This is the story of the way in which the members of the Lions Club of Essendon, Victoria took up the challenge of the "dream" of their President in 1962. His challenge to them was to provide secure, independent and reasonably priced accommodation for elderly people in their community who were not adequately housed.

History demonstrates that in taking up that challenge the Lions members achieved a success beyond the hopes and imaginations of even their most fervent supporters. The project, known as Lionsville, was to become one of the greatest Club projects in the world of Lionism. In the early years the optimistic aims were supported by colleagues from the Lions Club of nearby Coburg and as Lionsville grew, financial support came from numerous sources including generous, personal donors, the fund-raising efforts of the members of the Lions club and from Australian Government subsidies.

The story, which relates the struggles and successes, is told in detail as a tribute to the many Lions and other supporters who have worked tirelessly and with skill and determination throughout the past forty years. From 16 residents in 1966, Lionsville now houses around 200 elderly people in 2002!

The book is produced to mark the 50th Anniversary of the Chartering of the Lions Club of Essendon in April 1953.

The "dream" of 1962 has become a remarkable reality. It is truly…

"The Miracle By The Creek"
THE MIRACLE BY THE CREEK

The story of the establishment and development of Lionsville Aged Care Facility, Essendon

A project of
The Lions Club of Essendon
1962 – 2002

Neil Baudinette
Architect’s sketch: “How Lionsville Will Look.” Mr. F. Neuss Architect 1965. The buildings, when completed, were quite different.
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This is the story of a dream, but unlike most dreams this one became reality. It is the story of the way a community group - the Lions Club of Essendon - responded to their President’s dream and with their faith in the worthiness of their goal provided their community with a wonderful asset, an aged-care facility called Lionsville. It may have seemed foolishness to some but history proved them wrong.

The dream described a way of relieving the hardship of those elderly people who lived in unsatisfactory conditions by providing for them secure, hospitable and low cost accommodation. There was a need and the dream showed a way of meeting that need.

The realization of this dream has been described as a “miracle” - a wonderful thing, a marvel, a surpassing example of quality. The first person to use this term in public was the Governor of Victoria, Rear Admiral Sir Brian Murray when in 1983 he officially opened the first wing of Lionsville Lodge. This is a hostel which serves the residents who already live at Lionsville as well as other members of the community who need such care. During his speech, using background information provided to him, he described the project that had begun some twenty years earlier with the building of the first independent living units on land beside the Moonee Ponds Creek, as “The Miracle by the Creek”. This term has been revived. With the permission of Lion Stan Morrison OAM, who used it in notes to the Governor’s Secretary, it has been chosen as an apt title for the history of what has been described by prominent members of Lions International as “one of the great projects in the world of Lionism”.

Others have been lavish in their praise of Lionsville. In opening the second wing of Lionsville Lodge in December 1990, the Prime Minister of Australia, the Honorable RJL Hawke AC MP used the following words to describe his feelings: “In my many visits to aged care facilities around Australia I have not seen any which have impressed me more than has Lionsville.”

During the years of the growth of Lionsville - through the late 1960s to the early 1990s - the spirit of community service and of volunteerism was strong. It is doubtful if such a dream could be realized in the present world where people are absorbed with the ideal of self-first and where personal aggrandizement prospers. The time, thought, energy, research, physical effort and wealth that were given to the realization of this dream by the members of the Lions Club of Essendon and their supporters was remarkable, even for this era when community participation was not uncommon.

When the idea developed that a history of Lionsville should be written to mark the 50th anniversary of the Chartering of the Lions Club of Essendon in 1953, it was soon realized that others had made the task easier for any writer. Lion George Neuss, the initial Secretary, was careful to preserve important documents and to write notes to assist future searchers. His successor Lion Lindsay Woods wrote very comprehensive Minutes of Meetings that proved to be a rich source of information. The present
practice of having the Committees and the two Managers present printed Reports to the Committee, and more lately to the Board, has been very helpful and should ensure that material is available for the use of future historians. Lion Stan Morrison, by writing a "Short History of Lionsville" in the early 1990s, provided a guide for the present volume.

In this new millenium things have changed greatly both in the attitude to volunteerism and in the response of governments to aged care. The increase in the proportion of elderly people in the community and the higher proportion of government financial budgets paid out for the care of aged persons, have resulted in greater participation by governments in the way the money has been spent and in the standards of care required. The provision of housing and residential care for the aged is now a huge business; consequently private sector participation in this industry has increased considerably. A not-for-profit, public beneficiary organization such as Lionsville, must now not only meet the highest standards of care for its clients, but also face increasingly competitive standards of residential accommodation, if it is to remain viable. Whatever happens in the future however, it can look back with pride and satisfaction on the nearly forty years of service to elderly people of this community, especially those in need.

Why have I been motivated to write this story into history? The answer is to be found in the last few lines of the Prologue to a history of the life and work of John Flynn - "Flynn of the Inland" - written by Max Griffiths. Flynn was also driven by a dream. Griffiths writes: "When I realized this I remembered something more. Only those with the foolishness of faith can dream the impossible dreams. It so happened that I shared the same faith and the same foolishness. So I went in search of the dream".  

The Lions Club of Essendon followed a dream and with the foolishness of faith achieved a miracle.

1 Quoted with the permission of the Author. The book, "The Silent Heart", was published by Kangaroo Press in 1993.
Aerial view of Lionsville 1984 showing the dates on which each parcel of land was obtained.
A. Original land gazetted 1965
B. Extra land gazetted 1969
C. Former Rifle Club land gazetted 1975
D. Land purchased from the City of Essendon 1982
E. Land obtained on lease from State and Local Government 1988
F. Land purchased from the City of Essendon 1995
G. Land purchased privately 1985-96.
INTRODUCTION

Lionsville is a project of the Lions Club of Essendon. It is an Aged Care facility which provides accommodation and care for 200 elderly people. There are 115 units for independent living and a hostel providing varying degrees of care for 78 frail aged residents. The site has very attractive trees, gardens and lawns.

In 2002, at the end of the financial year, the total Assets of the organization were almost $13 million and with Liabilities totaling $2.25 million the value of the Members’ Funds was in excess of $10.5 million! The replacement cost of the present care facilities would be well over $20 million.

There are 25 equivalent full time members of staff employed at the facility and the operation is professionally managed by two principal officers, the Hostel Manager and the Operations Manager, who is also the organization’s Treasurer and Secretary.

Lionsville is an incorporated association formed under the Associations Incorporation Act 1981 and is controlled by a Board of Management of eleven members, ten of whom are elected by members and one appointed by the City of Moonee Valley. Of the eight elected members at October 2002 five are members of the Lions Club of Essendon. Two elected positions have not been filled.

The buildings are situated on the west bank of the Moonee Ponds Creek, near the northeast boundary of the city of Moonee Valley.

With the changes in membership of the Lions Club of Essendon there are only two active members, Stan Morrison and John Dallwitz, who have witnessed the complete development of this project, considered to be one of the best club projects in the world of Lionism.

The majority of present members have only a sketchy understanding of the foundation and development of Lionsville and very few have any hands on experience with its present operation.

As we will discover, the part played by members in the operation of the facility will move from total control in the early years, to responsibility for policies, finances and planning by the present Board. This means that very few present members will find a way of serving Lionsville except for occasional working bees and visiting the residents.

This history may serve to help them, and others who are interested, appreciate the thought, planning and action provided by dedicated and hard-working Lions and their supporters over the years since 1962.

Lionism, the International Association of Lions Clubs, originated in Chicago, in 1917. A group of men, led by Melvin Jones, formed a club. The members agreed to emphasize high ethical standards in their business and professional lives. They also wanted to help people in their communities, especially those in need. In the years following, the movement spread through the United States and Canada and, as time went on, around the world.

Australia waited until after World War II for Lionism. Largely through the personal efforts of William (Bill) Tresise, a prominent
business-man and local politician, a club was formed in July 1947 at Lismore in New South Wales. One followed at Murwillumbah, not far from Lismore, in August 1948. It was not until April 1952, nearly four years later that a third club, Melbourne Host was formed and received its Charter. Thereafter the growth of Lionism in Australia was strong.

Essendon Lionism emerged early. The second club chartered in Victoria, the Lions Club of Footscray, worked with Essendonians to form the Lions Club of Essendon in March 1953. The Essendon Lions’ charter was presented in April. The Grand Charter Dinner took place in June. This was the fourth club formed in Victoria, the fourteenth in Australia.

After several years of activity some members of the Club felt that they needed to concentrate on a new and significant project. They wanted something “big” that would benefit the local community, “something they could get their teeth into”, as Charter member Stan Morrison described it.

The President of the Club in 1962/63, Ern Basford, had a “dream”. Such a project should take the form of care for the elderly. Some older people in the community lived in conditions that were no credit to society. They were often forced to pay a large proportion of their incomes for poor accommodation. In the 1960s, government financial assistance for aged people was minimal and the general community did little to provide suitable housing for those in need. This was an area of opportunity. There was a need and the Lions felt they could help meet the need. The favoured project was to house such people within a small cluster or block of suitable bed/sitting room units.

The early history of what became known as “Lionsville” has been summarized by the early Secretary/Treasurer of the Club’s Committee, Lion George Neuss. In a report to the Third Annual Meeting of Lionsville in August, 1969 he described the first few years.

“The project was first mentioned at a Directors Meeting in Ern Basford’s year, 1962/63. Three problems existed.

1. to obtain members consent for a continuing project, as it was generally agreed that in a Presidential year any project undertaken should be completed in that year. The consent was readily given;
2. to obtain a suitable site; and
3. to raise the funds to enable such development.”

George Neuss recalled one early fund raising activity when he indicated that “a Popular Girl Quest had been held and over $20001 was in hand at the end of Ern Basford’s year at June 1963. This quest was held over a number of years and, with the Sportsmen’s Breakfast, was a continuing source of funds during the early development.

The search for a suitable site was initially focused on land in Rose Street, Essendon which is now used as a Car Park for railway commuters. George Neuss provides his initial re-action in these words: “I remember leaving a meeting, with others, to inspect railway land in Rose Street. It appeared suitable ....” Stan Morrison negotiated with the railway authorities and other government bodies for approval. He described his frustrations about these attempts by indicating that alternative uses of the

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1 Money values are expressed in dollars even when the time was prior to the introduction of decimal currency into Australia in February 1966.
property required the consent of business people and residents of Rose Street. This consent was not forthcoming and as George Neuss writes ... “this necessitated the seeking of another site.”

The Town Clerk of the City of Essendon, Jim Scott, was well known to Ern Basford. He was approached in the hope he would be able to suggest alternative sites. He knew of unused land, designated as Crown land, for which the City was the Committee of Management. This was a block situated on the corner of Pascoe Vale and Moreland Roads. Directors of the Lions Club expressed interest and action was taken to investigate its availability. A notice was received from the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (abbreviated from now on as MMBW) on 23 July 1964, that a permit would be granted subject to the consent of the State Department of Lands. An application was made to that Department, with the support of the Essendon City Council, to have the land gazetted as reserved for “Homes for Elderly People”.

The Lions were confident. Developing the land commenced quite soon after the application was made. There was total confidence the application would succeed but no news had been received by mid 1964. At last, the Victorian Government Gazette No. 72 – September 8, 1965, on page 281, declared that a “site for Public purposes (Homes for Elderly People), 1 acre 0 roods, 34 perches, at Essendon Parish of Doutta Galla, County of Bourke was created.” The Lionsville project was a reality.

As early as 1962, the Lions Club of Coburg, a Club sponsored in 1959 by the Lions Club of Essendon, expressed interest in working with their Essendon colleagues to develop the project. They were represented at meetings from that time. They had funds set aside for housing elderly people, but had difficulty in finding suitable land for such a venture. As George Neuss describes it “they desired to erect four Units as a memorial to their late member, Dr Stan Whitside” ¹

George Neuss goes on to describe events.

“During the late George Holmes’ year as Club President 1963/64 -- Funds increased to over $5,000. During this period negotiations between Essendon and Coburg Clubs were conducted by George Carlyle and Des Cronin of the Coburg Club and myself.

Just following the end of Stewart Edgar’s Club Presidency, the permit to use the land was obtained. Trustees of the Lions Club of Essendon Old People’s Homes Society were appointed. Funds also increased to $9,000. Further donations were obtained, and with $10,000 from the Lions Club of Coburg, the first section of twelve units costing $60,000 was commenced in the following year during Jack Bates’ Club Presidency.”

A little later, he explains that the Society was registered by the Hospital and Charities Commission and the cumbersome name was changed to “Lionsville”.

Neuss’s account describes what appears to be a natural progression from 1962/63, when the project was accepted by the Lions Club, to the commencement of construction of the first units three years later. Such progression, however, tends to overlook, or understate, the wonderful work performed by the various committees set up to address the many issues involved.

¹ Dr. Whiteside was a former Club President and Zone Chairman who drowned whilst on holidays in New Zealand.
Architect's drawings for Lionsville 1972. The Units 1-69 were actual and the remainder planned.
These major tasks included:

- Contact with numerous statutory authorities, including the Essendon City Council, the MMBW, the Hospitals and Charities Commission, the Housing Commission and State Government Departments such as Crown Lands and Survey;

- Raising funds for the construction of buildings and development of the site;

- Deciding on policies relating to the occupancy and financial conditions of entry;

- Selecting an architect and choosing builders as each stage developed;

- Publicizing the project and seeking and selecting residents;

- Appointing Trustees and arranging for the financial and general management;

- Developing the appropriate legal entity of the organization.
A collection of photographs of the Opening of Stage 1 (above).

Official Opening Stage 1, October 1966.
The first President of the organization known as “Lionsville” was Lion George Holmes. In his President’s Report to the first Annual Meeting on 21 August 1967, he stated: “The efforts of the Lions Club of Essendon —— with the assistance of the Lions Club of Coburg, culminated during the past twelve months in the erection of 16 flats where 16 elderly people may spend the autumn of their lives in comfortable accommodation in pleasant surroundings.”

The first big occasion occurred on 19 October 1966 during the Club Presidency of Eric Hattam, when the local Federal member of Parliament, the Honourable Phillip Stokes MP, officially opened the first 12 units (Stage 1). Early in 1967 the next four units were occupied. Finances were building up and demand was strong, so the construction of further units was planned. The expectation at this stage was that forty units could be built on the existing 1 acre block. By August 1967, what are now known as Stages 1 and 2 had been completed. Residents in these Units and in Units built later were required to pay a Maintenance Charge which was set at an initial figure of $3 a week.

In this same Annual report, the Treasurer, Lion George Neuss stated that the costs of Stage 1 (Units 1 to 12) totalled $59,754.18. Those funds were provided by the two Lions Clubs ($20,140) and the Federal Department of Social Services ($39,755) on a grant of $2 for $1. A surplus of $140.82 was transferred to the Appeal Fund for further Units. Neuss reported further that Stage 2, Units 13 – 16, completed in February 1967, had cost $18,682 of which the Department of Social Services provided $12,500, continuing the two for one subsidy.

In 1968 things were moving well. The third Stage, consisting of two double Units (17 and 18) and four single units, (19 – 22), was completed in July. This completion was not without its difficulties and delays for as President George Holmes commented in the second annual report, dated 12 June 1968 “…. the builder had difficulty in digging foundations through lack of rain and (consequent) water restrictions. Eventually a pneumatic drill was necessary. The bricks chosen were out of stock and the bricklayers had just commenced another large job, and could not attend the site. However, it is now complete and 24 people have homes in pleasant surroundings, amidst people of their own age group.” The dry conditions made the development of gardens and lawns a difficult task and the grounds committee was investigating ways of providing the water needed for the beautification of the site.

It is sad to relate, as Treasurer George Neuss did in his report, that President George Holmes died on 22 June 1968, just two weeks after completing his report for the Annual Meeting.

The Treasurer’s Report further indicated that this Stage 3 (Units 17 – 22) had cost $45,732. This had been raised from residents’ donations of $14,600, contributions from the Department of Social Services of $30,500 and from the Building Fund an amount of $632. The report also showed that $19,200 was available for the development of Stage 4 (Units 23 – 38), 16 single Units.
The preparation for this stage was well under way by mid-August, 1968. This was the first time “residents’ donations” had been referred to. The Committee had decided that due to the demand for Units and the intention to continue to build, applicants were asked to contribute when possible, a maximum of $2000 for a life time tenure. This step made a considerable difference to Lionsville’s ability to meet the existing demand.

At a meeting of members on 19 August 1968 an election was held for office bearers for the year 1968/1969 at which Lion Ken McKerrell was chosen to fill the position of President and again Lion George Neuss was elected Secretary/Treasurer. Ken had been a former Secretary of both the Provisional Committee and the Committee of Management.

This period 1968/69 was one of very great significance for the future of the project. It was clear that Stage 4, Units 23 to 38, (16 single units), would be completed in 1969. It also marked the full use of the space already set aside by the State Department of Lands in 1965. It might be said that the project, as originally envisaged, was completed; however the demand for this style of accommodation for elderly people continued strongly. The Committee, and the Lions Clubs concerned, were keen to continue the project, but where would it continue and how would the development be paid for?

