



# The Heartbeat

As another year supporting the wellbeing and care of all our residents and staff ends, I find myself reflecting on the heart and soul of our business: our people. Earlier this year I was lucky enough to travel to the UK to see family. It has been a long time since I was able to hug them in person and, despite weekly WhatsApp calls, nothing beats the intimacy of seeing your loved ones face to face.

Caring for people's lives is so much more than a service; it's a privilege we never take for granted. The huge amount of work that has gone into implementing the new Aged Care Act has been done in line with our values; excellence, respect, integrity, stewardship, and compassion. They all feed in to delivering quality care. It is not always easy to quantify these, which is why we have our annual Staff Values Awards. This year we were delighted to receive more nominations than ever.

Finally, The Cunningham, our retirement village project, is officially ready to kick off. We're excited to see excavations begin early next year and will keep our community updated as construction develops.

Wishing love and peace to you and your families for Christmas and the new year.

**Leigh**

*Left: Bruce taking his spot on the throne. Right: Residents enjoying the sunshine at Halvorsen Park in Ermington.*



*Above: May I have this dance Pina?*

## *Coming up...*

### DECEMBER

- 03** 10am – 12pm  
Santa family photos
- 08** 4-5pm Happy Hour  
with the ABH Board
- 09** 1.30pm Community Choir
- 11** Resident Fire Training
- 17** 12pm Resident Christmas  
Lunch (+ 2 guests)  
including entertainers  
Fred & Ginger, Honey  
Sippers, Fiona Howe,  
Geoff Suede
- 20** 10.30am Ashfield Baptist  
Church Christmas Choir
- 25** Christmas Day lunch

### JANUARY

- 13** Entertainment (tbc)
- 23** Australia Day BBQ
- 30** Dale Ryan



## WELCOME!

Welcome our new team members:  
September, October, and November .

**Bethel  
Home Care**  
Anurag S

**Carers**  
Bandana T.  
Da Lyn T  
Destiny M  
Epifania S  
Helen P  
Iueni T

**RN's**  
Eui Elin E

Lourie M  
Punam R  
Racquel A  
Tominika F  
Vanessa Q

## People & Culture

2025 has been a busy and rewarding year marked by growth, system improvements, and enhanced support for our employees across all areas of the organisation. We have made significant strides in strengthening our team and fostering a positive workplace culture.

### Employer Sponsored Visa for Care Workers

We announced the successful introduction of our Care Worker Visa Sponsorship Program this year. This initiative has enabled us to recognise and reward the dedication and hard work of our staff, providing a valuable pathway to a more stable immigration status and long-term career prospects.

The program aligns with our ongoing commitment to strengthening our care teams and ensuring continuity in the high-quality support we provide to our residents. We are proud to offer talented individuals the opportunity to build a future with us in Australia.

The response to this program has been overwhelmingly positive. While we are limited in the number of individuals ABH can support, we look forward to partnering with those who demonstrate a strong commitment to the values and mission of ABH.

*Top: Speech pathologist training staff on choking risks.*

*Middle: Long time staff member Hawera buddying with new staff member Lourie.*

*Bottom: STADS Training teaching Staff that aged care homes are amongst the most fire safe buildings in Australia.*



Implementation of our new Human Resources Information System (Employment Hero)

This platform has modernised our HR processes, streamlined onboarding, simplified the distribution of documents, and enhanced accessibility to information, providing staff with direct access to their profiles. Phase 2 will include the implementation of the Payroll and Rostering Modules. We are eager to see the continued positive impact of this system on our operations and staff experience.

Commitment to Safety and Training Initiatives

Safety continues to be one of our top priorities. This year, we successfully delivered comprehensive fire safety training to all staff, ensuring that everyone is well-equipped and confident in responding to emergency situations. This initiative reinforces our ongoing commitment to maintaining a safe environment for both employees and residents. Additionally, we provided specialised, externally delivered training focused on resident swallowing safety for our care staff. This training is part of our broader efforts to enhance the quality of care we provide and to ensure the well-being of our residents.

Looking ahead

In collaboration with People Managers across the organisation, HR will work to ensure that we maintain a highly engaged and motivated workforce with a renewed focus on energy and innovation, driving continued success and fostering a positive workplace culture. We hope that you all have a happy and safe holiday season and look forward to another successful year ahead.

