“It is not how much you do, but how much love you put in the doing.”

Mother Teresa, Missionary

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PHOTO: Angela from Griffith

COVER PHOTO: Envia from Austral
PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

The possible consequences of the on-going government aged care reform agenda are the principal challenges to strategic planning. There have been a number of reviews of the aged care sector, including the seminal Tune Report, with most recommendations awaiting a response from government. Further, the recent media attention of the sector, mostly focussed on worst case and hopefully non-systemic situations, has led to a Royal Commission. We hope that this will include consideration of a range of good things in the sector, including our services. However, the publicity has heightened anxiety among potential residents and their families and has in some respects given rise to blunt and heavy-handed responses from government.

It is unquestioned that quality care must be at the core of aged care, nothing less is acceptable. But this requires adequate funding both through government and service fees that fund the increasing cost of staff and other inputs. At present we are faced with the cutting or freezing of subsidies, increasing costs and consumer expectations for excellent care with minimal or no additional contribution for that care. At Scalabrini we are fortunate that, as a not for profit organisation, we are better able than others to meet that challenge, within limits, and continue to achieve the best possible care for our residents, including the recent introduction of our innovative person-centred model of care, styled as sono io or this is me.

Pending the clarification of the government’s approach to the future of care and its funding, strategic planning in many cases is on hold or at best is difficult. It is partly for this reason that we have delayed the formulation of a new strategic plan.
FINANCIAL OUTCOMES

Though a number of critical recommendations for the reform of the aged care sector are pending, the Government has commenced to move on some recommendations, especially in the home care sector including the recent announcement to boost the funding of that sector. This will, of course, encourage people to remain at home longer and acute care with shorter stays will characterise the nature of residential care in the future. This will and has already had an immediate, and at least temporary, effect upon demand for residential aged care, which will probably be affected also by a move to a deregulated, consumer driven and competitive market for places and with many residents having to fund their own accommodation and contribute to the cost of their care.

The Board has been working to enhance the competitive position of the Company by adopting an excellent care model, positioning the Company to deliver specific services for acute, dementia and palliative care, and taking the Company well down the path of renewal of our built environment to deliver that care. The latter has, of course, placed pressure on occupancy both by the temporary closure of some places to allow the renovation of existing buildings and by the pace of commissioning and conducting an orderly admission of residents to new facilities.

Notwithstanding these challenges, Scalabrini Village has maintained and increased its net cash flow from its operating activities by $645k above that of the previous financial year. However, our total comprehensive income is a loss of $992k, largely affected by the provision of $9,232 million in depreciation and amortisation due to carrying an increasing allowance for depreciation as a consequence of the commissioning of new and improved facilities and accelerating the depreciation of the Lyons Street Drummoyne property. Our comprehensive income includes $9,12m on property revaluations arising as a result of the revaluation of four of the seven Village properties in accordance with the most recent government valuations.

At 30 June 2018 cash and cash equivalents almost doubled to $23,232 million as compared to the preceding year.

GOVERNANCE

As last year, I wish to specifically note that the Board and I are grateful to the members of the Company for granting us the stability necessary to unfold our strategies and permit us to commence to position the Company for a viable future in a context of significant change in the aged care sector. This will ensure that Scalabrini can continue to provide its unique and excellent care to its residents.

I remain grateful to all of the members of the Board for bringing their expertise and skills to the work of the Board and their contribution, with outstanding support from our senior management team and staff, in making Scalabrini always a better organisation.

CONCLUSION

I wish to extend my warmest wishes for a safe and holy festive season to life members, volunteers, who unselfishly support the work of the Village, residents, the Religious sisters and fathers, management and staff, Board members, and to everyone’s family.

Emeritus Professor Leroy Certoma, Chairman of the Board, November 2018
AN INVOCATION
FROM THE SUPERIOR PROVINCIAL

2018 has been a memorable year for the Scalabrini villages. Indeed a golden year to celebrate 50 years of altruistic service. The highlight of the commemorative events was the official opening of The Village by Scalabrini. I thought for this annual report to share with you the words of invocation at the great occasion aiming to praise the Lord for what we are at the Scalabrini family with gratitude and humility.

INVOCATION AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE VILLAGE BY SCALABRINI – 28 SEPTEMBER 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Christian approach to health care has always been distinguished by the understanding that every one of us is made in the image and likeness of God who is love. Whether we are young and vibrant, elderly and weak, strong or failing, every person is equal and worthy of reverence and respect. Our approach to health care is characterised not merely by offering all that we can do to make people feel loved and welcome, but also by the spiritual value of each person in the dignity of God’s image.

Therefore, we believe that each one of us is of infinite value. We have a capacity to make a difference by the power of God’s love within us, imitating Jesus, who gave himself for others that they might have life in abundance.

Blessed Scalabrini, the father to the migrants and founder of the Scalabrinian Family, understood very well this logic of love and dedicated his life to defend the dignity of the people of God especially the migrants. He saw himself as an instrument of God’s desire for communion in diversity. This is what we are reminded of as we contemplate the meaningful stained glass window, at the chapel of The Village, inspired by the coat of arms of Blessed Scalabrini. Taking his inspiration from Jacob who “had a dream: there was a ladder, planted on the ground with its top reaching to heaven; and God’s angels were going up and down on it” (Gn 28:12), Scalabrini saw his mission. This dream was a metaphor for a man of God whose surname (Scalabrini) includes the symbol of the stairway (Scala). Like the angels, God’s messengers, He wanted to be an instrument of dialogue between Heaven and Earth, between God and People, between The Church and the World, having hope as the journey, faith as the stairway, and love as vision.

Today, as we praise our Loving God for this new facility and for the wonderful people who with altruistic hearts have brought it to completion. We pray tribute to all those who have worked to make this portion of God’s kingdom what it is. We pray that the Christian Values we profess may continue to guide us as we strive to see the face of God in each human being and welcome one another with the words of Jesus in our hearts: “I was a stranger and you welcomed me”.

We ask the blessings and graces from our loving God upon each and every one of us. We ask the Lord to bless this new facility where people are cared for, their dignity respected, the love that is in them stimulated as together we become instruments of God’s love to one another. This we ask through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Fr. Delmar Silva CS
Superior Provincial
THE CEO’S REPORT

It is a privilege to lead Scalabrini as Chief Executive Officer and with that privilege comes a deep responsibility. The responsibility to work collaboratively with others to choose the right responses and make the right decisions that create opportunities for our residents to continue to live their lives well, with meaning, purpose and passion.

Celebrating our 50th anniversary in 2018, we are steadfast in ensuring that our commitment to excellent care continues to be at the centre of all that we do. With the opening of “The Village by Scalabrini” in February 2018, we are proud of our seven villages, each with its unique personality where staff work together to make things better for the people they care for, helping them to enjoy places where they spend time and to be active in a way that helps them to enjoy life.
As our reputation as a quality provider grows and flourishes, we continuously focus on delivering a seamless and better journey for our residents and their families. We understand that each person is unique and that their journey will be different. We look to make their life better.

