milkman Harry Thain was one such man. Sandy Thain Allen recalls her father as being a strong, fit and hard-working gentle soul. His working day began at 4.30am and rarely ended before 6pm.

In those days, the streetlights went out at 1.30 in the morning but Harry could find his way to the farm dairy in Findon, guided by the twinkling lights of other dairies in the district.

Upon his arrival, his brothers Dave and Bill would be busy hitching the milk float to their horse, Snips, having already milked the cows.

Snips was quite a clever horse and knew the milk round off by heart.

No wonder. In his previous working life, Snips had been a talented show horse, appearing at various show events across the state.

Harry Thain only took two days off a year. First was a trip to Glenelg to celebrate his daughter's birthday and the other a family day at the Royal Adelaide Show.

Much of their dairy farm later became the site of Findon High School.

In those days, a quick blast from the postie's whistle, the baker's horse and cart around lunch time, the bang and



**Rob Skewes, then 4, with his father Ralph in the backyard of Rob's grandparents' Kilkenny property in the late 1950s.**

clatter of a weekly rubbish bin collection and the occasional appearance of the bottle-o were all other common sounds.

Neighbours too were often wary of a flying football or cries of "catch it" as a cricket ball soared over a fence.

And since climbing fences, ladders and trees was a necessary part of young Boomer lives, there were the inevitable falls, grazes and scratches. Should an accident or illness strike, a knock on the

front door or ring of its bell often heralded a visit from the doctor.

When working at Woodville Medical Practice on Woodville Rd, Dr Broadbent recalled to a colleague chalking up 21 phone calls to the surgery in a day when the flu season arrived in force.

He was part of a team that included doctors Bennett, Hudson and Moore, and later a young local named Terry Schultz, who often made house calls day or night, rain

or shine. Terry had attended nearby schools and played junior cricket for Woodville.

Sometimes however this was a disadvantage. Often a knock on the front door could be greeted with: "We know your father. Aren't you that young fella who played cricket at the oval?"

"We were rather hoping to see that nice Dr Hudson or dear old Dr Moore."

Thankfully over time, Terry began to gain their trust.

Coughs, colds, lumps and boils were all par for the course and Terry soon began to feel the warm glow of inner confidence and neighbourly respect.

We Boomers are now all aging.

But if some readers find the noise of modern technology is getting on their nerves, my wise grandmother had a simple solution. She simply turned her hearing aids off, popped her false teeth into a glass and had a little nap.

Speaking of my grandmother, she also had a neighbourly opening in her back fence – like a missing tooth. From here I observed the friendly face of Mrs Perry and her three daughters hard at work under her back veranda.

Across the narrow gap and a foaming tub of bubbles, her old ringer washing machine