Cesar Antonio Suazo, HR Manager



Happy 90th birthday Peter! (Oct 25)

Happy BIRTHDAY!

DECEMBER

- December 2 ..... Lia UV
- December 7 ..... Pina B
- December 11 ..... Kevin O
- December 11 ..... Nina S
- December 13 ..... Les D
- December 22 ... Jennifer A
- December 23 ..... Betty B
- December 27 .. Chrystalla S
- December 28 ..... Helen D

JANUARY

- January 6. .... Eileen H
- January 6. .... Chris H
- January 12 ..... Maria P
- January 13 ..... Lydia L
- January 14 .... Margaret D
- January 16 .... Marcella G
- January 17 ..... John G
- January 17 ..... Helen R
- January 19 ..... Shirley W
- January 21 ..... Jack Y
- January 22 ..... Hugh H
- January 24 ..... Judith C
- January 25 ..... Elaine L
- January 27 ..... Emily Y
- January 30 ..... Beth N

## HAPPENINGS

The miniature ponies came to visit on Melbourne Cup day, dressed in their ABH finery including nail polish. The ponies trotted from room to room, interacting with residents. They even went up in the lift!

*Clockwise from top left: Elaine, Les B, Helen, Les D, Christine.*



## THE MOMENT

When Gary was browsing through Heartbeat recently he recognised an old school pal. He and David went to Canterbury Boys High together over 65 years ago. Gary popped in to catch up with his old schoolfriend, who has lived here since May.

*Right: David and Gary.*





## Kitchen update

WE CHATTED WITH MICHAEL HATA, THE CATER CARE CHEF MANAGER AT ABH

**I've been a chef for over 30 years.** I've been fortunate to work as a Head Chef in restaurants around the world, from small, family-owned venues to Michelin-starred establishments and hatted operations here in Australia.

**A few years ago, I joined Cater Care to find a better work-life balance** and spend more time with my young family. I've been with ABH for almost two years. Before here, I was working with Cater Care's Gather division in the education sector. I came here initially to help out with a function and was later asked to step into the vacant Chef Manager role. After spending a short time on site and meeting the team, it was an easy 'yes.'

**The most rewarding part of working here is the connection** you build with the residents. It's incredibly fulfilling. You become genuinely attached to the people you cook for. You also gain a deep appreciation for the care staff, RNs and everyone involved. Watching how dedicated they are each day is inspiring.

**Before each seasonal menu change, we hold food forums** where residents can share what meals they'd like to see. It can be a fun (and sometimes challenging!) process because tastes and needs vary so much, but it's always worthwhile. We then look at how we can include or adapt those suggestions so everyone, regardless of texture or dietary needs, can enjoy them. I also attend

Resident Meetings to discuss any ideas or suggestions they may have.

**The new Aged Care Standards** really focus on resident choice, from meal variety to how and when they would like to eat. It's all about giving people more independence and ensuring their preferences are at the heart of what we do. As a team, we're embracing these changes to continually find creative ways of meeting their expectations.

**The biggest difference between working in aged care and other industries is definitely the sense of community.** It's a real 'takes a village' environment. Because we get to know the residents so well, we're always thinking about how we can do more for them, whether that's introducing new dishes, accommodating preferences, or bringing joy to mealtimes.



Top: Michael in the kitchen. Centre: With his kids.  
Right: Michael attending a recent Residents Meeting.

## STAFF SERVICE *Awards*

Every year we celebrate staff who have been part of the ABH family by recognising their employment longevity and loyalty to our community. Congratulations to all staff who were recognised at this year's awards, personally handed out in a joint Values ceremony in October by our CE Leigh. Each milestone recipient receives a gift voucher and a new staff badge recognising their years of service.