The Secretary/Treasurer Lion George Neuss, at the Annual Meeting on 4 August 1969 hints at how the problem of land may be overcome.

The original allocation of land was on the corner of Moreland and Pascoe Vale roads. Immediately east of this was a further 2 roods and 9 perches of land. This Crown land was “reserved as a site for a proposed Centre for Crippled Children and Adults”. As those responsible for development of such a Centre were unable to use the site, they were agreeable to relinquish any option they had in favour of Lionsville. The Department of Lands had no objection and the area was gazetted for “Public Purposes – (Homes for Elderly People)”.

Although the Lionsville authorities welcomed this extra parcel of land to the east of the new units, it was not the most favoured area for development. The large block immediately to the north of the land occupied by Stages 1 to 4, the range of the Commonwealth Ladies Rifle Club (hereafter known as CLRC) was preferred. It ran from Pascoe Vale Road east to the bank of the Moonee Ponds Creek and provided more scope for development. George Neuss and Jack De Zoete on behalf of the Committee, negotiated with the Rifle Club representatives who indicated a willingness to consider an alternative site if Lionsville could find one that was acceptable to them. This would prove very difficult. Lionsville proposed the use of the area reserved for the Centre for Crippled Children and Adults. At a meeting of the Lionsville Committee on 6 June 1968 members heard a report from the sub-committee of Neuss and De Zoete on the re-action of the CLRC to that offer. The notes of the meeting indicate that the Rifle Club “had not fully discussed (the) proposal but in general principle were in favour. However they required firing from North to South, (that is towards Moreland Road) and not South to North. (They) also sought a larger firing end.”
The requirement to fire north to south presented problems that could not be overcome. The protection needed at the Moreland Road end entailed the construction of sizeable butts. It was considered to be impracticable and unsightly so all attempts to move the range failed. Subsequent events from 1970 to 1975 further highlighted the problems of finding a “suitable replacement site”, one that suited the officials of the Rifle Club.

George Neuss recorded the following memo "To assist future dealings."

The obtaining of land has created many problems in the extension of Lionsville. For Stage 5 an approach was made to Commonwealth Ladies Rifle Club who occupy adjoining lands. A meeting with CLRC was held, Jack De Zoete and myself acting for “Lionsville”. Briefly they wanted us to erect a 100 yard range along the creek-shooting towards Moreland Road. This would have necessitated the erection of an 18'-20' wall of earth and sleepers, building a club house, et al. The idea was scrubbed. We built Units 39-69 on that site.

In April 1970, Bruce Collings suggested we contact Essendon Grammar School who were building a 25 metre range and discuss the possibility of their club "Triune" granting certain facilities to CLRC. We would assist financially. Ewart M Ackroyd (Senior House Master) and Peter Gibbins called and discussed the proposal. Peter took charge of the meeting, produced plans and estimated they would require $8000 for a 50 metre range. This amount appeared excessive and the matter was not pursued. Rev Stevens (Head Master) phoned and said the decision was his as to the amount required from us.

I interviewed Mrs Murray (Hon Sec CLRC) and her husband Alan. Alan said they wanted at least 100 yards. I phoned the Captain, Norm Lutz, who said the same. The matter has been shelved. This is a great pity as we could erect 30-40 more units and CLRC is a very stagnant club - shooting 20-30 times a year with only 5 or 6 shooters! They have one big shoot a year."

As mentioned earlier, the Lands Department made available that portion of Crown land to the east of the existing site for an extension of Lionsville. This was now to be used for the next stage. The initial plan was for the construction of thirty-two units and a Recreation Hall. The estimates presented at the Committee meeting on 28 November 1968 showed that such a plan would cost $225,000. If the Lions Clubs could raise $75,000 a Government grant of $150,000 (on a 2 for 1 basis) would meet the remainder.

The Committee had already received enquiries from at least 30 people who desired to make Lionsville their home. Six of these were donors of $2,000, four were part donors and twenty were non-donors. There was a strong demand for accommodation and the Committee, and doubtless all members of the two Lions Clubs were keen to proceed. In fact at the meeting near the end of 1968 it was resolved “that land and finance be available the major overall plan could be to provide approximately 100 units for occupiers capable of looking after themselves, 15-20 units for those requiring some attention and a 15-20 bed hospital when occupiers require full time medical care.” That was a clear vision for the future. No longer was the plan to provide only suitable housing, it now envisaged continuing care.
Secretary / Treasurer Lindsay Woods enjoying morning tea with a resident of one of the Stage 3 Units.

Official Opening of Stages 2 to 4, 1969.
The meeting on 28 November 1968 was important for other reasons. First, Lion George Neuss gave notice to the Committee that he would hand over the position of Secretary “upon the completion of Stages 5, 6, 7 and 8.” He indicated that by then “Lionsville would have an income of $200 weekly or $10,000 annually from the present weekly maintenance charge of $3.” He considered that “the work involved warranted a part-time Manager/Secretary not in an honorary capacity.” He estimated that the work-load would be around 10-15 hours a week. Secondly, and in view of this notice of retirement, it was decided “that Lion Lindsay Woods liaise with the Honorary Secretary with a view to assuming management.”

Development of the site had taken place from the time the first residents entered in October 1966 and was continued during the early years. Paths to each block were made as each Stage was constructed. Alf Anstee, the original resident of Unit 8 was a keen gardener and with the help of some Lions made the new area more pleasant. In the latter part of 1968 a sub-committee was established to investigate the beautification of the grounds including the installation of a sprinkler system. John Dallwitz was given the task of leading this group. It was decided, however, “That the beautification of Lionsville by planting of trees and shrubs should be held in abeyance until Stage 4 (Units 23-38) is complete.” (Annual Report 1968).

Planning proceeded for the development of the extra land and at the same time arrangements were being made for the Official Opening of Stages 2, 3 and 4 (Units 13-38) by Hon. Phillip W Stokes MP, the local member for the Federal House of Representatives. He had opened the first block in 1966 and two and a half years later he performed the same task for the further twenty-six units (2 double and 24 single). The architect for all the buildings in Stages 1 to 4 was Mr Fred Neuss, George’s brother. The single Units, and all future single units, consisted of a bed-sitting room, a kitchen and a bath-room. All units except Stage 7 had front and back verandahs providing pleasant areas on which to enjoy sunshine. Stage 7, Units 95 to 114, had only front verandahs, (facing north), but had slightly larger rooms. The bed-sitting rooms possessed heating systems, the first 69 were gas heaters and the remainder were electric. The kitchens were equipped with adequate cupboards, sink, gas stove and a space for a refrigerator. The bathrooms had a shower recess, hand basin and toilet. Hot water was available to all units. The double units were provided with a kitchen large enough for an eating area and other facilities as for single units. The bathroom was “en suite” to the bedroom and possessed the same features as the singles. The bedroom was large enough for a double bed or two single beds and there were built-in wardrobes. The sitting-room was equipped with a heater and was adjacent to the kitchen.

In all Units blinds were supplied but not drapes. Floor coverings were also supplied in all units. Laundry facilities were provided with each four single units and each two double units being allocated a laundry, consisting of a washing machine, a drier and a trough. The charge for the hot water to the laundries was born by Lionsville. Clothes lines were available at various places around the grounds. Each unit had separate gas and electricity meters. Telephone and television links were provided and in
Hon. P. Stokes MHR speaking at the opening of Stages 2 to 4.

Another view of the crowd at the 1969 Opening.
recent years cable television links and smoke alarms have been fitted to all units

The interior and exterior maintenance is Lionsville’s responsibility and re-painting, repairs and replacement of blinds and floor coverings are carried out as necessary, often when there is a change of residency.

From the time land was first made available in September 1965 until March 1969, 38 units had been built and were occupied by 40 contented elderly people. That was three and a half years of planning, publicizing, liaising with governments and raising funds had borne fruit and the "miracle by the creek" was underway.
Ern Beresford Basford  BEM

One of the best known members of the Essendon community from the 1960’s into the 1990’s Ern was a small man, who was a wonderful illustration of the old saying that "good things are wrapped up in small parcels". Ern was full of life and used his energy to serve his community in many ways.

Born in Moonee Ponds, he suffered a serious blow when at the age of two he was a victim of what was then known as infantile paralysis, now known as polio. In his own words it left him "with a bad leg". Despite this difficulty - he wore a built up boot on one foot - he entered with enthusiasm into normal activities, playing in the local cricket competitions both as a youngster and when he grew up. Later in life he enjoyed lawn bowls at the Aberfeldie Bowls Club.

He worked for an Estate agency in Footscray and developed a reputation for "being able to sell anything".

He and his wife May had three children, two boys and a girl. He helped to start a kindergarten in Ascot Vale and became heavily involved in fund raising that enabled the erection of a new facility nearby. He was instrumental in the setting up of a Day Centre that met at the Ascot Vale Showgrounds and initiated the Essendon Elderly Citizens Recreation Centre which was built in Kellaway Street following a successful public appeal. His membership of the Essendon City Council culminated in his election in 1965 as Mayor of the City.

The arrival of Lionism in Essendon in 1953 became the vehicle for Ern to add an extra dimension to his community service. As a Charter member and eventually as a Life Member, his contribution to the community through Lionism was remarkable. He became Club President in 1962 and in 1965 was elected as District Governor of what was then District 201F. In the 50 years of the life of the Lions Club of Essendon Ern was the only member to have been elected as a District Governor.

It was in his year as Club President - 1962/63 - that Ern declared the nature of his dream for his Club. He expressed the desire to provide accommodation and care for elderly people. That the Club members embraced this desire, and in coming years continued to do so, is now history. There were immediate problems to be solved. Suitable land had to be found and funds obtained. Ern played a part during his Presidential year by ensuring that over $2000 was raised and, through his friendship with the Town Clerk, Mr Jim Scott, he was able to locate available Crown land which a few years later became the site for Lionsville’s initial facilities.

His participation in the development and growth of Lionsville continued as a member of the Committee from the commencement in 1962 until he retired in September 1993. He served his "dream" for more than 30 years. He was an excellent fund-raiser, particularly with the Miss Henley and the Popular Girl Quest, but his personal contacts in Municipal affairs, with politicians and with bureaucrats, enabled Lionsville’s negotiators to meet the people who were in the best position to help Lionsville grow. It was important to know whom to visit and...
Ern often ensured this. As recognition of his wonderful community work he was awarded the Medal of the Order of the British Empire, by the Queen in 1975 and in 1979 the Rotary Club of Essendon gave him an Outstanding Citizen Award. He received awards from Lions Clubs International including a Melvin Jones Fellowship in 1967 and Life Membership. In 1982 the he was made a Life Governor of Lionsville.

After the death of his wife May he moved from his Essendon home to Lionsville Lodge, where he was a most respected resident for a number of years. Eventually he transferred to a Nursing Home in Doncaster to be near his daughter Joy. He died there on 7 November, 2002.

The following description of Ern was given by Jim McLardie OAM, whilst Australian Manager of Lions International: "Ernie was a bubbly pixie whose joy of life shone through everything he did. He was one of the truly great Lions of any era."
The Official Opening of Stage 1, 1966.
This period from mid-1968 to the end of 1969, was crucial if the vision of a large complex dedicated to the accommodation and care of elderly people could be realized. Land for an extension was now available, but what about the finance? Enter Mr Edwin Clayton, Eddie to his friends. A modest, self-effacing man, he decided to make a very generous contribution to Lionsville’s extension, but requested that his name not be known, except to Committee members. How he came to be involved is a story worth telling.

Eddie Clayton was a business man who lived in Essendon. Whilst on business overseas he visited Toronto, Canada. One day when out walking, he had his pocket picked and was left with virtually nothing. In a city street he asked passers-by for assistance but was rebuffed. Eventually a man stopped to help him, offered him money to pay for what he needed and escorted him to the local police precinct. This Canadian had a badge in his lapel which Mr. Clayton discovered was a Lions Club badge. His difficulties overcome, he was grateful for the assistance he received. Upon his return to Melbourne he spoke of his experience to a neighbour, who happened to be a member of the Lions Club of Brunswick. Eddie offered to help fund a project of this Lions Club as a way of saying “thank you” to the Lions movement for the help he received. Upon his return to Melbourne he spoke of his experience to a neighbour, who happened to be a member of the Lions Club of Brunswick. Eddie offered to help fund a project of this Lions Club as a way of saying “thank you” to the Lions movement for the help he received. As the Brunswick Club did not have a project of any magnitude, Eddie’s friend suggested that the joint project of the Lions Clubs of Coburg and Essendon, known as Lionsville, was deserving of his help. In November 1968, Lionsville received an offer of substantial financial help. This came at the crucial time when Stage 5 of the development was being planned.

During 1976 Lindsay Woods, Secretary/Treasurer at this time, wrote an article for the Australian edition of “The Lion”, the magazine produced regularly by Lions International. In describing the growth of Lionsville he related how Mr. Clayton came to visit Lionsville and “was immediately impressed and lent us $20,000 free of interest to continue our project.” Stan Morrison, in conversations with the author, also referred to the original offer as a loan and recorded that Mr Clayton turned the loan into a gift when he intimated that he was providing for Lionsville in his will. A letter from the Committee to Mr Clayton makes no mention of a loan, but whatever happened, whether a loan or a gift, the Lionsville committee was delighted. This letter, drafted by Lion George Neuss, was adopted and sent to Mr Clayton on 18 November 1968. It accepted the “generous offer” and agreed to Mr Clayton’s requirements and conditions which included the “erection of a recreation hall”. The units financed by the funds made available would be known as “the Ruthville section” and the hall the “Ruthville Hall” in honour of Ruth the late first wife of Mr Clayton. The letter states that “you anticipate $20,000 could be available in January/February 1969 and further donations are anticipated after June 1969.” In fact Mr Clayton made Lionsville a major beneficiary of his will after provision for his second wife and for his aged sister. About $80,000 in total came to Lionsville. In present day values his total gift would have been worth more than half a million dollars.

The letter is of such significance as to the terms and conditions related to this “gift”, as to what had already been achieved and

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1 In the early 1990s Mr. Clayton’s second wife was a resident of Lionsville Lodge.
in what the vision was for the future, that it is included in full.\(^1\)

18th November, 1968

Mr Edwin Clayton
433 Buckley Street
ESSENDON.

Dear Mr Clayton,

Following discussions between yourself, Mr Des Staniforth and myself on 7/11/68, when you advised that you were desirous of assisting financially with the erection of additional units of Lionsville, the matter has been discussed by the Board of Management of Lionsville.

It was moved, seconded and carried that your generous offer be accepted and that the requirements and conditions so outlined in this letter be observed.

The Board of Management of Lionsville agrees:

1. That the additional units erected at Lionsville and financed by you prior to erecting or after erection, shall be known as “Lionsville – Ruthville Section.”

2. The erection of a recreation hall shall be considered an additional unit.

3. A plaque, suitably worded, shall be erected on the units so financed and a sign referring to “Ruthville Section” shall be placed on the gates or brick entrance.

4. The occupiers may, at the discretion of Lionsville, be either a donor, part donor or non donor. For purposes of record, a donor is a person who donates $2,000 to Lionsville and who is granted life occupancy, a part donor is a person who donates portion of $2,000 to Lionsville and a non donor does not donate to Lionsville. All occupiers of Lionsville pay a weekly maintenance charge of $3, which covers cost of maintenance of units and grounds, Municipal and MMBW rates, insurance, public lighting etc, hot water for laundry and use of drying cabinet, washing machine etc.

5. At no time, should a unit in Lionsville “Ruthville Section” be available, shall a worthy, deserving non donor be excluded.

6. To prepare plans and specifications, obtain tenders, engage builder or builders, obtain approval of necessary bodies, obtain approval of Department of Social Services and arrange for Government Grant on a $2 for $1 basis to be obtained. For purposes of record the method of obtaining Government Grant is for application to be made to Department of Social Services, enclosing plans and specifications, builder’s tender and a certificate from Lionsville Auditor that funds to meet one third of the cost are held. Approval of grant takes approximately six weeks. Building usually commences six weeks after advice with completion within six to seven months.

7. To have the grounds generally ornamented and maintained and if desired a small gardening plot will be made available to any occupier upon request in writing. It is the proposal of “Lionsville” and this will apply to “Lionsville – Ruthville Section” that all existing trees on the site remain and that additional trees shrubs, lawns etc shall be planted and maintained.

These are the main points arranged at discussion mentioned heretofore.

