

First house ready to open soon



A five-bedroom house (pictured below) in a quiet, leafy court in East Doncaster is soon to become the first house opened for the KRS redevelopment. Preparations are well underway for the opening this September.

Selection of the five residents who will move to this house is almost complete. A unique selection process applied for this house.

When the residents are selected, case managers from the Resident Assessment, Consultation and Planning (RACP) Team will work with families, direct care staff and residents to choose furniture and accessories to make the bedrooms home-like and personal. The house will also be painted throughout.

Individual transition plans to help ease the change into the new home will also be developed by case managers.

The RACP Team has completed 97 per cent of the process in which residents, families and friends expressed preferences for where residents would live. The Team has now started the process of matching the preferences into compatible house groupings. There has been a separate preference and selection process for the East Doncaster house.

The RACP Team has contacted the neighbours of the new house to inform them of what is going on. Letters were sent out with information about people with intellectual disabilities. The RACP Team then followed up by visiting the neighbours and giving them the opportunity to ask any questions. The reaction from neighbours has been generally very positive and accepting, according to RACP Team Manager Anne Leonard.



Pictures tell the Kew story

As a first step in preserving memories of Kew's rich and turbulent history, more than 25 past and present KRS staff came together in February to identify 500 photos from the 1960s and 70s.

Many photos have been lost or scattered over the years and existing photos are often unlabelled. As these photos



record the childhoods of many of Kew's present day residents, there is added incentive for the photos to be correctly identified so copies can be made for residents and their families. As residents move to their new community homes, the photos will form an important connection with the familiar past.

The photos will also be a feature of the individual 'Life



History' books that are being created to tell each resident's unique story.

Current KRS staff Anne Vogt, Helen Wilson, Annie Gargano, Barry Wales, Margaret Smith and Sally Lutter were amongst those who attended. Sylvia and Charlie Babic, Joe Selar and Kurt and Maria Kraushofer, who had each worked at Kew for more than 30 years, were also welcomed back.



With the wealth of experience present, considerable progress was made and around 80 per cent of the photos had at least some of the children in them identified. The photos highlighted the pioneering therapy work that was being carried out by staff, but also showed an overcrowded and hospital-like environment, with cots lined up almost touching each other.

Sylvia Babic recalled trying working conditions in the 1950s with only two staff responsible for 30 totally dependent residents. There were no wheelchairs or trolleys so the children were all carried to and from the bathroom for bathing and dressing before lunch.

The photos also show a very different Kew landscape with open space where the Eastern Freeway now exists.

And while no-one present would admit to ownership of the more outlandish 60s beehive hairdos, there was plenty of laughter at some of the fashion atrocities of the era.

Please contact Kerrie Soraghan on 9854 1409 if you have photos to contribute. Photos can be copied and the originals returned to you.

(L to R) Alma Adams (KRS Manager, and Hamer Centre staff member, 1980s), Dr Cliff Judge (medical officer 1960s), Fran van Brummelen (social worker, 1970s-80s), Donna Jaggs (historian), Barry Wales (24 years—present), Julie Dunn (13 years), Sally Lutter (1975-present), Sylvia Babic (1953-86), Anne Vogt (1980-present), Julie Carpenter (1976-present), Hosanna Sango (1970-present), Margaret Smith (1970-present), Inge Car (21 yrs), Helen Wilson (1973-present), Lucy Sioulas (1965-present), Geoff Ollier (1976-86), Annie Gargano (1980-present), Marie Ollier (1975-81), Andrea Eve (1980-98), Joe Selar (38 years), Charlie Babic (37 1/2 yrs), Kurt Kraushofer (30+ yrs).

Kew and Xavier... That



'It was just great when there was a smile, a response'

(Above) Brendan Wood with Bruce Troup



Students from elite Xavier College, one of Melbourne's more privileged schools, might not seem to have much in common with the intellectually disabled people living at Kew Residential Services.

However, a few weeks ago when a bus from KRS pulled up inside the manicured grounds of Xavier's Kew campus, the KRS residents who spilled out were greeted by students with the warmth of old friends.