### 25 YEARS

Losi T  
Vida A  
Dorcas B (pictured, above centre)  
Hilary H (pictured, above right)



### 20 YEARS

Debbie Y  
Nebyat L (pictured, above right)  
Salote T (pictured, above centre)

### 15 YEARS

Julie F  
Josephine C  
Kanta K (pictured)  
Malbika B (pictured)  
Sabita B (pictured)  
Bhadra W

### 10 YEARS

Jeanie S (pictured)  
Steven C  
Smita T  
Isabel N  
Bijaya D (pictured)  
Vicki H (pictured)

### 5 YEARS

Angela L  
Kenny A (pictured)





## ABH VALUES *Awards*

Every year we invite families, residents and staff to nominate staff members who embody one or more of our core values across all areas of our business and demonstrate them in a meaningful way. Respect, Integrity, Stewardship, Compassion and Excellence are enshrined in all that we do, from the ground up. This year, we were inundated by nominations, so we decided to award two nominees per category. Special congratulations to the following staff:

### COMPASSION

**Steph** – her thoughtful gesture of making personalised birthday cards for residents and staff alike brings joy to all

**Dorcas** – an exceptional team member whose kindness shines through all she does

Steph



### RESPECT

**Tevita** – described by his home care clients as a 'breath of sunshine'

**Freja** – brings positivity and care to every aspect of her work, stepping in wherever help is needed

Freja



### INTEGRITY

**Benny** – his kindness, reliability and dedication make a real difference

**Annalise** – takes care of everyone and always ensures those around her feel supported and valued

Tevita and Benny



### EXCELLENCE

**Luna** – demonstrates professionalism, warmth and a genuine commitment to resident wellbeing

**Tony** – an outstanding and dedicated team member whose passion for his work shines through every day

Tony



### STEWARDSHIP

**Darcy** – his management of the Return to Work Program represents care, respect and accountability

**Philemon** – takes great care in assisting residents with daily routines, bringing positivity to every interaction

Luna



Philemon



## Say hello to...

### RESIDENT JULIE SAMMERS

*As told by her family*

#### From Greece to the Tropics

Julie was born in 1928 in Ingham Far North Queensland, the fourth of five daughters. Her father Michael Kotsopoulos was born in 1888 in Finika on the southern coast of Turkiye, a multicultural merchant town.

After migrating to Australia in 1916, Michael worked in Darwin before gaining work on the Queensland railways. He lived and worked in and around Townsville, Cairns and Mackay. In 1921, family friends the Lazos family were given permission to migrate to Australia and Michael married Zafira Lazos, Julie's mother, on 25 November 1922 in Townsville. Michael and Zafira later moved to Ingham where they owned a fish and chip shop. They cooked on a small stove and sold lollies, veggies, fruit and cigarettes.

Julie's maiden name, Poullis, is a shortened form of Kotsopoulos, but also means little bird – appropriate since Julie's father was known to sing like a bird, and Julie has inherited this ability! Her childhood memories include



walking home squelching cane toads along the way, peeking through the holes in the wall of the corrugated iron cinema, playing marbles, skipping and cricket.

In 1938 the Poullis family moved to Innisfail, where Julie lived throughout World War Two. She remembers her older sisters going to dances with the soldiers on R and R. Julie and her sisters joined the Cairns 'Children's Circle' radio club, whose members exchanged letters under pen names, usually the names of their beloved film stars. So Julie became 'Linda Ware'. (*Linda Ware was an American actress known for the movies Paper Bullets (1941) and The Star Maker (1939).*)

In July 1945 the family moved to Sydney and rented a house in Riley Street. Eventually they bought a three-storey residence in Bourke St Darlinghurst, near Taylor Square, and opened a barber shop on the ground floor. One of Julie's sisters had married in Queensland but there are family jokes about needing to move to a big city to marry off all five daughters.

*Above: 97th Birthday with Christine, Phaedra and Paul.*

*Below left: Julie and Nick's wedding. Centre: Trocodero.*

*Right: Three generations making Koulouri.*





**Julie loved singing and dancing.** She still remembers the Sydney Trocadero, which she went to with her sisters in dresses they made themselves. She also used to love travelling as well as bingo and crafts. Julie worked as a dressmaker at Taylor Square and later at a record shop in Oxford Street selling Greek music. While working there, a young Greek merchant seaman started hanging around. Nick Sammers (originally Samartzis) came from the village of Styra on the Greek island Evia. In 1953, Julie and Nick married in the Saint Sophia Orthodox Cathedral in Paddington. They went on to have two children, Christine and John.

Julie and Nick lived in Bondi Junction, Camperdown and eventually Five Dock for over fifty years. The family would walk and go fishing in Hen and Chicken Bay. Julie and Nick were both long term members of what is now the Canada Bay Club. Julie still has her membership card!