\(^1\) It can be noted that at no time in the letter does Neuss refer to the “gift” being a loan, in fact he refers to $20,000 being available early in 1969 and that further donations are expected after June.
It is recorded that you as benefactor, will donate funds to Lionsville as and when available to you and that you anticipate $20,000 could be available in January/February 1969, further donations are anticipated after June 1969.1

On area of plan in your possession marked "A" and coloured pink it is proposed to erect, as funds are available Stage 5, sixteen units, Stage 6, eight units and Stage 7, eight units. Stage 8 the Recreation Hall will be erected between the two rear blocks of eight units. Stages 5 - 8 are the proposed "Lionsville - Ruthville Section." 2

Your approval for the Recreation Hall when erected to be made available for use by Lions Club of Essendon to hold small committee meetings, conditionally on the occupiers having first priority is recorded. A copy of letter from Commissioner of Probate advising exemption from probate duty of any devise, bequest, gift or settlement to Lionsville is in your possession. Official advice has been received from the Commissioner of Taxation that "Gift duty is not payable on gifts made to any institution or organization not formed or carried on for the profit of any individual."

Estimated cost of “Lionsville – Ruthville Section”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>No. of Units</th>
<th>Estimated Cost</th>
<th>Government Grant</th>
<th>Funds Required</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>$108,000</td>
<td>$72,000</td>
<td>$36,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>54,000</td>
<td>36,000</td>
<td>18,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>54,000</td>
<td>36,000</td>
<td>18,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Recreation Hall</td>
<td>90,000</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$225,000</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No provision is made for cost of layout of gardens, lawns, shrubs, trees etc, and for installation of sprinkler system. It is anticipated that through friends imbued with the spirit of service to others this outlay will be minimised.

Should additional land become available, it is proposed to erect additional units as flats for occupiers. The major overall plan is to provide approximately 100 units for occupiers capable of looking after themselves, 15-20 units for those unable to fully look after themselves, and a 15-20 bed hospital when occupiers require full time medical care. This project will depend on land and finance being available.

Should there be any further information required, please contact me. We appreciate your interest and offer of assistance in the provision of comfortable accommodation in pleasant surroundings for the aged folk.

Your wishes and requirements as expressed heretofore will be observed in spirit as well as in letter.

Yours sincerely,

G.R. NEUSS
Hon. Secretary and Treasurer.

As the land was available and the finance considered secure, the architect, Fred Neuss, prepared the plans and specification for this Stage 5 – “the Ruthville section”. Tenders were called from four master builders. In the Building Committee report to the Lionsville Committee meeting on 15 September 1969, it was made known that the tender from A.R.P. Crow and Sons Pty Ltd. for

1 Stage 7 as shown provided for 8 Units but this was changed to 6 - four single units and two double units.

2 All these Stages became known as Stage 5. It can be noted that the Recreation Hall was not placed between the two rear blocks but on the western side of Stage 5.
Some of the visitors at the Official Opening of Stage 5.

At this same meeting the question was asked: “Do we build up funds for future units?” There was even mention of the Rifle Range as the next site and a suggestion that $10,000 be set aside for the purchase of an alternative site for the Rifle Club. There was a great spirit of optimism for future development.

A question that needed an answer, now that Lionsville was the home for forty elderly people (soon to be 74), was, what would happen to these residents when they could no longer take adequate care of themselves? George Neuss felt that some provision should be made for them in future planning. As he explained in his letter to Eddie Clayton almost a year earlier, the major plan included 15-20 units “for those unable to fully look after themselves, and a 15-20 bed hospital when occupiers require full time medical care.”

Talks with authorities at Mt Royal Hospital in Parkville began and at a Committee meeting of Lionsville on 1 September 1969 it was resolved that “a $10,000 donation be made to Mt Royal in return for occupancy of five beds by the occupiers (of our Units) at Mt Royal when required …….”

Building of the new stage proceeded and although not totally complete it was officially opened by the International President, Lion W.R. (Dick) Bryan on 23 March 1970. The Opening of Stage 5, by him and the unveiling of a plaque, proved an outstanding success. He was “most impressed with the whole project and its magnitude and layout were given special emphasis” according to the report of the Lionsville President, Stewart Edgar in his Annual Report for 1969/70. On that same occasion, Secretary/Treasurer George Neuss accompanied by Mr. Clayton, unveiled a plaque to record the Official Opening of the “Ruthville” Recreation Centre and the assistance given by Eddie Clayton. In this same report Stewart Edgar paid a tribute of special thanks to Honorary Secretary/Treasurer, Lion George Neuss. “What inspired him to work so long so hard and so successfully, I can only guess. The Lions of Essendon and Coburg and the residents of Lionsville will never fully realise their indebtedness to Mr Lionsville.”

Perhaps the word “never” was too strong. When one examines the early development of Lionsville one cannot escape the fact that George Neuss’s contribution was outstanding. Many played a part in Lionsville’s development, management and operation; fewer made outstanding contributions, however only George Neuss can be regarded as “Mr Lionsville”. This view was accepted then as it is now.

The respect paid to the Club by the International President on the occasion of the opening of Stage 5 was the first of what became three such prestigious visits by International Presidents over 30 years. This first visit was a fitting climax to eight years of planning and perseverance resulting in an outstanding performance.

This Annual Report of 1970/71, presented in August 1971, recorded the sad news that in December 1970 Lionsville lost “our good friend Eddie Clayton”. The report added: “The good that men do lives long after.” Many of those who had participated in the development of the project were very sad that Mr Clayton did not
One of the rare photographs of Eddie Clayton. He is shown, pictured between George Neuss (left) and Lions International President, Lion W.R. Bryan, March 1970.
live long enough to see all that his generosity had made possible. He did, however, see Stage 5 fully occupied and the "Ruthville" Hall used frequently by the residents.

The raising of the funds for this new stage was a triumph for all concerned, but what were the sources?

The following is a statement prepared by George Neuss early in 1970 upon the completion of Stage 5.

"Where the funds came from still amazes us. To raise over $450,000 was a continuing effort. Every possible source (and some were impossible) that could be thought of was investigated. An accurate, to the cent breakdown, would take many hours and prove nothing. A list of donors of $1000 and over would show $33,673.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Edwin Clayton</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J H Neeson</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>G R Neuss</td>
<td>$2,030</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jack Gilbertson</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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These figures are "approximately correct"

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<thead>
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<th>Source</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government subsidy</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lions Club of Essendon</td>
<td>$16,573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lions Club of Essendon (Members)</td>
<td>$8,198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lions Club of Coburg</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Loan&quot; Lionsville Maintenance Account</td>
<td>$3,863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donors and Occupiers</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer’s personal efforts outside the club</td>
<td>$41,207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$450,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main success and early completion of the project lay in the change of policy of raising funds to that of granting occupancy to a donor (eligible) of $2000 (single) and $2500 (double)."

Lindsay Woods, in his article for the Australian Lion, wrote that "every possible source of money was investigated. Charity Queen competitions, dinner dances, theatre nights, picture nights, a citizen’s "Donation Dinner", "Little Tatts" - you name it, we had it. Life Governorships were offered for a donation of $200 (or more)."

The project, for some, was now complete. The object had been achieved! “Mr Lionsville” summed it up in the opening paragraph of his report to the Annual Meeting of August, 1971.

“This year has seen the near culmination of the project of Lionsville, first discussed by the Lions Club of Essendon in 1962. We little realized just how large the project would become, how long it would take to complete, and how much joy and comfort it would give to seventy-five elderly people. The buildings have been completed, occupancy has taken place or will have taken place by the time this report is published. The remaining works are mainly the beautification of grounds, a general tidy up, installation of a sprinkler system, furnishing of the “Ruthville Recreation Centre”, payment of final accounts to the builder and all the final paperwork.”

That seems conclusive enough ------ Until you read further on in the report ------

"It is the wish of the Lionsville Committee of Management that if possible Lionsville be extended. Negotiations with our good neighbours, the Commonwealth Ladies Rifle Club, which included
A view of Stage 5 in the early 1970s taken from the old gasometer across the Creek.
an offer of sharing a fifty metres rifle range plus club rooms and automatic marker, proved abortive. They require a one hundred yards range. As they have been in occupancy since 1908, they have the right of occupancy conditionally upon one lady member using the range on one occasion each year. The range is not overused”!!

The scene was set for a battle, if only a battle of words. But as the first verbal shots were fired in 1968, and the matter not resolved until early in 1975, the battle raged for longer than World War 2!
Tall, straight as a ramrod, well dressed but not dapper, George was the epitome of a city bank manager. His appearance fitted him for real life because during the years of Lionsville’s development he was Manager of the Commercial Banking Company of Australia’s branch at Moonee Ponds, the suburb adjoining Essendon to the south. Later he was moved east a few miles to take charge of the Bank’s branch at Brunswick. He joined the Lions Club of Essendon in 1957 and was a keen supporter of the plan for the Club to develop a project that would provide a real challenge to the members. He threw his weight behind the move to provide accommodation for elderly people in need and was chosen to be the Secretary/Treasurer of the Provisional Committee and later of the Lionsville Committee itself.

George’s contacts in the world of finance, his banking experience and his passionate belief in the Lionsville project, encouraged him to provide the financial expertise that was necessary for the successful establishment and growth of such a large enterprise. He guided the finances from 1962 until 1976 even though he relinquished the position of Treasurer in 1971. In 1966 no one really expected the project would develop beyond housing forty elderly people at the most, but largely due to George’s efforts and persistence and some good fortune, before he died in 1977 the number of Units had grown to 94 accommodating more than one hundred residents.

George’s contacts brought in donations to the funds and he used his knowledge to ensure that every subsidy available from Governments was obtained. This meant, in the early stages, that every dollar raised for building purposes was worth another two from Government sources. He paid close attention to detail, in fact he was meticulous. His financial statements, produced for every Committee meeting, were up to the minute and easy for the layman to follow. His financial advice to the Committee was always clear, sound and ensured that the financial position was known and understood by his fellow pioneers.

George displayed optimism even when those around were not so sure. When the first sixteen units were built some Lions members said “we’re finished now” ---- but he urged them on. Another of his pioneering colleagues, Stan Morrison, expressed the feeling that “if it hadn’t been for George Neuss we may not have extended beyond those first sixteen”. When the project had built and filled 38 units there were many who felt they had achieved what they set out to do, in any case the land allocated to them had been used up. George and several others realized that the demand for this type of accommodation remained high and as they had developed expertise they decided to continue. The history itself explains how, with George leading the way, extra land was found adjoining the existing site and the project continued, thanks largely to the wonderful financial support of Eddie Clayton.

The search for further land included investigation of the site occupied by the Commonwealth Ladies Rifle Club, which was Lionsville’s
neighbour to the north. When that group became unco-operative George set to work to gather information on the usage of the range by asking one of the Lionsville residents, Alf Anstee, to keep a record of the number of shooters in attendance each weekend. The information gathered did help in preparing a case for claims made to the authorities to move the Rifle Club, although this battle went on for five years before it met with success.

During the mid 1970s George’s health deteriorated. He was very well supported in the Rifle Range endeavour by Stan Morrison, in fact when George was ill much of the negotiation with that Club was carried on by Stan. Following the achievement of the objective, George put much thought and planning into the development of Stage 6. He liaised with the Government authorities, calculated the amount of funds required and secured these through his skill and tenacity. Despite setbacks over costs, the work commenced and when completion was assured George reported in his annual report as Extension Chairman “- - - let’s get this part of the wonderful Lionsville project behind us”. He went on to give details of the costs for Stage 7. His drive and optimism were undaunted despite his health difficulties. All members of the two Lions Clubs involved in the project were delighted when George was recognized, at the highest level in Lionism, by the presentation to him of the International President’s Honour Award for community service.

George always recognized the support and advice he received from his brother Fred, who was the Architect of all stages completed up to Stage 6. They shared a common outlook on community service, especially helping those in need in society and for them the Lionsville project was more than just a professional task, it was a labour of love.

It was sad that George did not see the Stage 7 he dreamed of. He died suddenly on 14 January 1977.

The Essendon “Gazette” carried a tribute to him shortly after his death. The heading for it was entirely appropriate.

“LIONSVILLE IS HIS MEMORIAL”

After describing George’s career and some of the details of his contribution to this project so dear to him, it went on to quote one of his contemporaries as believing that without George’s drive and enthusiasm the project may have faltered. He conceived its style and inspired his fellow Lions to believe it was possible to turn the dream into reality. He truly earned the title, "Mr. Lionsville".
The hatched area of this 1982 aerial photograph is the former site of the Commonwealth Ladies’ Rifle Club range.
When it became clear that 69 units (to accommodate 74 elderly residents) would not satisfy the demand for Lionsville’s style of accommodation, the Committee sought extra land. As described earlier the land at 260 Pascoe Vale Road (or the rifle range) was a very desirable site for Lionsville’s extension. The Rifle Club expressed a desire to assist but required a satisfactory alternative site before any agreement could be considered. That was an understandable attitude as they had occupied the site for well over 50 years. Previous efforts to find a suitable alternative site had proved difficult and the feeling at Lionsville was that the Club was being deliberately obstructive.

The site they used ran from Pascoe Vale Road east to a boundary some metres short of the banks of the Moonee Ponds Creek. With the development of the Lionsville Units the shooters were now quite close to residential settlement. As residents faced north across the range the view was unattractive, to say the least.

Some alternative sites were explored but the Rifle Club’s officials considered each unsuitable. The Lionsville Committee members felt that they were going to find it hard to discover any site that would meet with the Club’s approval. Strategists and negotiators for Lionsville (Lions Neuss, Morrison and Basford) then explored other ways of obtaining the land, the main one of which was to show that the range was little used. For some months, with the assistance of one of the Lionsville residents, Alf Anstee, George Neuss had been keeping a count on the numbers using the range during each week-end. Before there was much publicity about Lionsville’s interest the numbers were very small, as were the membership numbers of the Rifle Club. As the Club’s tenure was threatened there was a determined effort to lift Club numbers and promote the use of the range.

Another Lionsville strategy was to draw the attention of the City of Essendon Councillors and Officers to the safety factors concerned with the presence of a rifle range in a built up residential area. The seventh Annual Report (1972/73) reveals very little about plans for the extension of the project, except for a brief statement in the Secretary’s Report. Lion Lindsay Woods, now the Secretary/Treasurer, notes that “a sub-committee ----- has spent many hours probing into possibilities. The Mayor of Essendon, Cr. Basil Bainbridge, was invited to Lionsville and was very impressed. ------- The matter of the CLRC has been discussed by Council, and is now in the investigating stage.”

These approaches to the City Council made slow progress. At a meeting of the Committee on 3 June 1974 the Secretary read a letter from the Mayor inviting members of the Lions Club of Essendon to attend a meeting to discuss “the future use of the area now occupied by the CLRC.” It was intended that the Mayor, Ward Councillors, State and Federal Parliamentarians “within the immediate vicinity”, would also attend. That invitation came very late – three years, in fact. Much had occurred in the meantime.

The negotiations with the Rifle Club and the Council were carried out by members of the Committee and several ad hoc
sub-committees. There were three main arguments advanced by Lionsville:

1. a built-up residential area now surrounded the rifle range. The locality had changed remarkably in the sixty years since the Rifle Club had been given “permissive occupancy” by the State Lands Department in 1908;

2. the site was not used as a Rifle range on many occasions, nor by many shooters. Although it was a “Ladies Rifle Club” there were only 2 ladies using it in that period of 1970-1972. The site had developed little over 60 years and did not have toilet facilities, running water or electricity.

3. The site’s use as an extension to the “Lionsville Homes for the Aged” would benefit many more people and on a full-time residential basis.

While negotiations went on, concerns about the existing site emerged. Lion George Evans, who was in charge of Maintenance for the Committee of Management, reported to a Committee meeting on December 1st, 1971 that “considerable subsidence has taken place along the northern boundary of Lionsville adjacent to the CLRC range. Some 30 feet of fence has already collapsed”. The report continues that “the entire fault lies with the people controlling the Rifle Range who have contravened regulations by excavating inside the allowable distance from our boundary and not providing an approved retaining wall.” Despite this warning “no action was taken” by the Committee. The Council Engineer, Mr Cameron inspected the subsidence in October 1972. He, too, blamed the CLRC, but stated that as the range “was on Commonwealth land he could do nothing”.

A stalemate developed between the Lions and the CLRC. At a Committee meeting in April 1972 George Neuss, reported that no progress had been made. He felt … “that the only way (of solving the problem) was to buy them out.”

After much discussion Lion Des Cronin, from the Coburg Club suggested that the lease arrangement could be upset by contacting Billy Wentworth, Federal Minister for Social Services, but there is no mention of how. To conclude the matter at that meeting Cronin and Neuss were to form a sub-committee to investigate and were “empowered to use funds as necessary.” Some months later it was agreed that the Rifle Club be approached with the aim of a cash settlement. At a Special Meeting in February 1973 it was further agreed that George Neuss could bargain as high as $20,000! By April that solution also appears to have failed because Neuss asked for the support of “someone who knew the workings of the Council”. Lion Ern Basford (a former Mayor) was appointed.