“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”

Viktor Frankl, Austrian Neurologist
DEEPER INSIGHTS
Understanding what our customers value most is important to us. In 2018, we are conducting a series of focus groups to develop deeper customer insights.

Our goal is to bring the voice of our customers and potential customers into all actions and interactions within Scalabrini so that we can develop an approach our staff embrace that becomes second nature to the way they work, rather than an added-on process or simply an education piece.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FOOD
We are highly conscious of the vital link between food and wellbeing, and the role food plays in providing purpose, enjoyment, nourishment and the ability to make choices. Delivering great food to our residents is paramount. We spend a significant amount of money each year to ensure we offer a wide range of fresh fruit, vegetables, pasta and other high-quality produce to our residents each week. As we strive to offer exceptional care and service, we do recognise that there are opportunities for improvement across our villages.

In recognition of the need to improve further, Scalabrini is undertaking a Food and Dining Experience review across all villages. We have engaged Australia’s pre-eminent aged care nutritionist, Dr Cherie Griffin from The Lantern Project to undertake this work. The main purpose of the project is to improve mealtime experiences, menu choice, nutrition, and as a result, the quality of life of our residents. We are very much looking forward to sharing our insights, learnings and improvements with our residents and families as we progress.

THE QUALITY OF STAFF
Attracting high quality staff is paramount to offering exceptional service and care. Our determination to offer an allround quality package helps us attract and retain great people, dedicated people who choose aged care for the right reasons – those who want to make a positive contribution and lasting impact on people’s lives. Our Sono lo Practitioner (SIP) program is a wonderful example of how we recognise and acknowledge great people. Over the last 12 months, the program has grown from 33 Sono lo Practitioners to more than 140 across our villages. These individuals have been selected because of their acts of kindness to others – they are empathetic, caring and compassionate – they lead by example and are role models. We are fortunate indeed to have them.

Over the past months, we have been inspired by the many wonderful initiatives and stories that have emerged across all our villages, most driven by our lively and creative people who look for new ways of engaging with our residents every day. For example, residents have the opportunity to participate in meaningful and purposeful activities like gardening amongst the chickens at Griffith, going on holiday from Austral to The Entrance, spending time in the beautiful gardens at Chipping Norton, cooking in Nonna’s Kitchen at The Village and at Chipping Norton, taking art classes at Allambie Heights, chatting with our Gold Soul live-in volunteers over coffee at Bexley and enjoying Playgroup at Drummoyne. These programs have all been developed and led by our staff and it is a delight to see the pleasure these initiatives bring to our residents who are continuing to live their lives well.

PARTNERSHIP WITH UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG AND DEMENTIA TRAINING AUSTRALIA
This year, we were very pleased to enter into a Partnership Agreement with the University of Wollongong and Dementia Training Australia (DTA). DTA has set up a “shop front” in the specially designed offices and teaching spaces on the top floor of the Wellbeing Centre at The Village.

The Centre provides opportunities for research into best practice models of care and positive wellbeing experiences, and opportunities for undergraduate and postgraduate placements across Scalabrini. Scalabrini staff too are given the opportunity to continue their professional development centred around caring for people living with Dementia and other chronic and complex aged care conditions.

VOLUNTEERS CONTINUE TO INSPIRE US
Scalabrini’s volunteer numbers continue to grow across the villages with many new volunteers joining us this year.

Our volunteers are special people who give of their time so generously to enable our residents to do the things they love. It was wonderful to acknowledge their commitment and contribution during National Volunteer Week celebrations in May this year where they were each awarded a special Daisy pin. They are truly inspirational and where would we be without them!

OUR RELIGIOUS SISTERS
Our Religious Sisters continue to make Scalabrini a very special place to live for our residents and their families through their unique focus on pastoral care and support, enabling connections and building relationships. We are blessed by their presence.

THANK YOU TO ALL STAFF
I am very grateful to all our staff who work incredibly hard every day to deliver great care to our residents, working in partnership with our families. During a very busy year, our wonderful staff have found the energy and drive to continue to put our residents and their families first. Thank you for your commitment to making a difference to the lives of the people we serve.

I look forward to the commencement of our strategic planning discussions with the Board later in the year. It is a critical time for the aged care sector and Scalabrini is determined to plan well for its future to enhance its competitive position in the market and ensure its long-term viability, amidst a rapidly changing external environment.

Above all, we will continue to work together to offer outstanding services, so residents can live meaningful lives and make choices about the things that are important to them.

Elaine Griffin
Chief Executive Officer, November 2018
In 1968, a group of lay people and Scalabrini Fathers came together to address the absence of residential care options for elderly Italian migrants living in Sydney.

Their solution was to build a nursing home where children would feel welcome to visit, families could gather and share meals, nuns would provide pastoral care, and residents shared a cultural, linguistic and religious background.

It was a formula that resonated with the Italian community, and following a fundraising launch in 1970 - a gala evening for 500 people - the Scalabrini Village committee was able to buy land at Austral. Proceeds from subsequent Charity Queen Quests and art unions, together with a $360,000 government grant, saw building start in 1973.

Close to 5,000 people were at the village the day the 54 bed hostel in 1974 was officially declared open by the Prime Minister of the day, Gough Whitlam, and the then Leader of the Opposition, Bill Snedden.

For many years the village was a focal point for the Italian community, hosting large fundraising festivals on its grounds, with people flocking to enjoy Italian food, live music, dancing and games.

Expanded a number of times, Austral's success provided inspiration to other communities with an ageing Italian migrant generation.

Griffith, a regional town in southwestern New South Wales, was one. Many Italian migrants had settled in and around Griffith and the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area after World War II, attracted by infrastructure jobs and the availability of fertile, irrigated farmland.

By 1982, a small group of citizens formed a Steering Committee to consider the town's shortage of nursing home beds. After drawing on the advice and experience of Scalabrini Village, both parties agreed to join forces. The Griffith nursing home project adopted the Scalabrini name and received financial and administrative support from the Sydney organisation, leaving the local campaigners to concentrate on fundraising.

In 1988, a 30 bed nursing home was opened on a 7 acre block surrounded by citrus farms and vineyards. Almost full from the day it opened, Scalabrini Village Griffith immediately moved onto a stage two expansion.

The late 1980s also saw land purchased at Chipping Norton and Allambie Heights in Sydney. After years of fundraising by dedicated volunteers in those neighbourhoods, villages were built and opened in 1991 and 1994, respectively. These were followed by Bexley and Drummoyne, each of which came about when properties unexpectedly came on the market. The Bexley Private Hospital was bought in 1996 and a retirement village and nursing home on the waterfront at Drummoyne was purchased from the Little Sisters of the Poor in 1999. Both purchases were followed by substantial redevelopment work.

By 2000, Scalabrini Village Ltd had been through at least 16 rounds of capital works across six locations, adding nursing bed wings, hostel wings, independent living units, chapels, recreation areas and more. Individual village committees made up of volunteers were critical to fundraising at this time and helped ensure the smooth running of the villages.

Volunteers also organised activities and celebrations to make life enjoyable for residents.