The occasion was a reunion of the students and residents who had been away together on what has become an annual tradition...a camp where 20 Year 11 students from Xavier, most completely unfamiliar with disability, head off for the hills with residents of KRS.

While on camp the students are not just mixing occasionally with the residents. Two boys have responsibility for each individual resident and are in charge of most personal care tasks over the four day camp, as well as sleeping in the same room.

KRS staff member Jayne Hocking, who has been on many of the camps, says the boys quickly lose their discomfort or nervousness around disability and take it in their stride with remarkable ease. By the last morning it is common for the boys to have their resident up, showered and dressed without any assistance from staff.

At the reunion it was clear that the links that were formed on the camp were real. Adolescent boys aren't always known for their sensitivity and gentleness, but the Xavier students held hands with their Kew friends as they strolled around the elegant campus together. They chatted away freely to the men from KRS, tied up shoelaces as needed and remembered small details, for example their mates' preferences for drinks, as they shared a cup of coffee together.

'I thought disability was a whole other world away...that barrier between normal and "not normal" has really been broken down for me'

Simon Douglas, pictured at left with John Psahoulis

's what friends are for

The camps have been running for more than 10 years. Students volunteer to go on the camp, and have to write an application arguing their suitability and reflecting on what they think they can offer. The camps have an excellent reputation, passed on down the years, and applications are always plentiful.

Rob Fomiatti, the co-ordinator of community service at Xavier, says the camps move students out of their comfort zone and are highly challenging for young men who are often from fairly sheltered backgrounds.

The camp is filled with activities such as visits to a trout farm and hedging maze, mini golf, bushwalking and Stevenson's Falls.

Many of the boys volunteer to continue to visit KRS...last year as many as 11 kept in touch by visiting their mates at KRS on Friday afternoons, despite the hectic demands of school, sport and social lives.



(Standing) James Penzo, John Psahoulis, Simon Douglas, Ron Halfpenny,
(Seated) Dennis Periera, Paul Labbozzetta and James Woods

Patience, acceptance...and 'a hell of a lot of fun'

Xavier College has a tradition of commitment to social justice, and its motto of 'Men for Others' reflects its history of practical Christianity.

However, the Xavier boys' involvement with KRS is not a worthy but dull exercise in 'doing good in the community'. The word 'fun' keeps cropping up as the boys talk about the camp, and they speak thoughtfully and with insight about what the camp has meant to them.

Sean Walsh says that though he volunteered for the camp expecting a challenge and determined to avoid 'the easy way out', he had 'a hell of a lot of fun...I learnt to adapt and how to be patient'.

Brendan Wood agrees that the experience, though initially confronting, taught him a lot about perspective: 'I'm normally a worrier about school, and this really made me think about how much I take for granted,' he said. Like Sean, Brendan was matched with a man with no speech and had to learn to interpret what he needed and read his cues. 'It was just great when there was a smile, a response...we received so much back from the experience'.

As well as the camp, another group of Xavier students attended KRS for a week of community service with Kew Day Programs. Simon Douglas, one of these students, said working with Kew residents had helped him see there were no barriers between those with, and without, disability. 'I thought disability was a whole other world away...that barrier between normal and not normal has really been broken down for me. These guys have exactly the same feelings and needs as we do.'

James Penzo said that he had learnt about the frustration of being unable to communicate with words: 'The feelings are there, it's like they are locked away and can't get out.'

'You have to realise that perhaps they can follow the sound of your voice, if they are vision impaired. I've learnt so much about acceptance and patience,' says Paul Labbozzetta, who hopes to one day practise as a psychiatrist or psychologist.

'Coming to KRS moves the boys out of their comfort zone'...Rob Fomiatti, Xavier College



*'A hell of a lot of fun'
The camp, March 2002*

Remembering Kew's past

With the announcement of the redevelopment of Kew Residential Services, preserving memories of the service's fascinating past will be a priority. An official history of Australia's largest and oldest institution is likely to be written and creative ways of telling the history are being considered,



Around the turn of the century – recreation time

including collections of oral stories from residents, families and staff.