**Julie and Nick set up a fruit shop in Petersham,** but as the family's breadwinner, Julie spent most of her working life at Salapatas Greek Bookshop in Elizabeth Street. The shop sold Greek newspapers, books, icons and memorabilia. It was hard work: five and half days per week, for over thirty years. Julie was bilingual and the face of

that popular store visited by all Sydney Greeks. Her customers remember her warm smiles and sunny disposition.

**Julie was welcomed by Nick's extended family on a visit to his village in Greece.** Nick's family ran a well-known café in the village. Other trips include visiting her son and grandson in London, a trip with friends to Surfers Paradise and a Pacific Islands cruise with Christine, Christine's husband Paul and their daughter Phaedra.

**Julie's husband Nick was a Bethel resident for two years** before he passed away in 2011. She has lived here since July 2017. Her son John has lived overseas much of his adult life, and three years ago moved back to his father's ancestral village, Styra. Phaedra often visits Julie with her partner Aidan, and John's son Moss lives near London. Also in touch is Julie's life-long friend and sister-in-law Nia. She also has six nieces and nephews living in Sydney. Her niece Kerry and Kerry's husband John describe Julie as their favourite Auntie!

**Julie is cheerful, youthful and family-oriented.** She's always been patient, friendly and hard working and has a very strong sense of humour.

*Below left: Julie (at right) at Salapatas book shop.*

*Centre: Julie (second from right) and her sisters.*

*Right: At the Record Store in Taylor Square.*





## Christmas LUNCH

Our annual Resident Christmas Lunch was a huge success, with amazing food, entertainment, Christmas Cookies and incredible gelato.



Residents celebrating with their families and friends: Top row: Peter, Steve, Grace. Second row: Margaret, David and Elaine, Maria. Third row: Kevin, Tuti. Bottom row: Don, Patricia, Rita.





Residents celebrating with their families and friends: Top row: Jennifer, Prasad, Betty. Second row: Rosaria, Dave, Michael. Third row: Les, Elaine, Mary. Bottom row: Wendy, Yani, Helen.



## *Santa* VISITS



*Clockwise from top: Jack, Prasad, Helen, Alice, Joan, Shirley, Gladys, Geraldine and Frank with some of their extended families.*



## Christmas Quiz

1. In which decade did the song “Rockin’ Around the Christmas Tree” first come out?  
A. The decade when dinosaurs wore Santa hats  
B. 1960s  
C. 1950s  
D. 1970s
2. What classic Christmas dessert is traditionally “fed” with brandy in the weeks before Christmas?  
A. Christmas pudding  
B. Anything left at the back of the fridge after November  
C. Lemon tart  
D. Pavlova
3. In the film *Home Alone*, where is the family heading when they accidentally leave Kevin behind?  
A. Paris  
B. The North Pole for elf try-outs  
C. London  
D. Sydney
4. What Christmas decoration was originally made using strands of real silver?  
A. Whatever glitter got stuck to Dad after wrapping presents  
B. Fairy lights  
C. Tinsel  
D. Baubles
5. Which Christmas gift became a craze in the early 1980s?  
A. Digital picture frames  
B. Cabbage Patch Kids  
C. Battery-operated singing mistletoe  
D. Fidget spinners

Answers: 1.C 2.A 3.A 4.C 5.B



## Staff profile

### BHAWANA GIRI, RN

**I was born and brought up in a village called Ramkot in Nepal**, near Kathmandu. It's a small but very naturally rich place with beautiful landscapes. I felt very safe growing up and was able to play outdoors. My next door neighbours became lifelong friends; we used to play together and celebrate festivals together. And sometimes get scolded by our parents for not studying for exams!

**I am the middle child**, with one elder brother and one younger sister. I had the blessing of growing up with my grandparents, my parents and my siblings. My family is part of a very tight knit community where everyone lives as one family and supports each other.

**I studied a Bachelor in Public Health in Nepal**. I also worked in different roles in the public health sectors in Nepal. I came to Australia in February 2016 with my husband to study a Masters in Public Health. Later I decided to change

my career and I completed my Bachelor in Nursing in 2019 from the Australian Catholic University in North Sydney. I have worked as a Registered Nurse in aged care settings ever since.

I found the education system in Australia quite different to Nepal. Here, you are provided with guidance and support but you are expected to search for answers yourself. It took me some time to adapt to this new way of learning.