At the same time that Scalabrini was expanding into new suburbs, the aged care industry was becoming increasingly complex. The company's structure, with its reliance on multiple volunteer-run committees, was a legacy of its grassroots heritage but not necessarily the best model for a large enterprise facing competition from for-profit providers, tighter regulation, shifting demographics, more demanding consumer expectations and changing government funding arrangements.

Across the organisation there were differences of opinion about the best structure and the right strategic direction to ensure long-term sustainability. Adding to the challenge, two members of the founding committee who had led Scalabrini through decades of growth - Chief Administrator Father Nevio Capra and President-Chairman Carl Melvey - were nearing retirement.

Ultimately, the committee model was dismantled and replaced by a corporate model, including a board of directors. Later, in 2011 a new era again began. A reconstituted board included directors with expertise in law, aged care regulation, governance, finance and clinical care, and the senior management team was strengthened.

In a new Mission and Vision Statement, Scalabrini made its goal clear: “To be recognised as one of the most outstanding providers of aged care services to the Italian community and other culturally different communities.”
The vision was supported by a five-year strategic plan designed to meet a changing policy landscape, including the government’s Living Longer Living Better reform package, and challenging market conditions. Residents were typically frailer at entry than in the past and requiring more specialist care, while dementia was becoming increasingly prevalent.

These trends informed continuing property redevelopments across the portfolio and resulted in a decision to build a new village in Drummoyne. The Village by Scalabrini drew on world best practice in terms of its design and care model, harnessed cutting edge technology, and the expertise and insights of staff and families.

The result is a village that gives residents choice and freedom of movement in a community setting. Residents live in homes or case of up to 14 people, which wrap around a neighbourhood piazza with its own café, restaurant and chapel, and easy access to a domestic garden, recreation hall, hair salon, GP surgery and more.

The Village has set a new benchmark for Scalabrini and the Australian aged care industry, and earlier in 2018 was named Best Aged Care Facility at the Annual Australian Healthcare Week Excellence Awards.

A company-wide cultural change program put every Scalabrini village on a better footing for the modern era. Called Sono io (Italian for “This is me”), this authentic, person-centred approach to care honours the individuality of each resident.

Sono io asks staff to constantly consider one question: “How would I like to be treated if I were the resident?” The same yardstick is being applied to the organisation’s policy and procedure framework to enable meaningful engagement and a holistic model of care and the planning of redevelopments and refurbishments.

Today, the concept of person-centred care continues to evolve, embracing primary carers and families. Excellence in aged care means connecting with people throughout their journey. It’s about tapping into each person’s unique needs and meeting them where they are at, so each person can live with dignity and meaning.

This approach is seeing Scalabrini build relationships with people in the community who are living with dementia and their carers. The Caring for the Carer programs and the Friendship Café are examples of this goal in action.

Fifty years on, the one constant in the Scalabrini story is the pursuit of improvement.

The company has taken stock of findings from past investigations into the aged care sector, been an industry innovator and early adopter of enhanced quality safeguards.

That Scalabrini today is a flourishing aged care provider, respected by the industry and trusted by hundreds of families with the care of their elders, is a tribute to the members of the founding committee and their successors, the volunteers who supported the villages over several decades and still today, a compassionate and professional workforce, and the enduring care of the Religious Sisters and Fathers.

“The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members.”

Coretta Scott King, American Author, Activist, Civil Rights Leader, and wife of Martin Luther King Jr.
FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS, SCALABRINI HAS GROWN INTO A FLOURISHING AND RESPECTED AGED CARE NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANISATION. ACROSS SEVEN LOCATIONS IN SYDNEY AND REGIONAL NEW SOUTH WALES, SCALABRINI NOW HAS SOME 900 RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE BEDS, 66 INDEPENDENT LIVING UNITS, NEARLY 1000 EMPLOYEES, AND THE PASTORAL SUPPORT OF THE SCALABRINI FATHERS AND THREE LIVE-IN ORDERS OF RELIGIOUS SISTERS.

OUR APPROACH TO DELIVERING EXCEPTIONAL CARE TO PEOPLE FROM CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS IS ENRICHED BY OUR ITALIAN HERITAGE AND A DEEP APPRECIATION OF FOOD, CULTURE, LANGUAGE AND FAITH.

1974
In April a lawyer representing the estate of Mercedes Isarsich Galliani (a former importer and distributor in Australia of Italian newspapers, magazines and books) donated $60,000 to Scalabrini. The gift proved transformative because a government scheme to match donations on a $2-for-$1 basis, delivered a further $120,000.

Also in April three Canossian Sisters arrived at Austral from Brisbane. In the following years more Canossian sisters followed.

In May Prime Minister Gough Whitlam and Leader of the Opposition Bill Snedden opened the village at Austral.

Speaking to a crowd of thousands, each drew cheers for speaking some Italian. The Archbishop of Sydney, Cardinal Freeman, presided over a Mass and blessed the building, with the Apostolic Pro-Nuncio, Archbishop Paro also in attendance.

1978
In January the expansion of Austral began, including the 30 bed Mercedes Galliani Nursing Wing, the 54 bed Max Carpenter Hostel Wing and an administration building.

The $1.7 million project, aided by a near-$1.4 million Department of Social Services grant, was officially opened in May 1979 by the Minister for Immigration Michael MacKellar.

1980
In May Bishop David Conien blessed and dedicated a newly built church on the grounds at Austral. The Church of the Divine Providence was built largely by Father Nevio and volunteers. Supporters provided many of the materials, including the roof and Murano stained glass windows.

1981
In June a fourth round of construction began at Austral, with the addition of a 30 bed nursing wing named after the Provincial Superior who was part of Scalabrin’s inaugural committee, Father Giorgio Baggio. The project took six months, and cost $626,000. Most of the funding came from a $350,000 Department of Community Services grant.

1968
In September a small group of businessmen, lawyers and Scalabrinian Fathers met in the basement of the Church of St Francis on Albion St in Surry Hills and formed a committee. Their mission was to find a culturally sensitive aged care option for elderly Italian migrants.

1970
In May Scalabrin Village Ltd was incorporated as a Company limited by guarantee and registered under the Charitable Collections Act. Father Nevio was appointed as Chaplain and Administrator.

In November public fundraising commenced with a gala evening at the fashionable Chevron Hotel in Potts Point attracting 500 guests. Sufficient money was raised to buy 27 acres at Austral for $36,500 and get the project started.

After a gala evening, fundraising events snowballed. With Art Unions and Charity Queen Contests, which later gave way to massive fetes on the grounds at Austral, where thousands came to enjoy live music, games, raffles and Italian food.

In December during his first Papal visit to Australia, Pope Paul VI blessed a foundation stone for the Austral village.

1971
1972
1973

In April a contract was signed with the construction company, A.W. Edwards, to build a 54 bed hostel at Austral.

Construction started on the 18th of June. The project took less than a year to complete and cost $577,000. The Department of Social Services contributed $360,000.

1974

1980

1977

1978

1981

1968 - 1981
1982

In June Italian migrant Elsa Dal Nevo召开 a meeting to discuss the needs of the ageing Italian population in Griffith and a shortage of nursing home accommodation. A few weeks later, the Griffith Aged Nursing Home Steering Committee was formed, with Elsa Dal Nevo its president.

