

# Splash!

November 2025



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## ABOUT US

Harbourside Port Stephens (formally Port Stephens Veterans & Citizens Aged Care) is a local, compassionate, not-for-profit community organisation with a proud history spanning over 40 years. We are dedicated to providing care and support to seniors in the Port Stephens region.

### We offer

- **Retirement Living** – Villages located in Shoal Bay, Salamander Bay, and Fingal Bay
- **Home Care** – Supporting seniors to live independently at home
- **Residential Care** – Located in Shoal Bay

Established and trusted, Harbourside Port Stephens continues to evolve to ensure our communities and services remain accessible and relevant to today's seniors. Our comprehensive range of professional, dedicated services provides residents, clients, and their families with peace of mind, knowing that additional care is available should their needs change.

### Our Vision

The leading and trusted provider of aged care services to our community.

### Our Mission

Partnering with our community to provide:

- Safe and respectful personalised care.
- Vibrant residential, home care and retirement living.
- Ongoing and innovative growth in service.

## Making a Splash

Splash is more than just a newsletter—it's a celebration of the vibrancy, spirit, and joy of life at Harbourside Port Stephens. Here, we don't just go through the motions—we make a splash! Growing older doesn't mean slowing down; it's about embracing life with energy, passion, and enthusiasm. Whether it's trying something new, sharing laughter with friends, or making a difference in the community, every moment has the potential to be a Splash moment. Through inspiring stories, community highlights, wellness tips, and heartwarming connections, Splash is here to showcase the everyday magic that makes Harbourside so special. So dive in and enjoy!

### OUR VALUES

CARE + Community

**Compassion**



**Accountability**



**Respect**



**Excellence**



+  
**Community**



## Message from the CEO

Welcome to our Summer edition of Splash!

As the year draws to a close, it's a wonderful time to reflect on all that we've achieved together at Harbourside Port Stephens. 2025 has been a year of continued growth, innovation, and connection – and I'm proud of the dedication shown by our staff, volunteers, and community partners.

One of the highlights this year has been our partnership with the Maggie Beer Foundation, which has helped us elevate the dining experience at Harbourside Residential Care in Shoal Bay. Food has always been about more than nutrition – it's about joy, comfort, and connection – and this collaboration ensures mealtimes continue to be something our residents truly look forward to.

We've also continued to invest in upskilling our team. A great example is our participation in Dementia Australia's virtual reality training, which builds empathy and practical strategies by allowing staff to experience the world through the eyes of a person living with dementia. This is innovation with purpose – strengthening person-centred care across our nursing, care, hospitality, cleaning, and maintenance teams.

In early November, we held our Annual General Meeting, a valuable opportunity to reflect on the year past and the exciting future ahead. I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to our Board of Directors for their continued leadership and support: Raad Richards (Chairman), Keian Barnard (Vice Chairman), Jason Brennan, Max Pride, Graham Blythman, Anne Zele, and Geoff Robinson.

As we approach the festive season, I want to thank every member of our Harbourside community for your warmth, resilience, and care. Whether you're celebrating with family, friends, or neighbours, I wish you a joyful and peaceful Christmas.

Looking ahead to 2026, we're excited to host our Harbourside Coastal Country Fair in March – an event that will bring together residents, families, staff, and the broader community in true Harbourside spirit. You'll find more details in this issue.

Thank you for being part of our journey. We care – and together, we continue to make a splash.

Warm regards, Paul





# Flavour, Friendship, and Celebration at Harbourside's Maggie Beer Foundation Finale

Laughter, conversation, and the aroma of freshly prepared food filled Harbourside Residential Care in Shoal Bay on Friday 7 November, as residents, staff, and families gathered to celebrate the conclusion of Harbourside's 12-month participation in the Maggie Beer Foundation – Trainer Mentor Program.

The final event marked the end of a year-long journey of creativity, learning, and connection, where Harbourside's kitchen team worked alongside chefs from the Maggie Beer Foundation to enhance mealtime experiences for residents.

The Trainer Mentor Program included five days of comprehensive training facilitated by Maggie Beer Foundation Chef Trainers, monthly coaching and coursework sessions for continuous learning, and quarterly progress meetings between Maggie Beer Chef Trainers and Harbourside's Head Chef, Tommy Slowey, and his team to review achievements and set goals.

Throughout the program, residents took part in taste-testing sessions, slice-making workshops, and themed food events – all designed to make dining not just nutritious, but truly enjoyable. The collaboration has inspired new approaches in the kitchen and brought residents closer to the food they love.