It ought not to be supposed that during this period of nearly three years nothing had happened at Lionsville. Great work was being done to develop gardens and lawns amongst the units already built and occupied. Under Lion Jo Clift’s direction the paths were constructed, lawns and gardens set out, and carports completed. During this period a number of the male residents, led by Mr Alf Anstee, did wonderful work in establishing and developing the gardens, caring for the lawns and encouraging other residents to take an interest in the external surrounds of their own units. The pioneers of the early 1970’s (and the late 1960’s as well) deserve the admiration,
respect and thanks for the foundations they laid for what are now the beautiful surroundings for Stages 1 to 5!

Lion Lindsay Woods took over the management of the day-to-day operation of the project in mid-1971. His reports to the Committee of Management meetings provided the members with up-to-date information of the residents and their activities, and day-to-day maintenance requirements. As Treasurer he continued to provide the usual thorough and clear financial reports to the members. He remained in this position until April 1989, a period of 18 years.

The project had excited interest particularly from other members of the Lions movement. The Lions Club of Essendon was asked by Lions International, through the District Governor (Keith Smith), to have about 100 feet of colour film taken of the Lionsville project. It was to be sent to the USA for a film to be made of contributions from eight countries, and entitled “This is Lionism”. Lionsville, even at that time - the early 1970’s - was significant enough to attract international attention.

Despite the frustration of not being able to settle the issue of the Rifle Range land – especially after all “the deputations, interviews, correspondence, inspection of possible alternative sites for the CLRC, all with people of influence, including Ministers, Department heads and members of State and Federal Parliaments” – the President of the Committee of Management, Lion State Morrison, was not pessimistic. In his Annual Report for 1973/74, he continued the previous comments with the following statement of gratitude:

“Lionsville has continued through the year to do, in a most wonderful way, that for which it was designed – to provide for older citizens, good accommodation in an ideal setting. I know from so many of our residents that this is being achieved, and received with grateful thanks.”

All the discussions and lobbying were showing signs of paying off. Drips were wearing away the stone. In 1974 discussions recommenced with the State Minister for Lands, Hon. W.A. Borthwick MLA and his Department.

There was considerable public discussion of the issue in both the local and metropolitan press. Membership numbers of the Rifle Club were the cause of dispute and the Captain of the Rifle Club and a local lady made strong comments about “the doubtful motives of Lionsville.”

In representations to the Minister for Lands, the Lionsville Committee President, Stan Morrison, indicated that in 1969/70 membership of the Rifle Club was 26. Apparently in an article in the Melbourne “Age” of 22 July 1974 the figure quoted was much higher. In his letter to the Minister on 27 July 1974, President Stan wrote:

“The dramatic upsurge of membership referred to in the article (The Age 22/7/74) must surely arouse suspicion that it has been arranged simply to produce an illusion of strength. This opinion is reinforced by the attendances from 18 February 1973 to 30 June 1974 which show, excluding Mr Peterson, (Captain of the CLRC) that the range was used 30 times by an average of 4 people for a total of 97 hours in that 16 months.”
A view of Stage 7 (left) and the road leading to the Essendon Adult Day Centre.
This letter was to a Minister of Lands clearly not eager to disturb the status quo. This same attitude had been demonstrated by the Department of the Army. It sided with the Rifle Club, probably fearing the loss of a rifle range. It is never easy to persuade bureaucrats to change their minds but this did not deter fighters like Morrison, Neuss and Basford. Their efforts continued with support from Kenneth Wheeler MLA and the Essendon City Council. The Morrison letter continued with purpose:

“We believe it is pertinent to refer to the request in 1908 for the present site in lieu of Puckle Street East, as that area had been developed. (The original land grant in 1908 followed the refusal by the Rifle Club of an offer of land in that area.)

An outlying piece of land was sought and obtained. Now, of course, the present site has long since become a densely populated residential area. Probably far more so than Puckle Street East was in 1908.

It is believed reasonable to assert that permission to establish a rifle range in a densely populated residential area in 1974 would not be granted. If that is accepted, surely it is consistent to expect permission for a rifle club to CONTINUE operation in that same densely populated residential area, to be WITHDRAWN in 1974.

Essendon Council agrees with this reasoning. Even more so consistent, we contend, if the greatly increased membership would suggest greatly increased shooting activity in the future at this site.

Since the original meeting with representatives of the C.L.R.C. (referred to earlier in this letter), we have worked untiringly to achieve a solution satisfactory to both parties. Now we believe we must concentrate simply on what we believe the honest merits of the case. We are supported by the ever growing public opinion, but that is not the reason for our change of policy. The reason is the knowledge of the need (for suitable accommodation) of many old folk and the urgency to meet this need.

For this reason, Mr. Minister, we urge you to meet the request of the Essendon Council that the Permissive Occupancy be terminated. Very strong public opinion in our district is that the C.L.R.C., has enjoyed a wonderful privilege for 65 years, could well be grateful, and should have displayed a more humane attitude by energetically seeking suitable re-location, instead of adopting a stay-put policy.

Since the Essendon Council and members of Parliament have shown a close interest, the matter has received great prominence in the local newspapers. This has brought new enquiries from old folk on the Lionsville waiting list, and enquiries from further prospective residents. Our waiting list has been closed for some time.

Your position and natural desire to make a decision which will be acceptable to you and the vast majority of the public, is fully appreciated.

Although until recently we have followed a consistent policy of non-involvement of the public, reports in the Press have acquainted the people in this district of the situation which exists, and their support for our objective is overwhelming.”
Harry Laing gardens while he talks to Bob Martignoles.
The pressure was being exerted on the Minister for Lands as he was the only one who could withdraw the “permissive occupancy” granted to the Rifle Club in 1908.

How much this letter affected the Minister’s decision cannot be determined, but one could hazard a guess. The State Assembly seat of Essendon was held by Mr Wheeler (a member of the Government party) but with an uncertain majority. One month later, on 28 August 1974, Lionsville received advice from the Minister of Lands that he had given formal notice to the Rifle Club to vacate the area by 18 February 1975! Discussions that had begun with the CLRC in 1968 concluded successfully. Except for the many hours spent by the members of the Lionsville Committee, especially the Extension Committee, there was no cost to Lionsville. Although it would not be possible even to estimate the hours given by members, the success was a wonderful reward.

The battle was over, but there was no rest for those involved. Lionsville had Stage 6 to plan and build and thus provide excellent accommodation for a further group of elderly people.
Stan is a “local lad”. Born in Ascot Vale he has lived most of his life in what was the City of Essendon but is now the City of Moonee Valley. The Great Depression of the early 1930’s met him as he commenced his working life and, not unusually for the time, he moved from job to job. Stan spent part of this period as a Commercial Traveller working on commission. In 1940 he joined the RAAF and after training, spent time on reconnaissance aircraft patrolling off the east coast of Australia. On one occasion in 1942 his aircraft, of which he was second pilot, sank a Japanese submarine. Later his duties included ferrying aircraft. He joined the 9th Communication Unit in New Guinea and flew out of Port Moresby, often in Tiger Moths, to small stations on the north coast. On one such flight, along the coast, his plane developed engine trouble and he crash landed. Six weeks in hospital in the mountains followed. Base duties were then his lot until he was discharged on medical grounds in mid-1945. Following his return to the work force he became involved in the Chemical industry, first in a supervisory position and then in marketing and advertising. He bought and sold property to build up capital and in time purchased a shoe store in Strathmore that his wife Irene ran successfully. In the early 1960’s he expanded into a shoe shop in Mt Alexander Road, North Essendon. He and Irene built up a very successful operation that they ran for nearly 15 years. “Retirement” came in 1976.

Stan joined the Lions Club of Essendon as a Charter member in 1953 and at the end of 2002 is the only Charter Member still within the Club. He was Club President in 1959-60 and in subsequent years became a Deputy District Governor with his area extending from Melbourne through Western Victoria and including parts of South Australia. He held numerous positions as a District Officer and in 1997 was one of only twenty Lions in Australia to receive the special “Lismore Medal”, struck to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the establishment of Lions in Australia. He was awarded an International President’s Medal of Honour for his work as a Lion in the community and in 1983 received the award of the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM). In 1997 he was again honoured by the International President, for his work at Lionsville.

Stan’s outgoing personality shone through in all his endeavours. He was a great entertainer - a song and dance man and a song writer. His work in pioneering and compereing the annual Sportsmen’s Breakfast was a major reason why this activity raised several hundreds of thousands of dollars for community projects, especially Lionsville, over a period of almost 30 years. He used his marketing skills in developing several other major fund-raising activities of the Club, in fact when money was being raised for the establishment of the “Homes for Elderly People” project Stan played a major part.

From the earliest stages of Lionsville’s establishment and growth he used other skills to facilitate development. He is mentioned by George Neuss as the representative who in 1962 “negotiated with railway
authorities and other government bodies” for the use of land in Rose Street, Essendon that was controlled by Victorian Railways. Although the efforts were not successful, this was the first of many times Stan’s skills as a negotiator were called upon by Lionsville.

When the first units had been built in 1966 the Lions Club decided to hold a Commemorative Banquet. The chief organizer was Stan Morrison, a task that demonstrated his capacity to organize, again using the marketing and advertising skills he had developed in business. His major contributions began in the early 1970’s when, with George Neuss and several others, including the Essendon Council and local politicians, Lionsville obtained use of the land occupied since 1908 by a Ladies Rifle Club.

The historical record indicates that from this period of the 1970’s Stan was an alert, persuasive, and diplomatic leader in the growth of Lionsville. He always recognized the wonderful part played by George Neuss in the early development and as George’s health suffered, Stan was willing and able to push on. George’s work ended with the completion of Stage 6 and the final financial planning of Stage 7, but his death left a gap that Stan was ready and able to fill. Many others played their part but the following is a list of the major areas where Stan’s leadership was crucial.

• Discerning the impact on Lionsville’s future growth of the Essendon and Coburg Councils’ decision to classify land to the north of Lionsville as “reserved for public recreation”.

• Researching the types of facility that would accommodate frail elderly.

• Leading the bid to obtain government funds to construct a Hostel and then persuading the Essendon Council to sell the land to Lionsville.

• Turning the disappointment of the failure to obtain a Nursing Home into a victory through the extension to the existing hostel.

• Researching the development of a purpose built Adult Day Centre to provide care on a regular basis for frail elderly and then working with other interested groups to plan and build such a Centre. This included leading the Lionsville Committee in a commitment to make land and finance available to ensure that such a facility would have a home and sufficient finance to obtain the assurance of government financial support.

• Researching the possibilities of a partnership with the State Ministry of Housing to use the Maddison property in a way that met the wishes of the former owner from whom the land had been gifted.

• Liaising with the Essendon Council to obtain land owned by them to provide for the building of a section of the Hostel specially planned for accommodation of dementia sufferers.

His commitment to and interest in care for the aged was recognized by his appointment to local and Federal Committees related to aged care. It is also very sad to relate that his wife Irene was to be a resident in such a place for an extended period before she died.

His official positions at Lionsville included:

1973/76 President of the Committee of Management
1978/85 Trustee of Lionsville
1985/95 Chairman of the Hostel Committee

Many have been valuable contributors to this project over the period of 40 years to 2002. Stan Morrison however, ranks with George Neuss as one of the few movers and shakers who have led the efforts to provide the facilities that are now available to the community of Essendon and district.
Part of Stage 6 taken in the early 1990s.

A garden view showing part of Stage 7 (left).
No sooner had the Minister for Lands given notice to the Rifle Club to vacate the land than Ken Wheeler MLA advised the Lionsville Committee to request the City Council to change the classification of the land to “Reserved for Aged Persons Housing”. On 2 October 1974 the Council notified Stan Morrison, President of Lionsville, that they had informed the Minister that Council “favours the use of the land - - - - by Lionsville for extension of their elderly citizens’ flats” and requested him to make the land available for that purpose. One week later on 9 October, Lionsville, through President Stan, also asked the Minister to take “the appropriate action” to make the land available for the extension of Lionsville.

On 3 October 1974, the Extension Committee was shown a plan by Architect Fred Neuss that allowed for 46 units, four of which would be double units for couples. The meeting resolved: “that the first section of 25 units (including four doubles) be undertaken and that the Extension Committee take immediate action to implement this.” It was also agreed that in response to the receipt of further money from the late Mr. Clayton’s estate, part of this new section – Units 75 – 90 – be called a “Ruthville” section and a suitable plaque prepared.

Although not present at the next Committee meeting on 21 November 1974, George Neuss “sent along a few pages of suggestions for the Committee to consider and act upon.” He considered that now was the “appropriate time” to take immediate action on Stage 6. He based this on four factors:

(a) he had been assured that the land would be gazetted for public purposes (reserved for Elderly People) on 27 February 1975 or 6 March 1975;
(b) the Rifle Club “are more or less reconciled to the fact that permissive occupancy has been withdrawn”;
(c) “the Senior Officer of Social Services Department will be on leave from 16/12/1974 until late January. An early application was suggested;” and
(d) finance for the project seemed assured.

The Committee agreed and resolved that the Extension Committee prepare a budget and plans and proceed with Stage 6.

It was further reported that the Department of Social Services had announced that an increase in subsidies had been agreed to and the Bill “only awaits Royal Assent”. As recorded by the Secretary “this is much better for us than anticipated and we should walk in’ financing (the) extension.”

The Architect (Mr Fred Neuss) had prepared an estimate of the cost of the proposed 21 single and 4 double units. Including fees, the estimate was $283,650. The Secretary still felt that the financing of Lionsville’s contribution would present no problems.

So that the new Stage could be administered by Lionsville, the Committee was required to appoint Trustees for this new site. The Trustees for the original areas of Lionsville were Lions Dr M Velik, A L Beech, E W Petherbridge and G B Carlyle. It was agreed that they be appointed Trustees for this new site. It was also
agreed that George Neuss be appointed Extension Secretary for this exercise. Site clearance, filling of the site and the erection of fencing would be budgeted separately and would be in the hands of a special committee including Joe Clift, George Evans and Cliff Williamson. Everything was in readiness to commence this new Stage.

The first meeting of the Committee in 1975, held on 20 February, clarified aspects of what had been agreed to at the previous meeting of 21 November 1974. George Neuss indicated that an agreement to build this new Stage had been received from the Department of Social Services and he tabled that agreement. This was ratified by the meeting and George Neuss’s actions were endorsed. He also indicated that he had not yet received notice from either Essendon or Coburg Lions Clubs that the members would support the project as it continued, but he was assured that this was only a matter of timing.

Progress continued during the next few months. The Site Clearance Committee worked on and the Architect indicated that the plans and specifications for the extension would be ready by about mid-April. At the special meeting held on 21 April, with the Architect present, the Committee was notified that the State Electricity Commission needed a sub-station within the new structure. The cost would be $7000 plus a further $3000 for the cost of cable, but the Commission had assured the Architect that this would do both Stage 6 and the projected Stage 7. The Committee decided that instead of gas heaters, as used in Stages 1 to 5, a portable electric heater would be supplied in each new unit. The plans and specifications as submitted by the Architect were accepted and he was instructed to call tenders.

George Neuss reported that although the Government Gazette had not yet announced the decision about the Rifle Club land “he had been in touch with the authorities - - - and he had been assured that the same would be gazetted about 30 April 1975”. The decision had been made in the previous August but it had not been gazetted 8 months later. “The Mills of God grind slowly!” Having sent off the information to various builders the Architect was not able to report until early July. At the Committee of Management meeting on 7 July he broke the news. Members were shocked to find that the lowest tender was $373,715, not including the Architect’s fees. Remembering that the estimate of cost by the Architect in the previous November was $283,650, the state of shock was not surprising! The maximum subsidy to be claimed was close to $240,000 leaving a further $143,000 to be found by Lionsville. The Architect agreed to defer his fees of $22,480, but there was only $94,000 in hand in bank accounts and a further $39,000 had to be found before an application for a subsidy could be made! A number of members offered personal loans to cover over $20,000 of this amount and with contributions from the two clubs and the hope that other Club members would agree to provide personal loans, all was not lost. Other methods of “bridging” finance were mentioned including advertising 10 of the single units at $5000 and 2 doubles at $6,000 with 10% reduction for early payment of the donation.

Suddenly, Lion Joe Clift, a retired builder, burst into the discussion. As the Minutes declare: “J. Clift told the meeting that he was
apalled at the figures of the private tenderers. He had inquired from the Housing Commission some details of the costs of their building and had ascertained that they were building at approximately $11,000 to $13,000 per unit.” He went on to tell the meeting that building costs had dropped considerably – “about 25% from last year”. He offered to cost the project, and if the Committee so desired, he would submit a tender for the Committee.

Joe stated at that meeting on 7 July on his own initiative he asked the Architect to invite the lowest tenderer to re-consider his tender. No action was taken by the builder except to write a letter of protest to the Committee claiming a breach of ethics. Two weeks later on 21 July 1975 the Committee met again. Lion Joe Clift made a statement advising that “following a request and to assist the Committee to proceed with Stage 6, he had submitted a tender to the Architect, Mr Fred Neuss, in terms of plans and specifications, for $346,000.” He then requested permission to retire so that the Committee could discuss the tender. He was told he need not do so, but he did.