After a decision to join forces with Scalabrini Village Ltd, a new committee was formed, along with a Ladies’ Social Committee.

1983

1984

In May some 650 people attended a gala dinner at Griffith’s Yoogali Club to launch a fundraising appeal. It was one of the biggest public fundraising events Griffith had seen, raising $55,000 that night.

Scalabrini Village Ltd acquired a 7 acre block at Yoogali for the proposed Griffith village for $70,000.

1985

1986

In March land was purchased at Chipping Norton, however, was not developed until 1990.

1987

In March a fifth round of construction began at Austral, adding 24 nursing beds. A $562,000 Department of Community Services grant covered most of the $834,000 capital outlay.

The extension was subsequently opened by John Howard, the then Leader of the Federal Opposition.

In November construction work began at Griffith.

1988

In June runs from the Daughters of St Anne in Peru arrived in Griffith. The order, having marked 100 years in Peru, decided to celebrate the milestone by establishing a new mission in a new country.

Today the Daughters of St Anne are also in Chipping Norton and Austral.

In November three acres were acquired at Allambie Heights.

In October the new 30 bed nursing home at Griffith was opened by the then Papal Nuncio, His Excellency Franco Brambilla, and Noel Hicks, the then Member of Parliament for Riverina.

1989

The organisation was reconstituted as Scalabrini Village Ltd with the former management committee replaced by a Board of Directors.

1990

Alexander Downer, as Leader of the Federal Opposition, declared the village at Allambie Heights officially open. The village comprised 23 hostel beds, 48 nursing beds and 12 villa homes. The All Saints Church at the village was consecrated on the same day.

1991

Scalabrini Chipping Norton was officially declared open by the then Prime Minister, Bob Hawke. It included a 40 bed nursing wing, a 40 bed hostel, and an administration and services building. A chapel was dedicated the same day by Bishop David Cremin.

1993

The Daughters of Saint Anne

1994

Prime Minister Bob Hawke and Father Nevio Capra at the opening ceremony of Scalabrini Chipping Norton
1996
In November Bexley Private Hospital was purchased for $3.1 million, refurbished and transformed into an aged care facility.

1997
In April the Church of the Good Shepherd at Scalabrini Griffith was consecrated by Bishop William Brennan. A new recreational centre at the village was opened by Noel Hicks, the local MP.

In November Scalabrini Bexley was declared open by Craig Knowles, the then NSW Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, and Minister for Housing. The Church of the Blessed Giovanni Battista Scalabrini was consecrated by Bishop David Crenn.

1998
In September Scalabrini celebrated its 30th anniversary with a dinner-dance for 600 staff, friends, members and supporters in Sydney.

In December Italian President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro visited Australia. This was a momentous occasion for Scalabrini.

Father Nevio with Italian President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro at Scalabrini Austral

2000
The Passionist Sisters commenced their pastoral work at Scalabrini Allambie Heights.

1999
Scalabrini Village Ltd. acquired a retirement village and nursing home waterfront property at Drummoyne from The Little Sisters of the Poor.

The signatories of the contract for Scalabrini Drummoyne

2001
The last residents moved into the refurbished nursing wing at the Drummoyne village.

In December Father Nevio retired as Chief Executive Officer of Scalabrini Village Ltd.

2002
The Passionist Sisters commenced their pastoral work at Scalabrini Allambie Heights.

2003
An external consultancy conducted an organisational review for Scalabrini, leading to a major restructure.

2004
Carl Melvey, one of the founding committee members of Scalabrini Village, stepped down as president and chairman. In 2013, reflecting on his connection with Scalabrini for the 45th anniversary, he described Scalabrini Village as one of the most successful aged care initiatives for migrant families in the history of immigration to Australia.

2005
Scalabrini purchased the Benevolent Society Bexley Centre, a property adjacent to Scalabrini Bexley, and work began to fully integrate the properties.

2006
Scalabrini purchased the Benevolent Society Bexley Centre, a property adjacent to Scalabrini Bexley, and work began to fully integrate the properties.

Mr Carl Melvey

Scalabrini Bexley

Passionist Sisters of St Paul of the Cross from the Philippines and Indonesia commenced their pastoral work at Scalabrini Bexley.

2009
Scalabrini purchased the Benevolent Society Bexley Centre, a property adjacent to Scalabrini Bexley, and work began to fully integrate the properties.

Mr Carl Melvey

2010
Scalabrini purchased the Benevolent Society Bexley Centre, a property adjacent to Scalabrini Bexley, and work began to fully integrate the properties.

2017/2018 Scalabrini Annual Report

2018
Scalabrini purchased the Benevolent Society Bexley Centre, a property adjacent to Scalabrini Bexley, and work began to fully integrate the properties.
2011

A transition from an interim board to a new board led by Professor Leroy Certoma took place, and the management team was strengthened. Advances were made in all aspects of the service, including governance, finances, management, compliance, quality of staff and care of residents.

2012

In April, the Commonwealth Government released the Long Longer Living Better blueprint, which preceded significant changes to how aged care services would be delivered operationally and financially. The changes really came into effect in 2014.

In August that year, the Scalabrini Board outlined a new strategic vision for Scalabrini: To be recognised as one of the most outstanding providers of aged care services to the Italian community and other culturally diverse communities. It included a plan for major upgrades across most villages to cater for residents with increasingly complex needs and to provide a more supportive environment for people who live with dementia.

2013

A property was purchased at Mary St., Drummoyne - the site of the former Drummoyne Boys’ High School. Planning began for an aged care facility at that site that would set a new benchmark in terms of catering for people living with dementia and others with chronic and complex health needs.

Construction of the state-of-the-art facility began in 2016 and was completed in early 2018.

2016

Scalabrini launched Sono io (This is me) transformative care culture program. The program puts residents and their unique needs at the heart of our care model.

Scalabrini staff who live and breathe the Sono io values through their daily behaviour, setting examples for the rest of the organisation, are given the admired label “Sono io Practitioner”.

2017

In August, Scalabrini won two Better Practice Commendation Awards from the Australian Aged Care Quality Agency. One was for the Open Heart pastoral care program at Scalabrini, Chipping Norton and one for the Let’s Move To Italy Italian language outreach program at Scalabrini, Allambie Heights.

2018

In February, the first residents moved into The Village By Scalabrini, in Drummoyne.

In March, The Village by Scalabrini was named Best Aged Care Facility at the 9th Annual Australian Healthcare Week awards.

In April, The Village by Scalabrini received industry recognition by being nominated as finalists at the prestigious Eldercare Innovation Awards in Singapore. Our wellbeing program in the Innovation of the Year - Care Model category and the Best Silver Architecture - In Construction category.

In September, Scalabrini celebrated its 50th anniversary with parties across its villages, culminating in the official opening of The Village by Scalabrini by the Hon. Ken Wyatt, Minister for Senior Australians and Aged Care.
It is a privilege to be entrusted with the care of our community’s elders.

Having contributed so much to society, they have earned the right to be well cared for when frail and vulnerable, and to have their individuality and autonomy respected and supported.