Head Chef Tommy Slowey said the program had been both inspiring and rewarding:

"Working with the Maggie Beer Foundation has given our team fresh ideas and renewed energy. It's been wonderful to see how a few small changes – from new recipes to involving residents in menu feedback – can make such a big difference to their enjoyment and wellbeing."

Harbourside's ongoing focus on fresh, nutritious



Tommy Slowey, Head Chef and resident



Paul McDonald, Maggie Beer Trainer, Paul Fitzpatrick, CEO and Tommy Slowey, Head Chef



Tamara Honeysett, Executive Manager Residential Care & Resident

meals and resident involvement – including its Guest Cooks initiative – will continue to shape the dining experience well beyond the Maggie Beer Foundation partnership.

"Food has always been more than a meal here," Tommy added. "It's a way of showing care, building connection, and creating moments of joy – and that's something we'll continue every day."



## Harbourside Port Stephens Partnership with Port Stephens Koala Hospital to Protect Local Wildlife

In the heart of Anna Bay, the Port Stephens Koala Hospital is leading the charge in koala conservation. Behind its tranquil setting lies a world-class facility dedicated to the rescue, treatment and rehabilitation of one of Australia's most loved – and endangered – species.

Harbourside Port Stephens is proud to support the hospital by making land available at our Trotters Road site for growing vital koala food trees.

*"For more than 40 years, Harbourside has been part of the local community," said CEO Paul Fitzpatrick.*

*"Supporting organisations that matter to our community is one way we can give back beyond our core role of supporting seniors."*

**A Hospital like No Other** – The Port Stephens Koala Hospital is one of only two fully accredited wildlife hospitals in NSW. It cares for 25–30 koalas at a time, along with other native animals such as birds and sea turtles.

*"If we can keep them alive for 24 hours, our survival rate is around 50–55 percent – far higher than any other facility in the state," said founder Ron Land.*

Its vital work is carried out by 13 staff and more than 230 volunteers who rescue, treat and release koalas impacted by cars, dogs and habitat loss.

**Growing Hope** – At Harbourside's Trotters Road site, more than 800 koala food trees – including swamp mahoganies and eucalyptus robusta – have been under cultivation for a several years, providing around five percent of the hospital's total food needs.

**The Power of Community** – "Partnerships like this are vital for conservation. When community organisations lend a hand, it gives us hope," Ron said.

**Looking Ahead** – As koalas face increasing threats from habitat loss and disease, the hospital's work has never been more important. Harbourside is proud to play its part in ensuring koalas remain a cherished part of the Port Stephens landscape for generations to come.

**How You Can Help** – The Koala Hospital is currently looking for more volunteers to support its expanding work. Visit: [portstephenskoalas.com.au/volunteer](https://portstephenskoalas.com.au/volunteer) or Call: 1800 775 625



# Our People

## Heather's Journey:

### A Lifetime at Harbourside: Heather's 40-Year Journey of Community and Care

At 102 years old, Heather Charge has lived a life full of warmth, friendship, and community — much of it right here at Harbourside Port Stephens. Having first moved into her villa in May 1985, Heather has called Harbourside home for almost four decades, making her one of our longest-standing and most treasured residents.

Heather first discovered the village while visiting friends who owned a holiday unit nearby in Shoal Bay. She remembers watching the early stages of Harbourside being built and feeling immediately drawn to the peaceful surroundings and close-knit community that was taking shape.

"I came over to have a look one day and thought, I could easily live here," she recalls. "When my husband passed away, I decided it was time to move, and I've been happy here ever since."

Over the years, she became deeply involved in community life. Her passion for craft led her to join a small craft group that met in a tiny room behind the old maintenance shed. Under her leadership as President, the group flourished — eventually raising over \$200,000 to purchase equipment for the village and the residential care home. In recognition of her contribution, Harbourside's craft cottage was officially named the "Heather Charge Craft Cottage" in her honour last year.

"I've been involved in everything really," Heather smiles. "We had fairs, fundraisers and craft stalls". It's been a big part of my life."



These days, Heather enjoys quieter moments, spending time with her family — including her four children: Brian (who has since passed), twins Grahame and Narelle, and youngest son Peter — along with her nine grandchildren and 21 great-grandchildren. She still joins friends for card games and Scrabble in the community hall, keeping her mind sharp and her days full of companionship. Every Christmas, Heather's extended family gathers at Little Beach in Nelson Bay, where around 40 relatives come together under marquees for a festive celebration filled with laughter, food, and love.

Now receiving support from Harbourside Home Care, Heather continues to live independently in her own villa — something she says means the world to her.



