

VOLUNTEERS NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2025

Merry Christmas everyone!

As we start December and the busy Christmas/New Year period, it is very easy to look back and wonder where the year has gone. As I write this Newsletter, I am thinking that it doesn't feel long ago since I was doing the last one! But here we are, at the end of another year.

It has been a big year for Aged Care in Australia. The new Aged Care Act 2024 came into being on November 1st and established the Support at Home (S@H) programme. This has absorbed the Home Care Packages (HCP) into its orbit, but the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) will not come under S@H until at the earliest 1 July 2027.

The CHSP scheme is very important to us. This is how we are funded. We receive an amount to subsidise each meal we deliver, and another to subsidise each hour of social support we provide. There is a review into this most successful of the Departments schemes but also a desire by the Government to wind it up and incorporate everyone under S@H. 2026 will be an important year for CHSP and we hope that all the campaigns will see the Government change its mind. S@H can not cope with what it must do now and to take on all the CHSP people as well will, I believe, break the new system.

But it is Christmas and we should be happier and look forward to time with family and friends. I hope that you get the opportunity to put your feet up and enjoy yourself. I know that Denise and I are looking forward to days on the beach with the family and we always enjoy the company of our grandchildren...and of course our children.

If you are travelling, then please do so carefully. You have already travelled many roads and kilometres this year as you have cared for our clients. Thank you for your compassion, assistance and feedback which has been helpful. The informal 'welfare checks' that you do are important for the clients and the comments, written and verbal, when you return from a run or outing, are greatly appreciated by us.

Under the new Act we must record data that we have not needed to collect before. I know this is a burden and seems a waste of time, but the law requires that we collect this information.

This has been expanded to include the planned pick-up and return times for our outings with clients and then the actual times we arrive and return them to home.

I appreciate the efforts the staff are putting into making this system easier to manage, and less time-consuming when out on the road. We will be introducing iPads onto the buses to assist with this task, and these will get the data back to us immediately. We must have all of this lodged by 5pm on the day of the event at present!

The new Aged Care Act was to be simple for clients and providers. I am not sure this has been achieved.





But, once again I move from the happy moments of the year.

The Client Survey in May was full of compliments about your efforts and service. I have noted this before, but it is important to remind yourselves that the clients appreciate your efforts and support. They love to see you. Each visit or phone call breaks the social isolation for many.

This year as part of their Christmas bag will be a Christmas Card. The students at Moruya and Milton Public Schools have designed and created the cards and written messages. I hope our clients are happy to know that the children in their area are thinking of them.

We have produced another calendar which will go to each client. Once again Laura Cockroft from the Ulladulla office has spent the year collecting photographs. She has delivered a beautiful calendar of our region with twelve beautiful photos. These are available at the office and this year we have produced extra should you wish to purchase one for a gift, especially for family or friends outside of our areas.

I do have to commend the staff and thank you for your wonderful comments about the support you receive from the staff as noted in the Volunteers Survey in June. Our staff are very compassionate, concerned about the welfare of each client, and volunteer, and try to go the extra mile to make sure services are provided well. I wish each of them a great time with family and look forward to working with them in 2026.

So, what can we expect in 2026? I hope that the bugs in the new Aged Care Act have been highlighted since 1st November and that the new year will see these worked through and the clients will benefit from the aim of the Act -to support the elderly within our community.

I hope that you will continue to feel welcomed and appreciated as you

support our clients. I am hoping that there will be no new 'expectations' from the Act and its Rules that we have to ask you to do. We will be offering two First Aid Courses again, and I do wish to reestablish regular Volunteer Forums to get your feedback on what we do, and how we could offer more to our clients. We are now in a very competitive market, and we need to make sure every CHSP client we have is happy, and that we are providing for them. We also need to make sure every HCP and S@H person using our services feels that they are getting value for money.

Once again, thank you so much for all you have done in 2025. To those who have retired from volunteering this Christmas, we sincerely thank you for your years of service. It was sad

SIX CHIX / By Isabella Bannerman



to see Anne Wakelin retire after 46 years of service to Meals on Wheels.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all.

Alan Russell,
Manager