In 2012, Scalabrini set a clear goal for the organisation – to be recognised as an outstanding provider of care to the frail and to those living with dementia, including people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

It was accompanied by a strengthening in all aspects of service, from governance, finances, management, compliance, quality of staff and care, and drove a multi-million dollar overhaul of the villages.

Most importantly, it led to a comprehensive cultural change program that embedded advances in understanding of dementia, changes in public expectations, examples of world best practice and feedback from residents, families and staff.

That program was launched in 2016 and made authentic, person-centred care the core of Scalabrini’s philosophy and approach.

Known as Sono io (Italian for “This is me”), this model gives carers the tools and the time to better meet the individual needs and preferences of residents, develop closer relationships in the process and build stronger partnerships with families.

“We decided as an organisation that we wanted to make sure residents were at the centre of everything, so we put together a strategy that focused on our people, our environment, our systems and processes.

“It is a continuous journey but the results to date are heartening,” says Chief Executive Elaine Griffin.

Every employee needs to feel valued and understand the part they have to play.

“As employees, we too must experience person-centredness for ourselves in the way that we interact with each other, so we can pass it on in the right way to our residents.

“Our people are integral to the success of our Sono io program.” Says Elaine Championed from the leadership down, Sono io is supported by substantial training, resources and a genuine will to do the best by residents. It is backed up by staffing ratios, excellent clinical care and a depth of expertise in dementia and complex healthcare needs.

Through Sono io residents control the rhythm of their day and are supported to continue living their lives with passion, meaning and purpose.

In the villages, Sono io is behind many small everyday things - photos of residents outside bedrooms that give clues to their interests and their lives, varied and interesting activities such as cooking, gardening, painting, playing with children and participating in a wide range of outings.

But one ingredient above all others has driven profound change and amazing happenings in our villages: A simple yet radical mindset of people before tasks.

For that reason, residents in Scalabrini determine when they get up, when to shower and when to eat, just as they did in their own homes. “We always try to let residents lead their lives as if they were at home. This is their home and we need to adjust to them more than they adjust to us,” says Alessandra Solzo, a member of the Wellness Team at Scalabrini Allambie Heights.

At every level of our organisation, we are focusing on one golden rule: treat people the way you would like to be treated.
“Sono io also is about taking the time to talk and listen.”

Staff give lots of hugs and go out of their way to help if a resident is feeling down, says Alessandra. For residents who are living with dementia, it is especially important to take things slowly, she says.

“They don’t need to be rushed.”

Simple things, such as holding a hand or sharing a simple conversation, can make a big difference.

“The reality is, when you know their story and what they did in their lives, then you know these are people to be admired. They often started with nothing, perhaps a single piece of luggage, but they have raised families and helped build this country.

“Scalabrini staff know these stories and get very close to residents.

“When a resident dies, staff often cry,” says Alessandra.

Another big part of Sono io is tackling the boredom and lack of stimulation that are some of the big fears associated with life in residential aged care.

Part of human dignity is the ability to engage in meaningful, purposeful activity. Across all Scalabrini villages, residents are encouraged to keep doing the things they have always done, even though some activities may need to be modified. Some people who have cooked all their lives still love to cook. Others love the idea of never having to cook again. It is about personal choice.

In the villages, no two days are the same. Residents are collecting freshly laid eggs, tending gardens, playing card games, cooking with friends, painting, teaching Italian, enjoying films, singing in choirs, going on outings – and even on holidays – doing woodwork and more.

“If someone used to like gardening or painting or singing we try to let them do that as much as possible,” says Alessandra.

Being active brings pleasure, improves self-esteem and provides opportunities to make friends. In short, it can be the best medicine. Often residents who have been isolated and lonely in their homes find they have a new lease on life after moving into a village.

Human identity also is grounded in culture, language and faith.

Because of our Italian heritage Scalabrini has a unique appreciation of the importance of these elements of personhood.

It is why there are Italian speakers on staff, religious sisters throughout the villages and celebrations of important events from a variety of cultures.

Some of the most beautiful moments in the villages flow from residents reconnecting with their cultural heritage, such as making floral garlands for the European summer solstice or peeling and eating freshly roasted chestnuts as Italians do on Castagne Day.

“If we do these extra things it keeps people’s passions alive and that is how you keep people living. You have to know their passions and not just see them as a resident,” says Alessandra.

In older age food can be one of life’s great pleasures and Scalabrini spends nearly 50% more than the industry average in this area.

As a not-for-profit organisation any surpluses go back into doing more for residents and allows the villages to prepare fresh and nutritious meals from on-site kitchens.

“We have decided as an organisation that we want to make sure residents are at the centre of everything we do.”

Elaine Griffin, Chief Executive Officer
Today more than 1.5 million of us are aged 75 and older and by 2047 close to 4.1 million people will be in that upper age bracket. It is part of a global trend, which the United Nations has described as one of the most significant social transformations of the century.

To reach a ripe old age is wonderful and at Scalabrini the focus is on aging positively. Naturally, home is instinctively where we want to be as we age. It is where we have our possessions, our memories, our neighbourhood and where we have autonomy over what we do and when we do it.

But for some elderly people, staying at home paradoxically erodes independence and can be harmful to their physical and mental health.

Some houses aren’t suited to an elderly person living alone and shopping, cooking and eating well also can be challenging when you live alone.

Sadly, loneliness is regarded as an epidemic among the elderly.

Numerous studies have shown that loneliness and isolation in the elderly are major risk factors for depression, affecting physical and mental wellbeing. A lack of physical and social contact can actually shorten lives. For many, families are a bedrock but as years go by and caring needs increase it can become a struggle to cope despite all the love and compassion in the world.

People who are simultaneously raising children and caring for aging parents, dubbed the sandwich generation, sometimes are at breaking point when they decide to seek residential aged care.

Scalabrini’s approach is that the way to provide the best aged care possible is to work in partnership with families. By paying attention to small things that are important to the resident and their families, Scalabrini can deliver great care in a way that recognises each person for who they are. It starts with something as simple as personalising the bedroom so that it can be as homely as possible for each resident and incorporating possessions that are important to them, such as favourite chairs, photos, paintings, clocks and furniture. Photos on bedroom doors also help to personalise rooms and generate conversations about life stories.

It helps residents feel that the village is their place, even if it is not home. Indeed, the villages are based on the principles of home but with the added value of trained staff, the right equipment, attractive buildings and gardens, fresh and nutritious food, a clean and safe environment, and opportunities to go out or socialise, says Michael Diaz, Village Manager of Scalabrini Allambie Heights.

“It is not quite a home but in some ways I think it can be better than home,” he says. After 10 years in his role, Michael says one of the best things about his job is seeing people who come reluctantly to residential aged care begin to engage with others and the activities in the village and gradually gain a new lease on life. “I can’t prove it scientifically but this place gives you life. We say, you don’t come here to die, you come here to live. For me, that is a very important focus. The success rate of people settling down is huge. Socially, people are happier here,” he says.

And as trust builds, families can gradually get back to just enjoying time together with their mum or dad or husband or wife rather than being the carer who is always doing something for or to them.