## We Care

"The home care is excellent," she says warmly. "The girls come morning and night — they help me dress, shower, and sometimes prepare meals. They're lovely, every one of them. I also have a DVA team that comes to clean once a week. I really don't feel I need anything extra."

With a walker at her side, a smile that lights up her face, and a quiet resilience that has carried her through more than a century of life, Heather is an inspiration to everyone around her.

"I've been very happy here," she says. "It's such a lovely place to live, and I've made so many friends over the years. I couldn't imagine living anywhere else."



**Harbourside Port Stephens is proud to offer a full continuum of care — from independent retirement living to personalised home care and residential care — ensuring residents like Heather can continue living the life they love, right here in the community they call home.**

## Stay independent, supported, and living life your way at home.

The Government is releasing new Home Care Packages over the coming months. If you receive a letter letting you know your package has been assigned — **call Harbourside Port Stephens.**

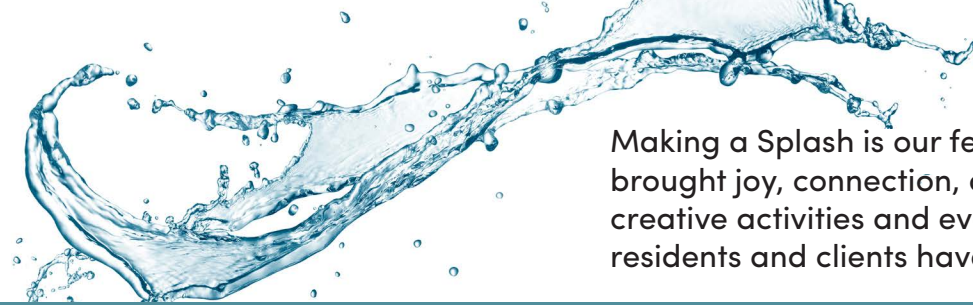
We're **your local team**, ready to guide you through the next steps and make sure you get the personalised care and support you need — ensuring you receive the right support, at the right time, **from people you know and trust.**



Call our Harbourside Home Care Team **TODAY** on **4984 1811** | email [contactus@harboursideps.com.au](mailto:contactus@harboursideps.com.au) | visit [harboursideportstephens.com.au](http://harboursideportstephens.com.au)



# MAKING A Splash



Making a Splash is our feel-good roundup of the past six months—celebrating the moments that brought joy, connection, and a little extra sparkle to our community. From fun-filled outings to creative activities and everyday moments of laughter, this section captures the memories our residents and clients have shared together.



## OUR SENIORS HUB CRAFT

This October, our Seniors Hub enjoyed celebrating our beautiful Port Stephens coastal lifestyle with a fun seashell decorating activity! Our clients painted and decorated their own shells, then proudly hung them up for display. The activity sparked wonderful conversations and reminiscing, with amazing stories shared about the area's past and its seaside memories.



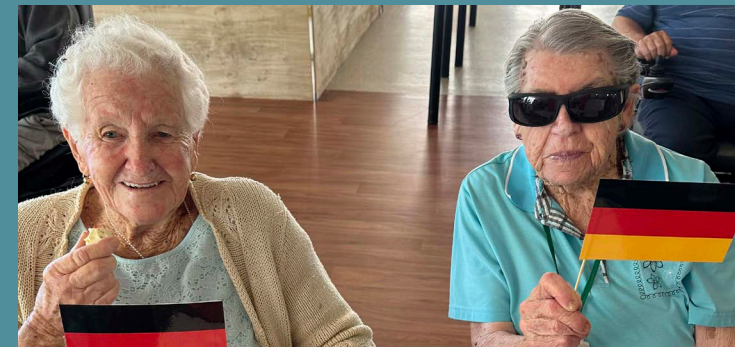
## A HEARTFELT THANK YOU

A heartfelt thank you to our lovely residents Faith and Doreen, who knitted beautiful blankets during Rosemary's Craft Group sessions – and even in their own time – to be donated to the neonatal ward at John Hunter Hospital. Your generosity and kindness will bring warmth and comfort to the tiniest patients and their families.



## A SPECIAL VISITOR

Our Seniors Hub clients spent the morning with their regular volunteer Buddy our therapy dog! Buddy joined in for morning tea, gardening, a game of dominoes, and even a relaxing walk in the sunshine while everyone caught some Vitamin D. His gentle company and wagging tail brought plenty of smiles and calm to the group.