A recent display of photos and historical material at the Kew Cottages Parents' Association fete gave a glimpse of the many highs and lows that KRS has been through. While many of the photos of Kew's early years are now being held and catalogued at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, KRS is allowed free access to them as required.

The collection includes rare photos of the original three 'cottages' that were built in 1887 to each house 20 children with intellectual disabilities. The cottages were formed as a then progressive attempt to separate the care of these children, who were formerly housed in the prison or mental

health systems. The facility had its own school and programs of callisthenics and recreation—revolutionary concepts for that era.

However, life was still likely to have been harsh and grim for the residents of what was then known as 'The Idiot Asylum'. In 1905, a government report condemned widespread practices such as the use of mouth gags, straight jackets, and a 'Compulsion chair' in which a resident would be constrained for periods as long as a couple of months. Equally horrific was the 'cold water cure' which involved tipping hundreds of buckets of water over the unfortunate recipient.

The care and dedication of the staff has been a familiar theme over the years, as is the commitment by families to improving the care of their children by major fundraising

and public awareness campaigns.



The original five Kew Children's Cottages

Designed for comfort and privacy

The new houses to be built as part of the KRS redevelopment will be designed to ensure privacy and comfort, as well as maximum safety, for residents, visitors and staff.

Since September, a group has met fortnightly to advise on the design features of the new houses. The group works in partnership with the project architects to make the houses home-like and comfortable. Group members have visited the house sites and some existing community residential units (CRUs) to see what works well and what could be improved.

Some of the innovative features to be incorporated in the new house designs include ceiling framework to connect hoists and raising the height of dishwashers, washing machines and clothes dryers to reduce back strain for staff.

The user group has been particularly concerned to ensure that the houses will maximise privacy for residents. Bathrooms and toilets, for example, will be completely separate. The designers have also worked to ensure that bathrooms do not open out from the main living areas.

An interior designer has also been working on the house plans. Exterior colours and garden designs have been chosen so the houses will blend in with the streetscape.

Construction of the first six houses for the KRS redevelopment started this month. These houses are all in the Eastern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne. Several house sites have also been purchased in the Northern and Southern Regions and building is likely to start soon.

Planning for Kew site takes shape



(L to R) Community Services Minister Bronwyn Pike, Manager of the KRS Redevelopment Alma Adams, the Mayor of Boroondara Meredith Butler, and Eastern Region Director John Leatherland

The new suburb being developed for the KRS site will 'showcase the idea of people of all abilities living harmoniously together', according to the Community Services Minister, Bronwyn Pike. On 11 April, the Minister launched the start of the planning process to develop the Kew site. The new suburb will include new homes for some 50 to 100 of Kew Residential Services (KRS) current residents.

The Minister also announced the formation of a working partnership with the City of Boroondara to guide the process. With representatives from the council, the local community, Urban and Regional Land Corporation, and Department of Human Services management, the Working Group will, over the next six months, establish a framework for the development of the site.

The formation of the Boroondara Working Group represents a key milestone in the redevelopment of Kew Residential Services, announced by Premier Steve Bracks in May 2001.

Mr Bracks stated at the time that all funds raised by the sale of the KRS land site will be used for buying

and building new homes for residents throughout Melbourne and Victoria.

The Minister launched the start of the planning process at a rare tree just near the kiosk. The 13.5 metre Bishop Pine tree, which is listed on the National Trust Register, is one of the trees on the KRS site that will be preserved due to their unique conservation features.

(In this edition of Kew News we have included a copy of the newsletter which has been circulated to neighbours of KRS, advising them of the redevelopment and the Working Group meetings.)

The family business caring for Kew's 'tender feet'

For close to 40 years the Watt family, who still hand make shoes in their landmark Carlton shop, have been fitting shoes for the residents of Kew.

Bob Watt, whose family has owned the Lygon St business since 1895, visits Kew every Thursday morning to fit and repair shoes. He has known and fitted many of the Kew residents since they were children—and his father filled the same role before him.

Bob works closely with physiotherapist, Pat Paterson, to custom make shoes to fit the specialised needs of many of the people who live at Kew. His visits to KRS are eagerly awaited by many residents who know that seeing Bob means a new and comfortable pair of shoes.