For residents who are living with dementia it is helpful to have trained people near who know how to respond to certain behaviour or identify unmet needs.

At home “people can get very frustrated, especially after a long day at work, by little things. But if you understand dementia you will respond in a different way,” says Michael.

What is more, staff at the seven villages can call on the expertise of Scalabrini’s in-house Dementia Excellence Team if support is needed.

An added benefit of person-centred care is that when residents are understood and their needs are met, the need for psychotropic drugs may be reduced significantly. There are times when drugs may be the best solution, but they act as a kind of restraint, can trigger reactions and may cause people to lose their balance, increasing the risk of falling.

Input from a psychologist, combined with good nutrition, common sense and excellent person-centred care, may reduce the need for medication and help people feel themselves again.

Life expectancy in Australia is among the best in the world, with older people making up an increasing proportion of our population.
Scalabrini’s newest village has received national and international recognition for its design and its care model, which support residents with dementia or chronic and complex healthcare needs to live in a normalised way.

From the start the $90 million 126 bed village (which also houses 16 independent couples care apartments) was designed to be enabling, supporting residents to move freely and safely about their neighbourhood. At every step decisions about design, the use of supporting technology, the fit-out, social care model, management structure, policies and procedures were made based on what works best for residents, what protects their dignity and their individuality.

After a six-year design and construction process, The Village by Scalabrini was named “Best Aged Care Facility” at the Australian Healthcare Week 2018 awards. The Village also was a finalist at the Asia Pacific Eldercare Innovation Awards this year with respect to its Care Model and its architecture (the Silver Architecture – In Construction category).

“The bottom line is, anything that you can do as a person in your own home with your family or in your community, you can do here at The Village, and it’s real, not pretend,” says CEO Elaine Griffin.

“Residents can be free and be safe. They can have their privacy, and the building looks after that.”

After touring The Village by Scalabrini in April, Dr David Sykes of Dementia Australia’s Centre for Dementia Learning shared his impressions:

“The design of the whole village is truly inspiring, from the clever use of technology, to the clear separation between home and workplace elements of the centre. This helps to create a unique space where staff can support people living with dementia and their families and carers to lead rewarding lives through a clear focus on wellbeing first and foremost with the clinical aspects of care being more an important but unobtrusive element of the approach. All who wants to live in a hospital!”

I commend the board and staff for developing the vision and delivering it in such a unique and culturally sensitive way.”

As The Village fills with residents, the learnings from its development have flow-on benefits for Scalabrini and the aged care industry as a whole. All future capital works can draw on a deeper understanding of how the built environment, care model, workforce model and approach to people and culture affect residents, families and staff.

This comes at a time when demand for quality residential aged care with an authentic and holistic approach to care is expected to increase substantially.

Today, more than 1.5 million Australians are aged 75 and older and by 2047 close to 4.1 million people will be in that upper age bracket.

In response to this demographic trend and its budgetary implications, the government has adopted policies to enable aged persons to remain at home as long as possible.

In addition to an increased proportion of older people in the Australian population, projections suggest that without a medical breakthrough the number of Australians who are living with dementia will reach more than half a million by 2025 and 1.1 million by 2036, up from more than 425,000 today.

As dementia progresses, the need for purpose-built residential aged care increases.

“INNOVATION

“We are working hard to create that vibrant environment where people can feel that they can continue to live their lives. We want them to have the opportunity to still pursue their interests and their passions.”

Elaine Griffin, Chief Executive Officer

PHOTO: Maria from Austral
One innovative feature of The Village by Scalabrini is that residents live in intimate homes of between six and 14 people. Each home, or *casa*, has a domestic kitchen, dining room and lounge, as well as private, single bedrooms with en suite bathrooms. In the centre of The Village is a piazza where residents can go out to meet family members, visitors and other residents. Like a regular neighbourhood, there is a café, restaurant, grocer, chapel, recreation hall, GP surgery, hairdressing salon and barber shop. Residents also have access to a domestic garden, chicken enclosure and garage.

The social model of care at The Village focuses on relationships and a deeper appreciation of each resident’s preferences, personality, capabilities and passions. This stems from having a dedicated pool of staff within each *casa*, who get to know residents and their families well. This helps staff to be more alert to changes that may be outside the norm and to have better relationships with families, allowing for more open communication and collaboration should challenges arise.

Another aspect of the social model of care is about the rhythm of life. Domestic activities, such as eating meals, making morning tea, folding washing and watching TV, happen in each casa, while social gatherings and entertainment happen in the piazza and the recreation hall.

Technology is an invisible carer, aiding freedom of movement, choice, safety and wellbeing. It allows some of the institutional elements of aged care to be hidden from view, such as nursing stations, allowing the homes to feel domestic and familiar. Among the many technological innovations are sensor flooring to alert staff to falls, variable lighting that reinforces natural circadian rhythms and keyless entry to bedrooms.

Above the village, 16 luxury rooftop apartments form a unique integrated care offering known as The Palazzos. These apartments help couples stay together when one person may be living with dementia or a complex care need. All the programs, facilities and care services of The Village, including on-site 24/7 emergency assistance, are accessible.

Residents can add on other services such as cleaning, laundry and respite care, allowing couples to continue living together in the way that they want.
CLINICAL GOVERNANCE

In February 2017, Scalabrini created a Clinical Governance leadership role, moving ahead of industry peers and ensuring a major safety and quality review of the aged care sector.

That review, by Kate Carnell and Professor Ron Paterson, identified the professionalism of aged care workers, a commitment to care and compassion, and effective clinical governance in the residential homes in which they work as critical to ensuring that residents are well cared for.

To support quality of life in an aged care setting simply demands there be excellent clinical care, says Tracey Osmond, who was appointed as Scalabrini’s Director of Clinical Governance & Quality in 2017.

“Without it, everything comes unstuck,” says Tracey, who is responsible for clinical care across the seven villages, including the monitoring and analysis of key indicators that can act as early warning signs.

Monitoring helps prevent small problems from escalating into medical emergencies and helps ensure the villages have the right resources for the job.

For residents it means making sure that symptoms are managed properly because if people are unwell or in pain they won’t sleep well, won’t feel like eating or getting out of bed.

“We need to understand their health needs and have their symptoms managed to the best of our ability.”

After 35 years in the healthcare sector, either as a nurse, academic or manager, Tracey has a lot of respect for aged care nurses.

“You have to know about anatomy, physiology, pathophysiology, pharmacology, nursing, psychology and sociology, and apply that to a person whose organs have been working for 70+ years, may have a number of chronic conditions and is likely to be on multiple medications.

“You have to have all of your nursing wits about you, be a great listener and have extremely good life and people skills.”

In support of Scalabrini’s clinical governance goals, staffing levels at the villages are optimum by industry standards and the Company has its own in-house specialists in dementia, chronic and complex care, and palliative care.

If a registered nurse encounters something that is outside the norm, such as a wound that won’t respond to treatment or a resident living with dementia experiencing increased agitation that is out of character, they are available.

Every consultation is an opportunity for sharing knowledge and increasing the capacity of the care and clinical team, says Tracey.