## OKTOBERFEST

Our residents enjoyed some lively trivia, learned a few German phrases, and watched travel videos showcasing the beauty of Germany. Of course, no Oktoberfest would be complete without delicious German pretzels, beer and wine, and plenty of traditional music and folk dancing – which our residents loved joining in on!



## NEW BUS, NEW DESIGN

Back in January, we proudly unveiled our refreshed Harbourside brand – and now, our new look has officially hit the road! Residents were thrilled to take the bus out for its very first outing, enjoying that unmistakable new vehicle smell along with the comfort and safety of travelling in style. It's wonderful to see our community on the move, representing Harbourside with pride wherever we go!



## MULTICULTURAL CONNECTIONS DAY

Our residents enjoyed a delicious spread of South American dishes and cakes for lunch. The afternoon was filled with joy as our talented staff Emma, Pak, Cherry, Anna, Elizabeth, Minerva and August performed a lively dance during the resident concert with ice creams all round – a true celebration of culture and community!



## MILITARY MUSTER

Our Seniors Hub group enjoyed a beautiful day out in the sunshine – starting with a lovely morning tea at Fighter World, followed by a stop at Clarence Town to check out the Military Muster, and finishing off with a relaxing lunch in Raymond Terrace. The bus was a buzz of conversation on the way home as we shared stories and laughs about all we'd seen and done together.



## CELEBRATING DIWALI

This week, our residents and staff came together to celebrate Diwali, the Festival of Lights – a beautiful tradition that symbolises the triumph of light over darkness and good over evil. Our team shared the story and customs of Diwali with residents, decorating with colourful lights and rangoli patterns, enjoying traditional treats, and joining in festive music and dance.



# Virtual Reality

## Walking in Their Shoes:

### Harbourside Staff Experience Life with Dementia Through VR

At Harbourside, we know that exceptional care starts with a skilled and supported workforce. Earlier this year, around 50 of our staff took part in an innovative program with Dementia Australia, using virtual reality (VR) technology to gain a first-hand understanding of life with dementia.

Through immersive VR simulations, participants experienced the confusion, sensory overload, and daily challenges that many of our residents and clients face. Combined with classroom learning and problem-solving exercises, the program provided practical strategies while creating powerful moments of empathy.

The training is already influencing the way we deliver care, reinforcing our commitment to compassionate, person-centred approaches. As Harbourside CEO Paul Fitzpatrick explained, “This training is invaluable to all our care staff—not just Registered Nurses, but also Personal Care Assistants, activities and support workers across maintenance, kitchen, laundry, and cleaning. Seeing the world through the eyes of someone with dementia is incredibly meaningful and positively shapes the way we approach care.”

Our involvement in this program also highlights Harbourside’s focus on innovation in staff education. By embracing creative learning methods, we ensure our team is not only highly skilled but inspired to provide the highest standard of support to the people we care for.



# Bridging Generations

### Together at Harbourside:

At Harbourside, we know that some of the most meaningful experiences happen when generations come together. Inspired by the ABC series Old People’s Home for Teenagers, our intergenerational programs continue to thrive, creating opportunities for residents and young people to share stories, creativity, and laughter.

Building on the success of our 2024 Teenagers in Aged Care program with Tomaree High School, we expanded in 2025 with Creative Connections, an art initiative where students and residents create side by side. We are also collaborating with the Port Stephens Community Arts Centre, supporting both students and residents in developing new skills. The program will soon grow to include craft, knitting, pottery, and sculpture, culminating in an exhibition in December 2025.

Our partnership with Shoal Bay Public School remains another highlight. Each visit brings energy and joy, with residents joining in games, music, dancing, and quizzes. Sometimes residents even attend school assemblies, strengthening the bond between our communities. These interactions have become a cherished part of our calendar, filling our spaces with laughter and friendship.

The benefits are clear: residents gain purpose, companionship, and the chance to share their wisdom, while students develop confidence, empathy, and respect. As one resident said, “When the students visit, it feels like the whole place lights up—it gives us energy, laughter, and hope.”



*Save the Date ...*



Harbourside  
**COASTAL  
COUNTRY  
- FAIR -**

2026

Come join in the fun on **Saturday 28 March** as we  
host our **Coastal Country Fair!**

Food, Stalls, Entertainment and lots more....

Commencing from 10:30am till 1:30pm **Harbourside  
Shoal Bay**, 89A Shoal Bay Road, Shoal Bay -  
**Everyone is welcome!**



To learn more about

**HARBOURSIDE PORT STEPHENS**

call our friendly team on **02 4984 1811** or

visit our website **[harboursideportstephens.com.au](http://harboursideportstephens.com.au)**