The Committee did not take long to make a decision. It was, after all, nearly $28,000 less than the previous lowest tender, a saving of almost $1,110 per unit! It was resolved that “the Architect be instructed to accept the tender of JJ & J Clift”. The resolution was carried unanimously. Lion Cliff Williamson advised that he desired to abstain from voting as he was an interested party.

Once that decision had been made the Extension Secretary was instructed to proceed with an application to the Department of Social Services for a subsidy of $240,240 for the building of these 25 units. With the major decision about Stage 6 out of the way George Neuss tabled a set of figures showing the costs for a future Stage 7, based on two tenders. Part of the cost of this new stage for Lionsville would be met, according to his estimates, through charges paid by the incoming residents of Stage 6 (on the basis of $6000 for the double units and $5000 for single units with discounts for early payment). About $30,000 would be allocated to help pay for Stage 6 and the remainder would be used in the construction of Stage 7, possibly about $85,000. The Committee agreed to proceed on those lines.

Work proceeded on the clearing of the site and preparations for the building. Work commenced on the construction just before the end of 1975. In February 1976 the Committee decided that insulation of the Units could be carried out as a Club project with the work to be done during the latter part of March. This cost saving would not have been possible unless Lionsville members were the builders. Joe Clift had Cliff Williamson as his partner. At this February meeting the wording of plaques to be placed on the buildings was decided and the date of the Official Opening was tentatively set for late May or early June.

The Official Opening actually took place on Sunday, 6 June 1976 with the “opening” performed by Sir Kenneth Wheeler MP who had provided such valuable assistance in obtaining the land. Sir Kenneth outlined the growth of the project that he described as “possibly the biggest continuing club project undertaken by Lions Clubs throughout the world”. He went on to indicate that the plans were to add a further 20 units between Stage 6 and the creek. He announced that the final cost of Stage 6 would be “slightly under $400,000”.
Following the Opening of Stage 6, 1976. A photograph of five “Key” people. Left to right are Ken Wheeler MLA, Lions Basford, Morrison, Neuss and Woods.
Lion Lindsay Woods, Secretary/Treasurer of Lionsville spoke of the gifts made by the late Eddie Clayton especially through his will and explained that as a result of these gifts this new section would be known as “a Ruthville section of Lionsville”.

It was clear from the Extension Secretary’s contribution to the Tenth Annual Report of Lionsville, 1975/76, that there were “unforeseen problems with the building of Stage 6. The steep slope necessitated additional brick work. This has been partly used as a store-room and for housing the S.E.C. transformer. We could not influence the M.& M.B.W. to open the easement near Units 91-94 and found it necessary to use that provided for Stages 1-5. This has increased our cost by around $5,000.”

Despite these problems George Neuss could not contain his enthusiasm for the project and wrote in the Annual Report delivered in August 1976: “Let’s get this wonderful ‘Lionsville’ project behind us. I estimate that Stage 7 (21 or 24 units) will cost as much as Stage 6 (25 units) and we will require to have around $200,000 available.”

The work of the Builder and his Supervisor was not overlooked. In his President’s Report for 1975/76 Stan Morrison praised them in these words: “Lions Joe Clift and Cliff Williamson have been magnificent in their dedication with the erection of Stage 6, with Joe coming out of his ‘building retirement’, and Cliff working such long hours in the face of so many difficulties. To Joe and Cliff I say thank you so much, and I know I speak for all.”

At the Committee meeting on 5 August 1976 one month after the Official Opening, Lindsay Woods was able to report “that as of this morning all Units in Stage 6 have now been taken.”

Beautification of the grounds around the new Stage was continuing although George Neuss, at the August meeting complained “of the apathy of (Lions Club) members towards working bees for the beautification.” Not all members shared the enthusiasm and drive of “Mr Lionsville”. When one sees the grounds of Lionsville 26 years later George’s concern seems unnecessary, but perfectionists like him find it hard to appreciate that not all possess his intensity. It should be understood, too, that George had been in hospital around that time and best wishes were sent to him from the September meeting expressing the hope that he would make a speedy recovery.

At the November 1976 meeting of the Committee, President John De Zoete “made special mention of the presentation to George Neuss of a Lions International President’s Honour Award by the Lions International Director, Lion Ian Stockdale.” This presentation was made at the Lions Club of Essendon’s Annual Sportsmen’s Breakfast held at the Southern Cross Hotel on the morning of the Melbourne Cup. These Breakfasts were a great feature in the life of the Club and over a period of nearly 30 years raised in the vicinity of $250,000. Lionsville was a major beneficiary.

The development of Stage 7 was uppermost in the minds of Committee members. A new Extension Committee was appointed to spearhead this further development and consisted of Lions Neuss, Basford, Morrison, Williamson and De Zoete. George Neuss reported that a subsidy could be expected in 1978-79 and that Lionsville could make application in October 1977 with a possible start with the building in February 1978. The
Extension Committee was asked to consider this and report back.

A Landscape Designer had been asked to draw up a plan and estimates for the beautification of the new area but this whole matter was deferred because it “required a lot of thought.” The final meeting for the year took place on 19 December. George Neuss made a report about his meeting with the Department of Social Security relating to unpaid subsidy from Stage 6. There was also some gloomy and some good news. There was a gloomy outlook on future government subsidies for Lionsville’s type of aged care, but the good news was that Lionsville had been promised a subsidy in the 3 year plan. George Neuss strongly advised that “we be ready, financially, to go ahead with Stage 7 as soon as possible.”

Little did anyone realize that this important advice would be the final contribution that George would make to a project that had been so dear to his heart and to which he had made such a marvelous contribution.

George Raymond Neuss died on 14 January 1977.

His unexpected death brought much sadness to the Lions Club, especially to the Office Bearers and Committee members of Lionsville. There was even greater sadness because the funeral was very private. No-one from Lionsville was invited nor were details known to enable the sending of a wreath. Bereavement notices were sent to the daily papers and to the local Gazette. An obituary was published in the latter paper under the heading: “Lionsville is his Memorial”.

Lionsville is his Memorial

Mr. George Raymond Neuss, who died on January 14 conceived the idea of erecting Lionsville old people’s home in Essendon.

A member of Essendon Lions Club, with 19 years of perfect attendance, Mr. Neuss provided the drive and enthusiasm which eventually got Lionsville under way.

From a humble beginning with 12 units, Lionsville now houses 102 elderly people in 94 units.

Much of the project’s success goes to Mr. Neuss.

His untiring efforts with the project were referred to by the then President of the Committee of Management, Mr. Stanley Morrison, during the official opening of Stage 6 last June.

"George Neuss, Mr. Lionsville as he was commonly called, conceived the entire project and inspired us to believe it was possible", Mr. Morrison said.

"He has had that rare experience of seeing a dream become a reality in his own lifetime.

"If ever in his innermost thoughts, George says to himself 'Lionsville is a monument to me', he’ll be jolly well right".

Prior to his retirement several years ago, Mr. Neuss was Manager of the CBA Bank at Moonee Ponds and later Brunswick. His vast experience in banking and money investment was invaluable to the Lionsville Committee of Management.

The Lionsville flag has flown at half mast during the past week as a mark of respect to Mr. Neuss, a man who will be sadly missed by all who knew him.
Special Meeting of the Committee was called for 6 June 1977 to empower the Extension Committee to meet a fresh challenge. The Councils of the Cities of Essendon and Coburg were going through the process of preparing to declare land, to the immediate north of Stages 6 and 7 and east of the properties in Pascoe Vale Road, as “Reserved for Public Purposes”. The aim was to create an area of about 5 acres for passive recreation. If that had progressed, further development of the Lionsville project on that site would have been frustrated.

Stan Morrison realized the danger and encouraged action. The Committee at that meeting empowered the Extension Committee to meet with the Essendon Council with a view to obtaining from the Council “the land adjacent to Lionsville, if the Council acquire the land from the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW).

What followed was another battle. Attempts by Lionsville to gain the use of the Rifle Club land had resulted in a prolonged campaign lasting five years. This second battle, though far less public, took about the same length of time. The details are best described by the report, prepared by Stan Morrison and published in the Annual Report of Lionsville for 1981/82.

“Early in 1977 the Essendon City Council announced its intention to develop all that land north of Lionsville for passive recreation. The development was to be in conjunction with the Coburg City Council. An agreement already had been reached by the two Councils.

Although further extensions to Lionsville could not even be contemplated, as Lionsville had built on all its available land, this development decision by the two Councils would make it impossible for Lionsville to consider any extensions for all time. We requested an urgent committee meeting when these facts were outlined and permission to approach Council was sought and granted.

After a meeting on site with our three Ward Councillors on 18 June 1977 we wrote our application for a part of the land in question on 23 June 1977. Fortunately the majority of Councillors of the ECC agreed to meet with the Extension Committee at which our submission was outlined.

Following this meeting the area in which Lionsville was interested was established, namely .4 hectare (or approximately 1 acre). After some months agreement was reached between the Essendon and Coburg City Councils. The Essendon City Council was in the process of purchasing the land from the MMBW and the Council agreed that if the MMBW agreed to rezone that .4 hectare to “Residential C”, the Essendon City Council would make the land available for extensions at Lionsville.

In an effort to assist our submission, the Extension Committee commenced overtures to the MMBW, whose policy was opposed to the rezoning suggestion. After more than two years negotiating with the MMBW, that authority finally agreed to initiate action within its own organization. Valuable contact established in the MMBW proved extremely helpful resulting in the Property Department eventually agreeing to depart from policy and recommend the rezoning to the members of the Board.
During this process it was discovered that the Title had not been transferred to the Essendon City Council pending final payments for all the land in the Essendon City Council redevelopment plan. The wonderful co-operation of the City Manager of the Essendon City Council, Barry Beattie, (who has been of inestimable assistance throughout the entire exercise), resulted in final payments being made and the Title acquired by the Essendon City Council.

The MMBW finally agreed to the rezoning subject to agreement from the State Department of Planning. This was finally achieved, after further overtures to the Department by the Extension Committee. An Objection Meeting at the MMBW was made necessary when a neighbour of Lionsville opposed the rezoning. We attended this meeting to put our case and the objection was not sustained.

Discussions with the Hospitals’ Commission revealed that if Lionsville obtained the Title to the .4 hectare, a land subsidy might be available. --- The exercise was further extended to persuade the Essendon City Council to transfer the Title to Lionsville instead of ‘just making the land available for use by Lionsville.’ Further negotiations with the Council resulted in the Essendon City Council agreeing to transfer the Title to Lionsville. Several months and further problems later, Lionsville acquired the Title in August 1981, making the application for a land grant possible. --------

It is encouraging to record that this exercise, commenced in June 1977, has found fulfillment five years later, with the signing of the contracts to build the Hostel on June 4, 1982.”

Future events demonstrated how important it was for Lionsville to own the property. The land grant for the first and second stages of the Hostel buildings amounted to $127,000.

During the early stages of this battle preparations were under way for the building of the final Stage of the Units (7). A relatively new member of the Lions Club, Lion Alistair McLeod, who had recently returned from overseas following further tertiary studies in Building, was asked by the Extension Committee to prepare drawings which could be submitted in relation to future development. The Department of Social Security needed more information relating to Alistair’s qualifications and these were forwarded. A meeting on 18 September 1978 heard a report from the Building Committee that included the receipt of a letter from Fred Neuss asking to be relieved from any future planning. The Committee agreed and expressed grateful thanks for the work he had performed during the building of the first six stages of the Units and for the support he had given to his brother George. In addition, the Committee indicated that the Department of Social Security had suggested an approach be made to consulting architects experienced in the field of aged care. As a result the Committee met with representatives of Montgomery, Kidd and Associates and requested them to prepare sketches for Stage 7. Following the receipt and study of these sketches it was decided to commission that firm. The Committee ratified their action. The project was then underway.

It was not until May 1979 that a tender for the construction of 16 singles and 4 doubles units was approved. There had been various
checks made of the suggested tenderer and as a result of these the Committee agreed to the tender from Karinya Constructions Pty Ltd. for $384,711. It was on the basis of “Fixed Lump Sum – subject to Rise and Fall” on the understanding that “the total cost will not exceed the builder’s tender of $395,565 – not subject to Rise and Fall”. The Trustees agreed to recommend that acceptance to the Department of Social Security immediately. In his President’s Report for the Annual Meeting for 1978/79 President Jack De Zoete announced the cost to Lionsville of Stage 7 is $423,595 (including Architects Fees). The expected grant from the Commonwealth Government was noted as $263,787, the Building Subsidy being $249,740 and the Land Grant $14,047. Stage 7, the final stage of Units construction could now begin. The Government met 62.5% of the building costs and Lionsville 37.5%.

The Committee records show, and human memory recalls, that the construction of this stage encountered numerous difficulties, especially with plumbing and sewerage. When the construction was completed the Lionsville supervisors made a long list of faults needing correction. When the first residents were in occupation in 1980 faults in construction caused an uncomfortable time, especially for one resident whose unit was twice badly affected by leaking water pipes. A married couple had ongoing sewerage problems in their double unit. These problems continued into the nineties. One plumber, called on numerous occasions, expressed grave doubts about the ability of the Building Inspectors who passed such bad work.

“Sunday 15 June saw the Official Opening of Stage 7 by the Australian Manager (of Lions Clubs International), Lion James McLardie OA,” as Lionsville President Jack De Zoete reports. Although he was too ill to attend the opening President Jack went on to say “that the successful completion and official opening of Stage 7 is truly the crowning point of my four year term of office.”

Secretary, Lindsay Woods was able to provide first hand information about the Opening Ceremony and was pleased to record the favourable comments made by James McLardie, whom Lindsay described as “terribly popular with the Essendon Lions”. He reported that Lion Jim “told of the many pleasures that befell him as Australian Secretary and Regional Manager, but said that the greatest honour that had been bestowed on him was the invitation - - - to officially open Stage 7,” and went on to say that “he knew of no better Club than the Lions Club of Essendon, and included members of the Lions Club of Coburg, who had made Lionsville possible.”

Those Lions who had played an important part in creating the great project that now provided secure, comfortable and relatively low cost accommodation for 127 elderly people, felt pleased and proud to receive such commendation. A letter received from Past International Director Ian Stockdale agreed with James McLardie’s sentiments. He sent his congratulations to the Committee for “such a magnificent project”. He supported Lion Jim when he mentioned that “it must be the greatest single project done by a Lions club in Australia, and in fact - - - it would be one of the great projects in the world of Lionism.”

1 During 2002, twenty-two years later, another flood occurred causing damage and inconvenience to a group of residents in the same block. Unfortunately the lady affected in 1980 was again inconvenienced, although not as badly as previously.
Following the Opening of Stage 7, 1980, Lion James McLardie (left) with Lion Stan Morrison and the commemorative plaques.
Beautification of the area, site works and access roads were completed to allow the area to fit in splendidly with the other sections already completed.

Once again – for the third time – the project was complete. No-one could deny, that in less that 15 years, the achievements had been outstanding and all those responsible deserved the opportunity to “rest from their labours”. As we know, it did not happen that way!

The Units now set in attractive grounds.
Lindsay was for many people, the best known personality associated with Lionsville for over 10 years from the late 1970’s. He was the Secretary/Treasurer of the Committee during that period and this included the responsibility for the administration of the Units. He interviewed prospective residents, chose those he felt were most in need of Lionsville’s accommodation, arranged for the collection of service charges from the Units’ residents and was responsible for the maintenance of the units and surrounding lawns and gardens.

He was President of the Lions Club of Essendon in 1973/74 and was also chosen as a Deputy District Governor for the area of western Melbourne and south-western Victoria. He was dedicated to serve the community and was honoured for this by his choice as Citizen of the Year in 1986 by the City of Essendon. The award of the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) followed in 1987. In these efforts Lindsay received wonderful support from his wife Louie (Louise) and it was her serious illness in the late 1980’s that hastened Lindsay’s retirement as Secretary/Treasurer in April 1989.

Essendon was Lindsay’s birth place and his home. He left school after Grade 8 and having had limited educational opportunities entered the work force at a time when a world-wide depression was on the horizon. He worked for a milk distributor and is remembered by one of the present Lionsville residents as her family’s milkman when she was growing up in Ascot Vale. He was employed by the Strack family, well-known Furniture Removalists and Carriers in the Essendon area. Lindsay’s personal drive led him to start his own business and he retired as a successful Cartage Contractor in the late 1960’s.

Described by those who have known him for years as “a rough diamond”, Lindsay proved his worth when the opportunity came to take a demanding managerial position at Lionsville. He played Australian Rules football and although he was not able to win a place in the famous Essendon VFL team he transferred to Port Melbourne, a team in the VFA, and played there for several seasons. This team, often known as “the boroughs”, had a reputation for hard, tough and unforgiving football. Quite a few of his team mates were “wharfies” (today they would be called stevedores) and the toughness of this back ground would have given Lindsay’s character much of the “roughness” attributed to him. His value to the community, the “diamond” side of the definition, shone through with his contribution to Lions and Lionsville. He appreciated the needs of "those less fortunate" and as Manager of the Units he fought to keep the charges to residents as low as possible.