Scalabrini also is working to improve registered nursing standards in collaboration with other faith-based aged care organisations. This has seen the development of 11 practice standards applicable to home care and residential aged care, against which registered nurses can measure and improve their aged care knowledge and skills.

In addition to clinical expertise and workforce education, a third element of clinical governance involves translating research evidence into practice.

This is behind Scalabrini’s collaboration with Dementia Training Australia and the University of Wollongong to ensure that everything from building design and fitout through to educating staff on the latest evidence-based practices.

In a win-win, the program gives students affordable accommodation on the grounds of Scalabrini Bexley, and the early results have exceeded expectations.

The program got underway in May, when three students from the Faculty of Health moved into a self-contained share-apartment under a program that nurtures intergenerational relationships, brightens the social lives of residents and gives future occupational therapists and physiotherapists an intimate perspective on ageing.

The brainchild of Sister Maria Elena, the Gold Soul Companionship Program was jointly developed by Scalabrini and The University of Sydney over several months. In exchange for a year’s rent-free accommodation and other incentives, the students spend around 30 hours a week working for the benefit of residents.

This may include face-to-face time with residents, attending training, planning activities and undertaking research.

The students make high teas for the residents, take them out gardening, cook for them, meet with relatives to learn more about what will make their family member happy and compile bespoke musical playists for residents.

“It is unbelievable what they are doing and the relationships that are forming - it is something special,” says Dementia Excellence Practice Leader Colin McDonnell.

“There is someone there to hold a hand when staff are too busy and they are building bonds with people. It is beautiful to see.”

A fourth student will move into the village later in 2018 and in 2019 the program will be evaluated by an occupational therapy honor student from The University of Sydney.

“Live-in University Students Enrich Lives at Scalabrini Bexley

In an Australian first, Scalabrini is hosting live-in university students under a program that nurtures intergenerational relationships, brightens the social lives of residents and gives future occupational therapists and physiotherapists an intimate perspective on ageing.

LIVE-IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS
ENRICH LIVES AT SCALABRINI
BEXLEY

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“Aged care nursing requires a deep knowledge of anatomy, physiology, pathophysiology, pharmacology, nursing, psychology and sociology....”

Tracey Osmond, Director of Clinical Governance and Quality

PHOTO: Gennaro from Bexley
“We cannot live only for ourselves. A thousand fibers connect us with our fellow men.”

Herman Melville, Novelist, Writer and Poet
Caring for a person who is living with dementia can be physically and emotionally challenging and if a carer is stressed, anxious or depressed, the experience can become harder. The feelings of exhaustion and stress experienced by carers are in fact so common that there is a term for it — carer fatigue.

Recently, Scalabrini launched two programs in conjunction with the dementia excellence team to support families caring at home for a loved one who is living with dementia.

Both initiatives fit within Scalabrini’s mission to be an outstanding provider of care to people who are living with dementia. This means working in partnership with people regardless of where they are living, and connecting with families through the journey, not just at the point when residential care is needed, says Sharonne Pearce, a Dementia Excellence Clinical Consultant at Scalabrini.

The Caring for the Carer program gives carers access to wellbeing support, education and resources, and opportunities to socialise in a safe environment.

The Friendship Café is a pilot project at The Village by Scalabrini and makes use of the new Drummoyne village’s café and gorgeous piazza. Each month primary carers can come with the person living with dementia they are supporting at home to an informal gathering at the café hosted by Sharonne. It is a casual, fun get together where people who are going through a common experience can relax in each other’s company.

It is hoped that this opportunity to get out of the house will be a welcome change. People who are living with dementia and their carers can often find that their social network falls away after a dementia diagnosis as symptoms can be challenging and alienating, even to longtime friends.

“And sometimes the world for a person living with dementia is so confusing and fast that they retreat. They can’t cope with the noise of a supermarket or the bright swirly patterns on the carpet in an RSL club,” says Sharonne.

These things can lead to a vicious circle of social isolation and depression. According to a 2016 survey by Alzheimer’s Australia (now Dementia Australia), people with dementia and their carers are significantly more lonely than the general public.

Meeting for coffee is an opportunity for new friendships to form and to chat in an informal setting about dementia, community support services, and what is happening at home. Residents also benefit from The Friendship Café, as visitors bring vibrancy and colour to the village, which has been deliberately designed for community interaction.

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CARING FOR THE CARER

Scalabrini’s Caring for the Carer program gives carers skills and strategies to help them look after a loved one at home.

Over six weeks Scalabrini’s Clinical Consultant Dementia Excellence, Sharonne Pearce, leads carers through topics designed to improve their own health and their ability to care for a loved one who is living with dementia.

COURSE MODULES

What is Dementia? An overview of dementia and how the brain affects behaviour. Participants have the opportunity to experience what living with dementia may be like by wearing goggles designed to alter reality. For some, this session generates lightbulb moments where behaviour they’re encountering starts to make sense. The session also deals with other conditions that look like dementia such as delirium and depression.

Carer Wellbeing. Explores emotions commonly experienced by carers such as anger, frustration, grief and guilt. Carers are encouraged to recognise and respond to changes in their own emotional health. Wellbeing and relaxation techniques are shared.

Meaningful Engagement. Verbal and non-verbal communication techniques to engage with a person who is living with dementia and how families can adjust techniques as dementia progresses. For many, reminiscence is a powerful tool that can tap emotions provided families can let go of the need for historical accuracy and enjoy the emotional experience.

Purposeful Living. Modifying activities and creating engaging environments so that dementia doesn’t stop people from being engaged in everyday activities that give purpose, such as cooking, cleaning, carpentry or lifestyle choices they’ve always enjoyed such as dancing, listening to music and swimming.

Responding to Changed Behaviour and Unmet Needs. Recognising that psychological and behavioural symptoms of dementia are often the result of unmet needs. Behaviour is a non-verbal form of communication that shows how we are feeling. If we feel angry, frustrated, sad or anxious these emotions will be expressed through a person’s behaviour. This session teaches skills to help detect the triggers for behaviours and techniques to minimise the impact these behaviours have on the person and those supporting them.

Planning Ahead. How to navigate the aged care system (My Aged Care) and find out what support is available. Covers legal issues such as enduring guardianship, power of attorney and advanced care directives.

PHOTO: The late Maria Salvestrin from Griffith, with her granddaughters.
A HOLIDAY TO THE ENTRANCE

Earlier in 2018, eight staff members and 12 residents from Scalabrini Austral went on an ambitious overnight holiday to The Entrance, the seaside town famous for its pelicans.

The trip was the second of its kind organised by Austral staff following on from a 2017 trip to Dubbo and the Taronga Western Plains Zoo.

Though just an overnight holiday, The Entrance excursion was a big undertaking. Some of the residents had never been on any village excursions, most were insulin dependent or had mobility issues, and one was living with dementia.

For the organisers, who spent weeks building up the confidence and trust of the residents, the results were amazing and brought tears to their eyes.

“It was very emotional to watch the residents go back in time and laugh. Going on a holiday they were just so happy. They couldn’t thank us enough,” says Leanne Restuccia, one of the organisers and an Assistant in Nursing at the village.