**I've always been an empath** and wanted to help others. I first worked as Assistant in Nursing at Presbyterian Aged Care in Ashfield, and then as RN, IPC Lead and Clinical Support RN. I started working at ABH in December 2024. I was nervous when I started, but great teamwork and working alongside helpful colleagues has been a really enjoyable experience. I have



*Above: Graduation from ACU.*

*Below left: Extended family catchup at the Twelve Apostles.*

*Below right: Visit from parents in Feb 2025.*





also made some really good friends here. I enjoy being able to provide a helping hand and making our elderly residents feel safe. I work on the ground floor Mondays-Thursdays.

**Rikesh and I met and married in Nepal.**

We lived there for a year before moving here. We have been married for over ten years and we welcomed our daughter Viyona in 2022. We live in Auburn, which has a strong Nepalese community. Many of my family members are in Australia but we are all scattered across different states. We still manage to catch up regularly and enjoy celebrating our Nepalese festivals.

**I love spending quality time** with my family and going shopping. I am fond of eating good food (cooked by someone else obviously) and watching psychological thrillers, comedy shows and movies like Harry Potter and Knives Out. Recently I watched a Korean series on Netflix called "When Life Gives You Tangerines". I had a good crying session with it.

**Nepal is my Ideal holiday destination.**

There are lots of places in Nepal which are on my bucket list and I have not been



able to explore yet.

**I love this quote:** *Happiness can be found, even in the darkest of times, if one only remembers to turn on the light.* - Albus Dumbledore (Harry Potter books).

**My grandfather is my biggest inspiration.** He taught me about hard work, honesty and discipline. He used to say proverbs like 'You reap what you sow', and he always taught us to be giving and kind with everyone. My father is also inspirational, he always put high value on education and hard work, encouraging me to pursue further studies.

**People wouldn't guess it** but it takes me 5-7 business days to reply to any calls and messages once I am off duty. I'm a Sagittarius, that's my excuse.

**Three words to describe you?**

Empath, honest and fun loving.

*Above: Bhawana, Viyona and Rikesh at a cousin's wedding.*

*Below left: At ABH with Santa. Below right: Christmas dinner with Presbyterian Aged Care Team.*



## Reflections

As the new Chaplain, I am thankful for the staff who give so much to care for your loved ones. This is the love we try to model as we reflect on God's love.

Over 2000 years ago, God stepped into our world in the person of Jesus, the promised child Isaiah spoke of: *They will call him Emmanuel*, which means *God with us*. That promise still stands today. At Christmas we celebrate more than a moment in history, we celebrate a living Hope. Jesus came to reveal God's love, to invite us into a life of purpose and wholeness, and to offer the gift of forgiveness, peace, and a future filled with hope. No matter where you find yourself this Christmas - full of joy, carrying questions or walking through challenges, you are not alone. Remember, God is with you. May you experience peace, joy, and love. Happy New Year. Shalom.

**Danny Suleiman, Chaplain**



## Spiritual care CALENDAR

### DECEMBER

#### Sunday Services

**07** 9:30am online

**14 21 28** 9:30am

#### Catholic Mass

**02 16** 9:30am

#### Devotional Service

**10 24** 10:00am

#### Orthodox Service

**11** 1:00pm

### JANUARY

#### Sunday Services

**04 11** 9:30am online

**18 25** 9:30am

#### Devotional Service

**15 29** 10:00am

**Catholic Mass & Orthodox Service will resume in Feb**

### PASTORAL SUPPORT

*Upon request –*

*Ashfield Baptist Church,  
Earlwood Baptist Church,  
St. Brigid's Lewisham Parish,  
St. Nectarios Burwood.*

 02 9797 3600

 31 Clissold Street  
Ashfield NSW 2131

 [www.facebook.com/ashfieldbh](http://www.facebook.com/ashfieldbh)

#### Ashfield Baptist Homes

 [info@abh.org.au](mailto:info@abh.org.au)

 [www.abh.org.au](http://www.abh.org.au)

 [www.instagram.com/ashfieldbaptisthomes](http://www.instagram.com/ashfieldbaptisthomes)

#### Bethel Home Care

 [bethelhomecare@abh.org.au](mailto:bethelhomecare@abh.org.au)

 [abh.org.au/home-care-services](http://abh.org.au/home-care-services)

**Acknowledgement of country** Ashfield Baptist Homes acknowledges the Wangal People as the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our company is located and where we conduct our business. We recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.