Some former residents of the Units realized that Lindsay was “firm but fair”. He became a close friend of a number of residents through the years. Keeping in mind that he did not have an office at Lionsville until 1986 but did his secretarial work at home, he kept a friendly relationship with most of his residents – 74 until 1976, 104 after 1976.
and 127 after 1980. His reports to the Committee always contained news of those who were in need and how the Committee might help them and his Annual Reports to the Lionsville community proudly broadcast the wonderful work his “helpers” were providing with the maintenance of the lawns and gardens surrounding the Units. He sadly reported each year the way in which the “Grim Reaper” had taken certain residents from the community and following 1983 the names of those then living at “Lionsville Lodge”.

The well recorded Minutes of Committee meetings have provided a fruitful source of information for those who have followed. His financial reports were clear and precise. As Lionsville grew in size Lindsay, the Treasurer who had no financial training, expressed his gratitude to fellow Committee members such as Cliff Williamson, for support and advice. Lindsay must have spent many hours on these tasks. Conscious as he was of his lack of formal training, Lindsay did not always take kindly to some critical, though well meaning advice, from the Auditor, Des Cronin, who was also a member of the Committee. Some interesting post-scripts to the Minutes gave the reader the impression that Lindsay was telling the Committee – “OK I know I lack training, but I am doing my best”. And do his best he did!

For eighteen years, from 1971 to 1989, he held the position of Secretary/Treasurer. He had watched and worked as Lionsville grew from an idea in 1964 to a complex in 1989 with 114 Units, and a hostel with 36 residents and another wing for a further 30 places under construction. He had indicated that his work at the Units was enough for him. That was where his heart was and he did not wish to take a part in the management of the new facility, Lionsville Lodge.

In April 1989 his own ill health, compounded by his wife’s illness, led him to retire from his position. He requested, and the Committee agreed, that he continue as Assistant to the new Secretary, which he did for another two years.

In time Lindsay became a resident in Lionsville Lodge and could not speak too highly of the care and attention he received. In 1996 the Committee of Management decided to recognize his service to Lionsville and arranged for a photograph and a plaque to be placed in “Ruthville”. This was to be unveiled by him in early December 1996 in the presence of his son Ralph and daughter Barbara and their families. Sadly Lindsay died suddenly a few days before the unveiling. His spirit will remain for years to come.

The daughter and son of Lindsay Woods following the unveiling of his photograph and the plaque commemorating his service to Lionsville.
The Official Party at the
Opening of Lionsville Lodge
in 1983. Two grand-
daughters of President John
Dallwitz present flowers to
Lady Murray, the wife of the
Victorian Governor.
“Where do we go when we can’t live alone any longer?”

As described earlier the foresight of Lion Stan Morrison and his Extension Committee enabled Lionsville to have access to extra land, for which it had the title. This was situated to the north of the area occupied by the 114 Units. The next phase of the Lionsville story moves in that direction.

In the late 1960’s when there were 40 people in the Units, the Committee finalized arrangements for five places to be made available at Mt Royal, Parkville when Lionsville residents required nursing care. There were now 127 people at Lionsville. The Committee realized that they must have an answer to the question … “Where do we go …?” Mt Royal had changed its entry policy. It now provided only short term care and could not be relied on in the future. Experience had already shown the Committee how difficult it could be to place an elderly person in permanent care, so what could be done?

The Committee members accepted that they had an obligation to those who were living in the Lionsville Units to provide a place for those who became too frail in mind or body for independent living. There are several indications in the minutes of the later 1970s that the provision of Hostel accommodation was the next phase of elderly people’s care that required serious consideration. The strong push for the land to the north was driven by this need. The development of a hostel was agreed to in principle at a Committee meeting on 9 June 1980 on the understanding that the land was obtained from the Essendon City Council, which at that time was still awaiting re-zoning to “Residential C”. A special meeting of the Committee was called on 25 August 1980 to receive a report from a sub-committee appointed to investigate the proposal. At the Committee meeting three months earlier the Honorary Secretary had reported receiving a letter from Dr Moss Cass, the Federal Member of Parliament for the local electorate. It stated that a grant for an estimated $447,700 had been approved and that the necessary details from Lionsville would be required by next November at the latest. Much preparatory work had been completed by the time the Special Meeting in August was held. That Meeting received a very comprehensive report from the Chairman of the Committee, Stan Morrison, on behalf of his fellow members Lions Williamson, Velik, Dallwitz, Cronin and Coldrey. The report indicated:

(a) meetings had been held with executive members of organizations which conducted hostels;

(b) six hostels had been visited by members of the committee and these were described, as were the details of discussions held there;

(c) consideration of the desirable and practicable size of such a hostel;

(d) how best a hostel of an appropriate size should be managed and operated;

(e) the names of suitable architects; and
the anticipated costs of building a hostel, providing suitable landscaping and roads and how the necessary funding might be developed. (The expected cost was almost $800,000).

Much discussion took place. Problems were outlined and ways of meeting them were discussed. The “spade work” undertaken by the Committee was commended.

A 37 unit hostel was considered desirable and practicable on the basis of the total cost estimated by the Committee and on the expected available government subsidy. An overdraft would probably be needed if Lionsville expected to proceed. Finally a motion “That Lionsville proceed to establish a maximum 37 units hostel as suggested, subject to sufficient finance being available” was “Carried Unanimously”.

Despite this approval by the Committee there must have been some second thoughts. At the 11 November meeting strong reservations were expressed. One was the fear that Lions Club members would not volunteer in sufficient strength to perform the necessary duties needed to operate the Hostel, one speaker despairing of the chances of getting support from the members. A serious doubt arose about where responsibility would fall should the hostel be unable to “balance its budget”. Who would meet the unpaid debts? As the Minutes declare – “nobody seemed to know.” Stan Morrison, however, “was of the opinion that Lionsville could generate sufficient funds to meet such a possibility.” Secretary/Treasurer Lindsay Woods advised that a few hours before the meeting he had been informed by the representative of the Commission that “we would not get subsidies to build further units until we established an onward care unit”. The Committee now understood that without a hostel on site Lionsville had nowhere else to go if it was to continue to expand its residential care for the elderly.

The following motion was put to the meeting.

“That prior to June 30, 1982 and providing that this date is acceptable for financial grants – This Committee hereby resolves to construct and operate the type of hostel to be used for help and accommodation of Aged Persons, as defined in the applicable Act”, and further “that Mr Ivan Anderson, of Ivan Anderson and Associates, be appointed Architect for the recommended project and that he be advised accordingly.”

CARRIED – but not unanimously.

Later in the meeting the President John Dallwitz accepted a motion “that advice be obtained, from our legal advisor, of the legal liability of Lionsville for Hostel operating costs especially re any losses”. This motion was CARRIED.

The information provided to Committee members, to assuage their misgivings, was very successful. Nothing further is heard from objectors to the construction of the Hostel.

The Annual Report of Lionsville for 1981/82 presents a summary of the activities of Lionsville for the year from 1 July 1981 to 30 June 1982. From that it is possible to understand what was happening in relation to the Hostel. President John Dallwitz reports that the “Lionsville Hostel building has now commenced and I look forward to this coming year with excitement. ------ The Hostel building, including furniture and fittings will cost approximately $1,000,000.”
Secretary Lindsay Woods adds that the “proposed 37 bed Hostel - got off to a good start with the successful tenderer, R J Grills Pty Ltd starting to level the site and preparing their access road on 16 June 1982.” The contracts to build the Hostel had been signed on 4 June 1982.

The liability of the Lionsville Trustees and of officers and members of the Committee in relation to Hostel operational losses was still the subject of discussion two weeks prior to the signing of the contracts. Committee members were assured that “all matters concerning the Hostel would be looked at carefully, so as not to put the members of the Committee in any financial difficulty.” This doubt lingered despite the general feeling that Stan Morrison was correct in believing that Lionsville would generate sufficient funds to enable the hostel to remain financially viable. However some members had fears that should the hostel incur serious losses, they, as Committee members, may incur some personal liability.

Advice was given by members of the committee that they should take advantage of the recent Associations Incorporation Act (1981) which permitted groups such as Lionsville to run their affairs without the need to fear personal liability. So long as Lionsville carried out its responsibilities under the Act the members would have no legal liability for losses made.

With the building of the Hostel underway much work was required to ensure it operated successfully. A sub-committee was set up and under the guidance of Stan Morrison developed a close relationship with two people from the Brotherhood of St Laurence. Neville Brooke, a Consultant, and Jan Wigg who had operational experience in Hostels, both provided valuable advice. Neville Brooke advised on aspects of the operation such as staffing and level of care. He stressed the importance of the Hostel always being part of Lionsville. The sub-committee found great value in this contact with experienced practitioners. They were present at a Committee of Management meeting in November 1982 and provided much practical advice when they spoke to the members. Fees and budget structures were amongst matters discussed as well as design features and the importance of colour décor, especially curtains and drapes. They advised that advertisements for a Hostel Supervisor, preferably female, should be arranged early in 1983. In the words of the advisors “the supervisor should be in the vicinity of 40-45 years, with lots of understanding, sympathy and love of people.” Some nursing ability would be helpful, but was not imperative.

As the new Hostel building progressed so, too, did the arrangements for its operation. Stan Morrison, Chairman of the Hostel sub-committee summarized these in his report to the 1982/83 Annual meeting:

- The Lionsville Committee of Management, on advice from the Consultant, Neville Brooke, agreed that although the hostel was in fact an extension of services at Lionsville, it ought to be considered as a separate entity and given its own name.
- The Lionsville Committee named the new hostel “Lionsville Lodge”.
- A small sub-committee of the Lionsville Committee was formed to establish and manage the new venture. It became known as The Lodge Committee of Management.
LIONSVILLE HOSTEL OPENS

LATE last month stage two of one of Essendon’s most ambitious projects was completed after nine months of work.

The Lions Club of Essendon saw their ultimate dream of a fully supportive aged complex come a step closer when the $1 million aged hostel had its first tenants move in.

The new hostel will accommodate 35 people and will offer limited support services such as meals, leaving the residents to look after themselves for the majority of the time.

The largest satisfaction for members of the Lions Club in seeing the hostel completed and operating is that it has extended the services tremendously,” said Stan.

“Lionsville is now able to handle two of the three stages which aged people face.

First we have the units where the elderly are totally independent and look after themselves, now we have the hostel which offers limited support for residents and the final stage, which is being planned, is a nursing home which will offer residents full supporting services.

The new hostel is set in very pleasant surroundings: with full landscaping in the centre of the hotel and a small waterfall and creek nearby.

“We have tried to make the area as pleasant as possible, after all this is these peoples new home.”

Importantly the centre is no far from an institutionalised hostel as possible.

Any further information regarding residence at Lionsville contact superintendent, Mrs Wiggan 270 6557.

* Enjoying a cuppa on the first day are supervisor Jan Wigg (standing), president John Dallwite (right) and two residents.
• The Lodge Committee recommended to the Committee of Management (L.C.of M.) the policy under which it believed it should operate. This gave the Lodge Committee flexibility in decision making but clearly indicated its limits of authority and its responsibility to the L.C. of M.

• The Lodge Committee interviewed applicants for the position of Supervisor. The successful applicant was Jan Wigg, who had been an advisor to the Committee and had outlined to them the age, personal qualities and qualifications that a Supervisor should possess.

• The new Supervisor appointed additional staff needed to operate the hostel.

• Decisions were taken about the basis on the value of donations to be sought from applicants and also on the weekly fees to be charged to residents.

• As the completion date drew near, it was clear that Lionsville Lodge was ready to provide a much needed extension of Lionsville’s services. In the words of Stan Morrison “Lionsville has greatly increased its limits of compassionate care for the aged, for which Lionsville is well known.”

The elected members of the new “Lodge” Committee were: Lions G Trewin, C. Williamson, K. Chadwick (Secretary) and S. Morrison as a non-voting advisor. The President and Secretary of Lionsville were ex-officio members.

“Lionsville Lodge” was officially opened by the Governor of Victoria, His Excellency, Rear-Admiral Sir Brian Murray on 14 September 1983. “A large gathering of over 300 attended” including representatives of Government, municipal Council and Lions International. The Lionsville organization had developed considerable expertise in arranging these “Official Openings”. The fifth such function, this was very capably organized and conducted by Lion Eric Hattam on behalf of the Committee of Management.

By the date of the Official Opening, the “Lodge” was already providing care and accommodation for nearly 30 residents. There were still some problems with the building itself and Cliff Williamson, Chairman of the Building Sub-committee, reported that “22 items had been listed by the Works Inspector of the Health Commission as needing correction”. Progress was being made to provide attractive gardens and surroundings for the new building and the Courtyard Garden was seen as a wonderful amenity for the residents who could delight in its beauty both from their rooms and from the seats in the corridors. The Lionsville President, John Dallwitz, summed up the general feeling of members in his report for the year ending June 1984. “Our main achievement”, he wrote, “is to provide a loving and caring place of residence for our elderly folk.”

There were some doubts expressed however about the financial results from the Hostel’s operation. The report at the end of the financial year 1983/84 revealed an estimated operating loss of around $27,000, mainly due to “the partial occupancy for the first six months. Unfortunately costs are ever increasing, so prudent management will always be required.” To assist the Lodge to keep costs down voluntary work was encouraged especially from Lions and Lions’ Ladies. A group known as “Friends of Lionsville” was established, working to assist the Supervisor, Jan Wigg. Helping
The Lodge is an extension of the Lismore units in Pascoe Vale, built for elderly people wishing to live in a small community environment.

The home for the frail aged in a staging right of the project that began 11 years ago.

Since then the Lions Club of Essendon has raised $5 million to make "the dream a reality."

The government contributed $5 million to the $11 million lodge.

In his speech to a large and enthusiastic audience, Sir Brian Wash, the chairman and treasurer of the homes involved in the project he described it as "the largest of its kind ever completed."

The homes have taken a lot of care and attention to meet the needs of the elderly in the community, he said.

"Lismore is obviously a happy community," he added.

Many of the residents were watching the ceremony from their units.

Also attending were past residents, Mr. and Mrs. Brian Murray, who were among the many proud words of the speakers, and first explained why the Lodge is called the "Munro Lodge by the Creek."
residents with personal shopping was one way, serving evening meals and cleaning up after was another. The President reported in June 1985 that this latter activity was “providing a tremendous help in reducing our operating deficit”. He urged Lions Club members “to make every effort to assist in this project.”

Office bearers paid tribute to work being performed in and around the Lodge. Ken Chadwick and Robin Mitchell toiled tirelessly around the grounds of Lionsville and both were valuable workers at the Hostel. The spirit of voluntary service was still very much alive and well. Val Chadwick was another who received acclaim. She helped with the preparation of the fortnightly payroll, with the assistance of the Gilbertson’s Meat Works computer and was one of the evening meal volunteers.

Some seventeen years later Ken Chadwick, now living back on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland, recalls these early years of the Hostel as “a good and satisfying involvement for all concerned. It also brought in new faces and personalities for the residents to communicate with.”

Lion Robin Mitchell continued his close involvement with the Lodge for a long time. He became the “Mr Fix It” of the hostel as well as friend to many of the residents. Staff members, particularly in the 1990s said that often, as they came to start work around 9 am, Robin Mitchell was going home for breakfast after having spent hours doing various tasks in the early morning. It was not unusual for him to return several hours later to do another “shift”.

Lionsville Lodge had been operating for only a short time before it became apparent to some on the Lodge Sub-Committee that they were unable to provide all the support some frailer residents needed. In fact less than a year after the Official Opening in September 1983, the President of the Lionsville Committee of Management was reporting that “we are now hoping to extend our program by erecting a 30 bed Medical Care Centre, perhaps better known as a Nursing Home.” (Annual Report for 1983/84). As early as February 1984 Stan Morrison had reported to the Committee on prospects for such a development. He offered to prepare a case “for presentation to the proper authorities” an offer warmly appreciated by the Committee.

Apart from the attempts to develop a Nursing Home there were two other important matters affecting Lionsville that were under consideration.

The first of these was the review of Lionsville’s governance. Since inception in 1966 the organization consisted of governing Trustees, appointed under State legislation. The administration of the project was through a Committee of Management, appointed by members of the Lions Clubs of Essendon and Coburg. When the hostel was developed, it became clear to some Committee members that an increasingly complex project would require a different form of governance. Questions had been asked by Committee members as to the nature of their personal liabilities should Lionsville make losses and incur indebtedness.

After research and discussion it was agreed to seek Incorporation under the State Act of Parliament known as the Associations Incorporation Act, 1981. When the necessary preparations were completed the application was lodged. A
A resident enjoys the peaceful atmosphere of the Lodge courtyard garden (left).