For one resident, Ken, it had been a dream to simply sit and have a beer on the beach – something he hadn’t done for years. Joseph, another resident, was so happy just to be fishing again.

“It was just great,” says Leanne.

Over two days residents fished, walked on the beach, ate shellfish, watched pelicans being fed and had a BBQ.

Since getting back, there have been requests to go again and residents are socialising more because of their shared experience.

A SCALABRINI CHOIR

About 25 residents at Scalabrini Drummoyne gather regularly to sing old Italian hits and enjoy music.

It is effectively a case of getting the choir back together.

In 2015 the residents performed at the Ryde Eisteddfod as “The Drummoyne Pasta Choir” and on a separate occasion that year joined with residents from Scalabrini’s other Sydney villages to perform at Luna Park.

One resident, Michela Santoro, who said at the time of the Luna Park concert that he never expected to be performing in his late 90s is still an enthusiastic choir member at 100.

“The residents have lots of fun singing traditional Italian songs. It brings back lots of memories, both happy and sad,” says Cinzia Pontrandolfo, Wellbeing Coordinator at Scalabrini Drummoyne.

“A lot of residents get emotional about the song Mamma. It brings back memories of their beloved mothers and being separated when they came to Australia.” Other popular numbers are Volare and That’s Amore.

A RESIDENT BRIDGE PLAYER

Once a month a little corner of Scalabrini Allambie Heights transforms into a bridge parlour when three bridge players from outside the village come to match wits with Allambie’s passionate bridge-playing resident, Suzanne.

Bridge is not the easiest game to learn – supposedly more difficult than chess but easier than learning a foreign language – and needs four people to make up a game.

“We have a lot of fun, the four of us,” she says.

Having played for 40 years Suzanne describes it as a game of strategy and deception that is mentally stimulating and fun.

Over the years the game has taken her to tournaments in Cairns, Townsville, Canberra, the Gold Coast and Mackay.

One big tournament in Canberra attracted 1,000 bridge players. Brilliant players come out for those big events, she says.

“People are some very clever players. Those really good players know what is in everybody’s hand. They eat you.”

In addition to the monthly game at the village, Suzanne teaches bridge fortnightly to a budding student.

When not playing with people face-to-face, there is always online bridge.

“It is one thing to reach a ripe old age, but at Scalabrini our focus is on ageing positively. Quality of life, social connection and wellbeing are more important than a number.”

W. Somerset Maugham, Playwright
KNITTING FOR CHARITY

At every Scalabrini village knitting is one of the most popular activities. At regular craft sessions and in their rooms talented residents make beautiful clothes, blankets and toys. Some are for friends and family but often their work is donated to charity.

For Kathleen Savage, a 92-year-old resident at Scalabrini Griffith, knitting has been a lifelong pastime. "I learned when I was five and I learned on six-inch roofing nails. We were poor way back then. Mum got me some wool and I made a doll’s blanket.”

More than 85 years later Kathleen is still knitting, mostly making beanies and blankets for charity. "I learned when I was five and I learned on six-inch roofing nails. We were poor way back then. Mum got me some wool and I made a doll’s blanket.”

More than 85 years later Kathleen is still knitting, mostly making beanies and blankets for charity. They are simple, she says, compared to the baby bonnets, booties and jackets that she used to make for friends or enter into competition (and win prizes for) at the Griffith Show.

At the village Kathleen knits and enjoys the company of other residents at weekly craft sessions run by Mary Bertoldo, a volunteer who began helping out 30 years ago when Scalabrini Griffith first opened.

The beauty of knitting is that you can do it and talk at the same time, plus there’s the personal satisfaction of having made something yourself, says Kathleen.

In Sydney knitters from the two villages in Drummoyne make blankets and blanket squares for an organisation called Wrap With Love. The charity sends warm wraps to aid agencies for distribution to people in areas of trauma and need around the world.

VISIT TO MARY MACKILLOP CHAPEL

In 2017 Scalabrini Allambie Heights took two residents on an outing just for them to the Mary MacKillop Chapel and Museum giving the ladies an opportunity to pray together to their favourite saint in a place that celebrates her life.

Both Lucia Marotta and Anna Bartole pray to St Mary MacKillop daily and credit her with getting them through tough times in their lives. “The day was beautiful. We walked around inside and they showed us everything - where she would pray and where she was buried,” says Anna Bartole.

Since meeting each other at the village, Anna Bartole and Lucia Marotta have bonded over their shared faith and common devotion to Saint Mary MacKillop, Australia’s first Saint. “She is a lovely friend,” says Lucia of Anna. “We go to chapel and say the rosary. We visit each other in our rooms and we play bingo. It is like I have a sister here.”

FESTA DELLA REPUBBLICA

For Italian migrants living in Scalabrini today there are few celebrations as big as Italian Republic Day, marking the vote in 1946 to abolish the monarchy and create a republic.

It is a chance to reminisce and have fun, says Franca Reho, the well-being coordinator at Scalabrini Austral. It is an especially poignant day for those residents who fought for independence. “They remember with pride the fact that they fought.”

In Italy the Festa della Repubblica on June 2 is a national holiday marked by official ceremonies, military parades, a laying of a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Altare della Patria (the Altar of the Fatherland) in Rome, and nationwide celebrations.

In 2018 Scalabrini Austral celebrated the day with a religious service outdoors. A priest blessed the Italian and Australian flags which were raised by Italian and Australian residents to singing by the Marconi choir. “It was a very moving service because when we were raising up the flags we had the Australian National Anthem and the Italian National Anthem,” says Franca. “Then we had a cake and spent an hour singing and just being Italian.”

THE BOCCE TEAM

Every Wednesday, 12 residents from Chipping Norton form into bocce teams and head to Liverpool Catholic Club to battle it out for prizes and the honour of being the week’s champions.

Residents of all nationalities get involved, including residents who use wheelchairs and walking frames. And everyone wears a team jersey (either green or brown), adding to the sense of competition and fun.

“Our residents look forward to it. It is a fun game and they love to win the prizes,” says Sailu Bhattarai, a Wellbeing Coordinator at Chipping Norton.

Sometimes residents from Scalabrini Austral join the competition, and if there is a shortfall in numbers, staff members play too. “I’m not so good. The residents are better and they tease me,” says Sailu.
“You may call God love, you may call God goodness. But the best name for God is compassion.”

Meister Eckhart, German Philosopher
CELEBRATING
50 YEARS!

Scalabrini has a proud and rich heritage of providing care and support to older Australians. The Scalabrini Story started 50 years ago in 1968 when a small group of lay people and two Scalabrini Fathers met in St Francis Presbytery in Surrey Hills with a grand plan to open an aged care facility to care for the elderly in their community. They had no background in aged care and little money, but they had energy, determination, and huge community support.

In September 2018, we celebrated our 50th anniversary in style with parties across our 7 villages, concluding at our newest village, The Village by Scalabrini in Mary Street Drummoyne. It was also fitting that in our 50th year we celebrated the official opening of our 7th village. Our founding fathers would be very proud.

Photos of the 50th anniversary celebrations from across our villages