Hearing Bob talk about the way his shoes are crafted is an education into a dying art. All the patterns for the shoes are still cut by hand in the Watt's workshop. They even still make their own thread with beeswax, having been unable to find thread that meets their exacting requirements.

The Watt's store, on the corner of Grattan and Lygon Streets in Carlton, still displays the original signage, quaintly advertising 'Surgical and Bespoke Shoes for Tender Feet'. 'Bespoke' is an old term meaning custom made and, according to Bob, many of the original shoe shops in London's West End still carry this signage.



KRS physiotherapist Pat Paterson with Bob Watt



Bob Watt outside the family shoe shop

Bob always goes the extra mile to make the shoes look less surgical, by adding modern touches such as colour stripes or bands around them. He will also adapt existing shoes and takes care to keep features such as wedges hidden inside the shoe wherever possible.

The shoes are all leather and cost upwards of \$400 a pair, with the cost subsidised by the Aids and Equipment Program of the Department of Human Services. However, their workmanship means that they last much longer and can cope with the extra stresses sometimes placed on them, such as unusual gaits or dragging of the feet. Each pair will take around five to six weeks from first fitting to completion.

Bob's shop has catered for many celebrities over the years...at one point both the Catholic Archbishop Dr Mannix (who apparently had unusually long and narrow feet), and Anglican Archbishop Head were customers. 'You had to hope they didn't meet up in the shop,' Bob says with a chuckle.

The shop also custom made shoes for television productions *All the Rivers Run* and *The Anzacs*, for which they converted hundreds of World War 2 boots to make them more authentic for the time period. Footballers such as Carlton's Stephen Silvagni and the Madden brothers have also been regular customers, as well as star cricketer Shane Warne.

About Kew News

We would welcome your comments on this edition of *Kew News*.

Drop us a line:

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Moving out...a family viewpoint

Many families wonder how their relative will cope with the move to community living, and they may be unsure how they will be supported and included through the process. This month Louise Gervalla shares her family's experiences of what the transition was like for them...

Louise's brothers, Zani and Agim, have both lived at Kew Residential Services. Zani will be moving to the community from Unit 20, while Agim made the successful transition to a community house in Mount Waverley several years ago.

While the outcome for Agim has more than pleased the family, the circumstances of his move did not make the initial transition easy. Agim was a resident of Unit 30/31 which was destroyed by the tragic fire in 1996, with the loss of nine lives. His move to the community was planned in the aftermath of that trauma. The urgency of the move meant that there was limited opportunity to consider the family's wishes. In particular, they did not have a say in choosing which region Agim would live in.

Agim has, however, settled well into his new home and Louise says the family is delighted that he is not now 'just one of the crowd'. 'His care is more personal, he has his own bedroom and his behaviour has started to open up more. Our family has never had an anxious moment about his care and we have a good rapport with the staff,' said Louise. 'We have no reservations now that it's the right place for him and his life has improved so much.'

In contrast to their experience with Agim, Louise feels that planning for Zani's move has given her and her mother many chances to voice their wishes for his future. 'We've been consulted, asked what we think, and we know there is a proper process...my mother feels more in control and involved and she is much happier about the process this time.'

So far Louise and her mother have been part of the process of developing a General Service Plan (GSP) for Zani and have expressed their preference for him to live closer to his mother in Thornbury. Zani's mother doesn't drive, but has a close nurturing bond with her sons, who both moved to KRS as children.

Louise is looking forward to seeing her brother linked into the community and mainstream activities. She is also hopeful that the two brothers can be reunited.

Louise says that they realise that all the pieces of the jigsaw—where and with whom her brother will live—are not yet sorted out.

'We know there is still a long, long way to go, but the staff of the (Resident Assessment Consultation and Planning) RACP Team have been really honest and open with us. Because they let us know where things are at all the time, it is easier to take each stage as it comes.'

For an update on the work of the RACP Team, see page 2.



Louise Gervalla (2nd from left) with her brother Zani, her mother Mrs Stavroula Zyka, and brother Paul (Agim)