Lions Club members tidy the grounds prior to the Opening of the West Wing of Lionsville Lodge, 1990.
meeting of all Life Governors and subscribers was called for Monday, 29 April 1985 at “Ruthville” to consider the new rules and regulations. These were accepted and were submitted to the Registrar of Incorporation for approval.

Lionsville was duly incorporated under the Act on October 1, 1985 as “Lionsville Incorporated”. The first Public Officer was Stan Morrison who had been the applicant for incorporation status. The first Officers were:

- President: C. Williamson
- Vice Presidents (2): K. Chadwick, R. Mitchell
- Hon Secretary/Treasurer: L. G. Woods
- Assistant Hon Secretary: J. Richards
- Assistant Hon Treasurer: K. Gilbertson

In addition 14 members of the Lions Club of Essendon made up the Committee of Management.

The second important matter was the relationship that developed with the next door neighbours at 262 Pascoe Vale Road, Mr and Mrs Gray. It was a difficult one and the Grays caused the management of Lionsville to spend time on matters that, in most situations, would have been settled by discussion. Problems were related to the condition of the fence between the two properties, the right to use the easement between Lionsville’s units and their property and the difficulty in locating Mr Gray when he left the property to live elsewhere. Lionsville was forced to consider legal action in relation to several of these matters.

Perhaps the most frustrating was Mr Gray’s lodgement of an objection to the decision of the MMBW to re-zone the land immediately to the east of his property. His objection was not sustained, as described earlier, but it delayed the process and therefore the further development of the Lionsville project.

In March 1983, Fred Peverill alerted the Committee of Management to the fact that Mr Gray’s property was “the subject of impending sale”. Committee member, Jim Richards was asked to investigate and report any details. Nothing much happened and in October it was reported that Mr Gray’s home address was being sought. It was not until two years later that the property was advertised for auction. After negotiation Lionsville made an offer and the property was purchased for $68,000. Possible uses for this property were investigated. The details are related later in our story.

The Committee, in February 1984, was thinking in terms of further facilities, this time a Nursing Home for those residents who, through illness or frailty, required nursing care. Stan Morrison reported to this meeting “that new guide lines relating to Nursing Homes would be emanating from Canberra very soon” and he expected to receive a copy of them as soon as they were released. He had gained this information from “a senior officer of the Department of Health” in November 1983. In the Annual Report for 1984/1985 he described the Extension Committee’s action as “endeavoring to obtain approval, subsidies and deficit funding arrangements to erect and operate a 30 Bed Nursing Home, adjoining our Hostel – Lionsville Lodge”.

When the new guide lines were released preparations were
made for Lionsville’s application. This “occupied weeks of work and research to satisfy the eventual guidelines”. The report goes on to state that there were understood to be 106 applications from Victoria and this would “greatly exceed approvals granted”. Nevertheless an application was made by the Lionsville Committee.

The Department of Community Service’s decision was not announced until July 1985. There were 17 applications for Nursing Home beds in the area served by Lionsville, but only 2 were approved and Lionsville was not one of them. The announcement was contained in a “Stop Press” paragraph in the 1984/85 Annual Report. As would be expected Lionsville appealed against the decision, although it was clearly stated that the appeal was not against the approval given to the Uniting Church of Victoria for its Nursing Home known as “Maryvale”, in Epsom Road, Ascot Vale. Lionsville had the finance, the land and the desire to proceed, but did not have “Government Approval in Principle”. Many hours were spent seeking such approval, including a special trip to Canberra by Stan Morrison. All to no avail, for as Stan reported in the Extension and Planning Committee Report for 1985/86 - - “the Minister was working to a very restricted set of guidelines which in fact had become more and more restrictive”. Now that a decision had been made, the report indicates that “we could at least move in another direction without further delay”.

The past history reveals that on two previous occasions the Lionsville enterprise had recourse to arguing a case for the reversal of a government or public authority decision. The first was the Rifle Range land, the battle for which was successful after about five years. Then there was the request to have land, declared by the MMBW as zoned for “public recreation”, to be rezoned to permit the development of Lionsville Lodge. This, too, had taken about five years of lobbying, researching, arguing and persuading. The third major case – government approval for “Nursing Home beds” – was given up despite a strong case being mounted by the Lionsville negotiating team. It has eventuated that this battle was better lost than won. By the late 1990’s it was shown to be very difficult for a “not for profit” organization like Lionsville to run small facilities (hostel 36 places and nursing home 30 places) in a financially viable manner. Lionsville Lodge continued to provide a high standard of care although up to the end of the financial year 30 June 1986, it was still operating at a loss. For that year the loss was $8,000.

The Supervisor, Jan Wigg resigned in October 1985 after two and a half years service and was replaced by Mrs Fay Forbes, a lady who “put her eight years of Hostel experience to good use” as the Annual Report for 1985/86 declared. This was the start of a long and happy association for both Lionsville and Fay Forbes.

In his report to the Committee on 25 June 1987, the Chairman of the Lodge Committee, Stan Morrison, indicated that “the greatly improved standard of management --- is being maintained, and the better than break-even performance is being maintained also. The close co-operation of our Supervisor --- continues to prove invaluable.” He went on to point out that “a healthy emphasis (is) placed on all the important aspects of happy living”.

As the application for a Nursing Home had been turned down, the Committee of Management in late 1986, on the suggestion
of Ern Coldrey, agreed that the Hostel Committee be given permission to consider the extension of the Lodge by a further 24 places and to negotiate with all those who would help to bring this about. The Hostel Committee did not waste time and set about the task of preparing a submission. It was decided to apply for an extra 30 places to bring the total numbers to 66. By 25 June 1987 Stan Morrison was able to declare in the Extension Committee’s report, that “we were pleasantly surprised that our application for approval and funding to extend Lionsville Lodge by 30 (including some to care for Dementia residents) was approved. The amount to be available from the Commonwealth Government is $663,600 and it is listed for 1988/89. Research into to what would be the optimum number of dementia residents, the architectural design considered best, staff required and staff procedures, has already commenced.”

There were some significant changes in the leadership of Lionsville in late 1986. At the September meeting President Cliff Williamson announced that he and his wife were retiring to Queensland and he was resigning from his positions. A second loss was also announced when Ken and Val Chadwick declared the same intention. Both Cliff and Ken had made very important contributions to the development and operation of this Lion’s Club project. Cliff’s role in the building of Stage 6 has been mentioned earlier. Ken and his wife Val played a significant part, especially during the first few years of the operation of Lionsville Lodge. Ken Gilbertson was appointed to the Committee and his accounting skills were soon put to good use. He was able to supply the skills lost when Cliff Williamson retired.

At this time Secretary Treasurer Lindsay Woods was experiencing a spell of poor health and spent a long period in recovery. President John Dallwitz expressed the feelings of the Committee in the Annual Report of 1986/87 when he wrote that Lindsay was “certainly missed during his absence and we are very grateful he is back carrying out his important duties”. Jim Richards as Assistant Secretary and Ken Gilbertson as Assistant Treasurer made important contributions during Lindsay’s illness and John Dallwitz was often on hand.

A Lions Club member Lloyd Craven took up residence at Lionsville during this period and “displayed his talents in many ways, namely caretaker, friend of Lionsville residents and handyman”. He was the first member of the Lions Club of Essendon to take advantage of a home at Lionsville and was of considerable value to the project. The link between the Lions Club members and the Lionsville residents became even closer as a result of Lloyd’s personal contributions.

During 1987 preparations for the hostel extension gathered pace. Architects were considered. Stan Morrison favoured Mr Brian Kidd and reported to a meeting in June 1985 that he be appointed because of his expertise in planning for Aged Care, however, the Committee at its meeting on 11 August 1987 invited five architects for interview. Following these interviews Mr Kidd was not appointed. The successful firm was Cecil R and Graham Lyons Pty Ltd. An approach was made to the Department of Community Services to vary the time frame for construction and this was approved. The research undertaken included visits by Committee members to hostels where dementia residents were
Prime Minister Hawke climbed the stairs in this block of Units to greet Mrs. Elsie Pond following the Official Opening of the West Wing of the Lodge, December 1990 (left).

The Prime Minister makes his Opening Speech (below).

Mr. Hawke is escorted by the Committee President and Secretary on a tour of the Units.
being cared for. Lionsville’s submission had included a “special care” section for eight residents who suffered this difficulty. By September the Chairman of the Extension Committee was able to report that “continued progress will make possible the necessary discussions on plans and estimates with the Department (of Community Affairs) and a formal application for actual subsidy money”. It was estimated that from the commencement of planning to completion of the building would take about 80 to 90 weeks, if no unusual delays occurred.

As events developed this estimate was optimistic. One year later in the third Annual Report of Lionsville Incorporated (for the year 1987/88) Stan Morrison reported that the extension was “a little behind schedule (but) the planning is complete”. It was expected that tender documents would be completed by September and tenders could then be called. He warned, however, that “building costs have continued to rise at a somewhat disturbing rate”. Australia was experiencing an inflationary cycle.

Another matter relating to the hostel was being pursued. The committee realized that car parking was becoming a problem, so the MMBW and the City of Essendon Council, as Managers of two strips of Crown land along the eastern or creek boundary of Lionsville, were requested to make the land available for this purpose. By late 1988 this proved worthwhile and provided regular car parking spaces for 19 vehicles.

During the 1987/88 year the Committee established a Maintenance Committee under the Chairmanship of Jack Grantham. Lionsville’s maintenance now required overall direction. Some buildings were ageing, the grounds were more extensive and co-ordination was required throughout the complex. In his first report Jack Grantham indicated that “much effort has been expended in maintaining the usual spic and span appearance of Lionsville – it does not just happen.” On the Maintenance Committee’s advice the Committee of Management, in 1989, decided to adopt a policy of “programmed maintenance” and let a contract for that to be carried out.

The illness of the Secretary/Treasurer, Lindsay Woods, which restricted his Lionsville activities in 1986 and into the following year, was not made any easier when his wife became seriously ill. She had been a great support to him in his work during his long period of service as the manager of the 114 units and as the executive officer to the Committee. It came as no surprise when, early in 1989, Lindsay decided to retire from his position. At that time a great deal was happening with the construction of the hostel extension, the development of the Adult Day Centre and the growing complexities of aged care administration and he felt he was no longer fit enough to carry his responsibilities. President John Dallwitz called a special meeting of the Committee on 17 April 1989 to choose a replacement. Lionsville officials had held personal discussions with Committee members prior to the meeting and Neil Baudinette agreed to take over these duties. Lindsay Woods accepted the position as Assistant Secretary. Thus ended a wonderful contribution of 18 years as Secretary/Treasurer. When he took that office in 1971, Lionsville had built 69 units and Ruthville. At the time of his retirement there were 114 units, a hostel for 36 residents with an extra 30 places soon to be occupied. Suitable functions were held to thank him for this wonderful service.
The International President, Lion “Bill” Biggs visits Lionsville, January 1991 (above).

Lions International President meets the Mayor of Essendon (Cr. Joan Brodie) with President John Dallwitz on his right and Ethel Dallwitz on his left.

PM praises Lions’ work

The Prime Minister of the Commonwealth, Mr. Bob Hawke, visited the Lions and congratulated the officers and members for their splendid work in the community. He was especially impressed with the Lion’s contribution to public awareness of the need for community volunteers and the importance of active participation in community affairs. He said that the Lions were doing a splendid job in providing a range of services to the community and that the Lions had a valuable role to play in the development of the community. He also commended the Lions for their efforts in promoting good health and wellbeing among the community. He said that the Lions were doing a splendid job in providing a range of services to the community and that the Lions had a valuable role to play in the development of the community. He also commended the Lions for their efforts in promoting good health and wellbeing among the community.

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The new Secretary/Treasurer first joined the Committee in 1975. He had been the Principal of two large High Schools in the area, Strathmore for 11 years and Keilor Heights for 4 years. His membership of the Committee was broken for one year when he was on an Exchange Program in Toronto, Canada in 1980 and for about a year prior to his professional retirement in 1986. He had assisted Lindsay Woods on some occasions in 1988 and early in 1989 so was aware of the responsibilities of this important position.

The construction of the hostel extension was making “steady progress”. The winter of 1989 was a very wet one and building works were interrupted by this continued bad weather. In addition President John Dallwitz, in his 1988/89 Annual Report, referred to “other building problems and delays” which put back the expected completion date to “early 1990”. This prediction was close as this extension, known as the “West wing”, was completed early in June and the connecting roadway to Pascoe Vale Road, running from Moreland Road through the property, was completed late in July. On the south side of the west wing 11 parking spaces for Lionsville Lodge visitors were created adjoining this new road.

In his Lodge report for 1989/90 Stan Morrison paid tribute to the Architect in charge, Cecil Lyons, describing him as a “remarkably competent and congenial gentleman whose skills have proved outstanding. His documentation of all discussions and decisions has been far superior to that which one might expect, likewise his advice and recommendations. It has been a constant delight to work with him.”

The residents were brought in to their new accommodation at “a controlled rate to allow old and new staff to become acclimatized without unnecessary pressure”. All rooms were occupied by September 1990. The site works around the new building proceeded as soon as the site became available around the middle of the year. By the end of the year it was clear that the high standard of appearance around the East wing and the Units would be maintained in this new area.

Impetus for a successful and attractive completion came from the news that the Official Opening of this wing would be in the hands of the Prime Minister of Australia. On 2 December 1990 the Hon R J L Hawke AC MP carried out the formal opening before an attendance of around 560 people. In his speech he praised the new work and went on to describe the whole Lionsville complex in glowing terms. “In my many visits to aged care facilities around Australia I have not seen any which have impressed me more than has Lionsville.” These words were delivered sincerely.

Mr and Mrs Hawke enjoyed their visit immensely. Mrs Hazel Hawke was particularly interested in the Hostel’s Courtyard Garden and asked many questions about the plants and how residents used the garden. The Secretary, one of the guides for the visitors, was impressed with her genuine interest in the people within the Hostel. It was difficult to keep to any prepared schedule as both she and Mr Hawke showed a desire to look for more than they were shown and to gain an insight into the way the residents responded to Lionsville as their home. At one stage the Prime Minister, whilst touring the Units,
A view of part of the large crowd at the West Wing Opening.
waved to a resident on an upstairs balcony and when she smiled and waved back he left his guides, ran up the stairs and along the balcony to shake her hand and speak to her. It became clear to the Lionsville guides that the timing of the program had been set back. The Prime Minister’s ‘minders’ were heard using their mobile phones to indicate to the people next on the PM’s itinerary that “he would be late”. By the time the Prime Minister left he was more than one hour behind schedule.

At the Official Ceremony a message from Lion “Bill” Biggs, President of the International Association of Lions Clubs, was read by Lion Ian Stockdale, a past International Director. The message, which was sent to the Secretary of Lionsville Inc was as follows:

“I wish I could be with you on this wonderful day, when you dedicate the latest addition to Lionsville Lodge. Lionsville is a perfect example of what a dedicated and committed Lions Club can achieve, and suggests to me that many clubs set their sights too low. You have certainly not set your sights low and the elderly citizens of your community are the winners.

Please express my best wishes to the Prime Minister and to all those who help you to celebrate today. I hope to see all of you later in the Lions’ year, certainly in Brisbane at the International Convention, but perhaps during my January trip.

In the meantime, I wish you the very best as you continue to give meaning to our motto “We Serve”.

This visit did take place on 23 January 1991 - and was again a great joy to Lions members.”
No one in the life of Lionsville has served longer in the position of President of the Committee than John Dallwitz. His term of nine years, although split by two years when Cliff Williamson was President in 1984 to 1986, was an important contribution to Lionsville's development. John's first spell began in 1980 after the completion and opening of the final stage of the independent living units. His association with the project had begun in the "early days". He was a member of the first Committee in 1966/67 and was named as a Life Governor in the first Annual Report.

In 1967/68 he was President of the Lions Club of Essendon and as such gave the Lionsville project his and his Club's full support. In the annual report in 1968 as Club President, he wrote that "at the first Board of Directors meeting the wish was expressed that during the coming year the required amount of money be raised to complete Lionsville. I am proud to say that this was done". John and others believed that their initial aim had been achieved. They did not realize that they would achieve far greater success in the coming years.

John, or as he was sometimes called, Jack, was not a "local boy". As a young man he had spent time working in Queensland. He and two of his brothers had a three year contract to cut cane. He and one of his brothers developed a business in Wangaratta in north-east Victoria before he and his wife, Ethel moved to Melbourne and settled in Essendon. Various successful businesses followed. The family moved to Strathmore but moved to the family home that they built in Brewster Street. John's most recent and highly successful business was in protective clothing from which he retired in 1980.

John was not a Charter member of the Club but joined early in the Club's life. He was a quiet man and although he had his business interest in near-by Ascot Vale, he never lost his love for the land. He enjoyed visits to his property in the Avenel district north of Seymour where a daughter and son-in-law farmed the property and raised their own family. On a number of occasions in the '70's and '80's the Lions Club organized picnics for Club members and Lionsville residents to a lovely location on the property. John and Ethel were always happy hosts to the visitors. They continued to visit Queensland and purchased two units near the beach at Yorkey's Knob just north of Cairns.

The Committee minutes record that John had responsibility, with other members, for the development of the gardens and grounds around the Units. The beautiful grounds existing today are a credit to the foundation developed by him and his teams of helpers during those earlier years.

His first spell as President saw the development of the Hostel, Lionsville Lodge. With his colleague Stan Morrison, who was Chairman of the Hostel Committee, John assisted in providing a comfortable place of residence and care for frail elderly people, some of whom had moved across from the Units. He was associated with the establishment of the
Courtyard garden which was a feature of the East Wing of the Lodge, and as President of Lionsville, was host to the Governor of Victoria, Rear Admiral Murray, when he officially opened this new development at Lionsville in 1983.

In his second term he led the Lionsville Committee during the extension of a further 30 places to the Hostel. His personal contribution was the development of an attractive area as part of the foyer created between the two wings. Consisting of running water, a water wheel and indoor plants it has remained a feature of the busy entrance way.

In December 1990 he presided over the Official Opening of this new wing by the Prime Minister of Australia, Hon. R.J. Hawke, and a month later greeted Lion William “Bill” Biggs, President of the International Association of Lions Clubs, when he made a short visit to inspect the project. During these official events, John and his wife Ethel, performed their roles in a calm and dignified manner and displayed the quiet friendship which was typical of their personalities.

It cannot be said that John Dallwitz took the initiative and argued causes in high places. That was not his nature. His quiet and patient handling of business was appreciated and he loved Lionsville and its residents. He lived “just around the corner” and was to be found there often after his retirement. When Lindsay Woods became ill during 1986 and 1987 and sometimes when Lindsay and Louie took a holiday, John would be the person who came over to see that all was well. His visits would include a walk around the complex and it was he who laid the foundation for Lionsville’s purchase of a further four residential properties along Pascoe Vale Road.

John, and his colleague Stan retired from the Committee at about the same time. A few months later a photograph of each (Stan’s was a photograph of his portrait painted by Essendon artist, Gregory Smith) and two plaques recognizing their contributions to the establishment, growth and development of Lionsville, were unveiled. A few months later the Chairman of the Board, Peter Gilbertson, announced that the Board had agreed to name the East Wing of the Hostel the Morrison Wing and the West Wing the Dallwitz Wing to commemorate their contributions to Lionsville. This was a tangible way of saying “thank you” to such wonderful workers as each had been closely involved for over 35 years.
A view of "Ruthville" following the 1991/92 extensions (above).

Part of the many visitors attending the Opening of the "Ruthville" extensions (right).
Chapter Six

THE WINGS OF SERVICE SPREAD WIDER

The story of “The Miracle by the Creek” has concentrated up to this point on the details of the construction of 114 units for independent living and the hostel, for 66 frail elderly residents. This story now takes on an added perspective. During the planning for and the building of the West wing of the hostel, there were other developments that widened the nature and the services that Lionsville offered. These were:

1. the use of the property at 262 Pascoe Vale Road, purchased from the Gray family in 1985 for $68,000, for a purpose-built Adult Day Care Centre;
2. the development of a property in Reynards Street, Coburg which was gifted to Lionsville by Mr and Mrs Eric Maddison;
3. extensions to the Ruthville Recreation Centre to meet the needs of the increased number of residents in the independent living units;
4. the search for more land, particularly attempts to purchase land on the east side of the Moonee Ponds Creek, then occupied by the Gas and Fuel Corporation;
5. the purchase of a community bus, for elderly people’s use, under the control of the city authorities; and
6. the development of a purpose-built extension for dementia care.

1. Essendon Adult Day Centre

With the failure of Lionsville’s attempt to obtain “permission in principle” to develop a Nursing Home came a desire to explore new fields of care for elderly people, especially any project that carried some financial support from government. The Extension and Planning Committee turned its attention to two of these – the first being further hostel accommodation, which has been described in the preceding pages, and the other a day centre for aged persons who lived at home and for whom social interaction was desirable. This latter also provided personal relief, on a regular basis, for its clients carers.

The property at 262 Pascoe Vale Road was considered suitable. It had been leased, for a short period from the end of 1985, for domestic purposes. At the Committee meeting held in June 1986 Stan Morrison reported that there had been “many meetings with personnel from Mt Royal Hospital” and that it was felt a custom-built Day Care Centre should be built on the site and “staffed by personnel from Mt Royal”. (Mt Royal Hospital was later known as North West Hospital, Mt Royal Campus, and later still as Melbourne Extended Care and Rehabilitation Service.) The meeting asked the Extension Committee to continue its enquiries.

At the meeting of the Committee in February 1987 Stan reported again, this time indicating that the Working Party had met 8 times. It was made up of representatives from the Essendon City Council, the Royal District Nursing Service (Western Region) and Mt. Royal, the Senior Social Worker of the Ascot Vale Day Centre and three members of the Lions Club of Essendon. This group continued to make applications for government support, first for operating costs and also for capital funding for
building. Stan explained that Day Centres were costly to operate and that an application for an amount of $25,000 a year had been made for transport alone, for a five days a week operation.

By the end of 1987 the position had become clearer. State and Federal Government funding – under the joint project known as Home and Community Care – had been obtained with $160,000 being made available for Capital Works and about $54,000 for part of the operating costs for the first 9 months of the life of the Centre. The intention was that Lionsville would make the land available without charge to a new community committee that would be formed to manage the Centre. A licence to use the land was drawn up. The Lionsville Committee agreed to support the project with a cash donation of $100,000 and the Essendon City Council agreed, in principle, to meet the remaining 20%. Lionsville also agreed, after discussions with the management of Mt Royal, that it would operate the Centre on a day by day basis, however this was not acceptable to the Government. As a result the Community Committee was formed. Lionsville appointed three representatives to this Committee. The first three members were Stan Morrison, Ern Coldrey and Jack Grantham, who were elected in June 1988. Other representatives came from Mt. Royal, the Essendon (now Moonee Valley) City Council and the community. It was decided that the Centre should become an Incorporated Association. When taking into account the increased value of the land, the contribution by Lionsville amounted to around $250,000.

In the Lionsville Annual Report for 1989/90 the Day Care Centre Chairman indicated that building costs had escalated so much between the announcement of funding and the completion of building, that funding was available for operation on only four days a week instead of five as planned. During that year the Centre Co-ordinator Bev Simpson, and her staff were greatly assisted by volunteers and Stan Morrison, in the report, congratulated them on providing “such a warm and caring environment for all the frail clients”.

The official Opening of the Centre, described as being the first “purpose built” Day Care Centre in Victoria, took place on 1 April 1990 with the State Minister for Community Services, Hon Peter Spyker MP performing the opening.

The early years were not easy. Diane Morel took over during the 1990/91 financial year and was described by Stan Morrison in the Annual Report of that year as “displaying a great depth of competence and enthusiasm in her very responsible position”. As the years went on there was a growing demand for the services provided, both to the frail adults in attendance and also from their normal daily carers. By 1995 it was offering programs over six days and one evening each week. Diane Morel has continued her wonderful leadership and twelve years after her appointment is still in charge of a very successful operation.

2. The Maddison Property in Reynards Street, West Coburg

In June 1984 Lindsay Woods told the Committee of a visit he had received from Mr Roy Treadwell whom he knew slightly. Roy had a very old friend who owned and lived in a property in West Coburg. This friend and his wife, both in their eighties, had no children and no close relatives. His name was Eric Maddison and the house was on a large block measuring 70 feet by 280 feet.
There was also access from a side lane. He kept birds in numerous aviaries, but his health was not good as he had been a long-time prisoner of war and also suffered from a heart condition. Lindsay related how he, President John Dallwitz and Cliff Williamson had visited Mr Maddison to express an interest in the property and in developing it for his expressed wish for elderly people's accommodation. It seemed Mr Maddison hoped that such a project could be called "Ericsville".

John, Cliff and Lindsay took action to encourage Mr Maddison to give the property to Lionsville and solicitors drew up a will to ensure that this became a reality. The property was then valued at around $100,000. Two years later Mr Maddison decided to sell his birds and early in June 1986 he notified Lindsay that the sale had raised $2,000 and he wanted the proceeds to go to Lionsville. Some members of the Committee continued contact with the two of them to ensure that they were able to cope at home. Mid-way through 1989 Eric and his wife left to live in a Hostel in McLeod. President John, Lindsay, Stan and Secretary Neil visited them and presented them with a Life Governor's Certificate as thanks for their wonderful contribution to the elderly of the district. Eric died in June 1990. The property was considered for use for independent living units similar to those already developed and these to be financed by Lionsville or perhaps in a joint venture with the State Ministry of Housing such as had been developed opposite the then Essendon Technical School in Hoddle Street. In the early 'nineties it was decided that there were other projects taking up time and resources so the property was let for private tenancy.

The search for sites for future development of Lionsville, but close to the existing site, took up much of the Planning Committee's time and effort, so it was not until 1994 that consideration was given to Reynard's Street. Stan Morrison had made some personal contact with the State Ministry of Housing and because of the housing needs in Coburg, the Ministry showed interest in the development of a joint venture with Lionsville. By the end of that year Lionsville had agreed to provide a long term lease of the property to the Ministry. It was decided to build seven one-bedroom units that would be allocated to aged pensioners.

The Housing Directorate appointed Mr Graham Lyons as Architect. He was well known to the Lionsville Committee for work he had performed. The plans he drew up provided each unit with a bedroom, a sitting room, a kitchen and a bathroom and the seven units were built in three blocks, two of two units and one of three. These plans were accepted by both parties, however the project was delayed due to a misunderstanding of the availability of a near-by right of way. By the end of 1995 the construction had commenced with Lionsville agreeing to pay for three of the units. The estimated cost was between $55,000 and $60,000 per unit, but the final cost to Lionsville for three was $194,250. An agreement was reached with the Ministry that Lionsville would have the right to choose the first occupants of three of the units. All other residents would be nominated by the Ministry of Housing and the condition of entry was that they must be recipients of a Commonwealth Aged pension. The three residents chosen by Lionsville included one lady; Mrs. Marjory Johnson, already in an Independent Living Unit at
Lindsay Woods (centre) soon after his retirement as Secretary/Treasurer with President John Dallwitz and Lindsay’s successor Neil Baudinette.

Lion Stan Morrison officially opens the “Ruthville” extensions, April 1992 (top right).

The Lionsville Committee President, Lion Jack Grantham talks to the State Minister of Housing, Hon. Ann Henderson, at the Opening of Maddison Court, 1997 (above).
Lionsville, another lady, Mrs. Beryl Fisher, on the waiting list for one and a third lady, Mrs. Gwen Turner, who was not housed in the area she favoured. The new residents were admitted during 1996 and the gardens and grounds were developed.

3. Extensions to the "Ruthville" Social and Recreation Centre
The "Ruthville" Centre was built in 1970 as part of the Stage 5 development and was named after the first wife of Eddie Clayton, the benefactor whose financial support made possible further development of Lionsville in 1970 and later. At the time of its construction there were 69 units, including the double unit, for a married couple, built on the first floor of the hall thus providing total accommodation for 74 aged persons. By 1989 however, the complex provided units for 127 people and there was a belief that the Recreation and Social Centre required extension and improvement.

In May 1989 soon after he took over as Secretary, Neil Baudinette called a meeting of residents of the Units to discuss this belief. The large attendance was an indication of the interest and the crowded nature of the meeting clearly demonstrated the need for additional space. It seemed to be a matter of discovering the kinds of changes the residents favoured, but as the meeting proceeded a vocal minority expressed opposition to change because they feared their Service Charges would be increased to help pay for the improvements. It was explained that this was highly unlikely but such re-assurance left a vocal few in doubt. The meeting ended, however, with a general approval for changes. Some interesting ideas were put forward, especially in relation to improved catering facilities.

When the Committee came to consider the matter it was agreed that the upstairs unit at “Ruthville” be re-designed and developed as the General Office for the growing organization. It was also agreed that Lionsville should look for a design that would allow for a replacement double unit as part of the extension.

After consulting Lyons Architects, the firm in charge of the Hostel extension, they suggested that the development should extend “Ruthville” towards Moreland Road (to the south), but when submitted to the Committee this was ruled out and the new plans provided for extensions to the north. Consideration was given to the supply of office furniture and equipment and $20,000 was set aside in the total budget. As it happened Lionsville was offered some very good second hand furniture as a gift from Strathmore High School, where the Secretary had been Principal some years before. A very large desk, a coffee table and a heavy and secure fire-proof cabinet for use as a safe, were donated.

In the Annual Report for 1989/90 the Extension Committee outlined the plan that had been accepted by the Committee. It consisted of:

- a large auditorium for 140/150 people including accommodation for tables and chairs to seat up to 110 people;
- office accommodation on the first floor with a General Office, Secretary’s Office, store-room, small kitchen and a toilet area. (This was the accepted alteration to the double unit.)
- a large kitchen with improved facilities;

1 This cabinet is still in use more than ten years later.
A front view of the Essendon Adult Day Centre (above).

At the Official Opening, by Judy Maddigan MP, of the "Lionsville Centre" marking its use by the RDNS for the administration of the Western Area of Palliative Care.
• the old office downstairs to become the library;
• improved toilet facilities;
• a double unit to be located upstairs at the northern end;
• an extra single unit (115) next to the double unit upstairs;
• a small stage in the hall; and
• a small lounge area for use by residents or for meetings.

There would be heating and cooling systems and a public address system for the hall area.

The City Council approved these plans and on 8 November 1990 the Committee put them out to tender. On 28 February 1991 the Committee accepted the lowest tenderer, Leonard Construction Co., for an amount of $579,800.

The facility, including the office space, was out of action for the remainder of the year. A few committee meetings were held in homes but mainly at the Essendon Adult Day Centre. The Secretary and his Assistant, Margaret Hunter, worked out of a small office in the new West Wing of the Hostel thanks to the support and consent of Fay Forbes, the Hostel Administrator.

The work proceeded but met some difficulty when it was discovered that the east wall of the existing structure needed strengthening. As work neared completion the changes to roads near the new structure were undertaken and the immediate area beautified. Special developments were carried out at the Moreland Road end with a new flag pole and a Memorial Garden on one side of the entrance and a Gazebo on the eastern side.

The offices were occupied towards the end of November. The interior hall furnishings, carpets and public address system were in place. The Committee was then in a position to agree to a special request from two residents of the Units. Trish Sperring and Bill Paice announced their engagement and requested permission to be married at Lionsville. The Committee agreed to their request with pleasure and was happy to have the wedding reception as the first official function in the new "Ruthville" Hall. This occasion, unique to Lionsville, took place on Friday 29 November 1991 to the joy and good wishes of the families and the Lionsville community.

The President of the Committee of Management Mr Jack Gilbertson, suggested that the new facility should be opened as part of the 25th Anniversary Celebrations of Lionsville, 1966-1991. It was considered impractical to hold the function to commemorate the Official Opening in October 1966 because the work had not been completed nor were the site works ready. The date set was Sunday 26 April 1992.

It was suggested that as the Queen was to be in Australia during the early months of 1992 that the President contact Palace Authorities and invite her to visit. He did so but received a letter indicating that Victoria was not on the Queen's itinerary on this occasion and therefore the Queen was unable to consider such a visit.

Jack Gilbertson asked Stan Morrison OAM, a pioneer and a driving force behind Lionsville's development, to officially open the newly developed Centre. The widows of the first President and Secretary of Lionsville - Jean Holmes and Phil McKerrell -
A view from Stage 7 of the construction of the Hostel West Wing Extension, 1996.

Lionsville Lodge Manager, Fay Forbes, discusses hostel care with Lions International President, Lion Bill Biggs, January 1991 (right).
were official guests at the opening ceremony and Mrs Edith Wright, the only original resident of Stage 1 still living at Lionsville, was invited to join them on the official dais. Lindsay Woods was a special guest also.

The Ceremony took place as planned on that day. The official dais was located at the new entrance to "Ruthville" and the large number of guests and visitors were seated in the new gazebo, beside the memorial garden and on the lawns and paths on the south side of the enlarged social and recreation Centre.

In his report on the Opening Ceremony, Secretary Neil recorded that "the new complex was built without financial support from any Government grant and is a tribute to the skill, dedication and hard work of Lion Jim Richards and his Building Committee, the Architects Cecil and Graham Lyons, the Builder Ron Hill of Leonard Constructions and the Landscape Gardener Andrew Woods."

Reports over the following years showed that residents made very good use of the new facilities and the Residents’ Social committee was quick to take advantage of this new Centre with an extended program of entertainment and other activities.

4. The Search for Extra Land Especially the Gas and Fuel Land to the East of Lionsville.

Jack Gilberston had been a member of the Lions Club of Essendon for many years. His heavy business commitments kept him away from a close association with Lionsville until he was elected to the Committee of Management in September 1990. At this point in Lionsville’s development all the land available was now in use. Jack felt that the two local Councils, Essendon and Coburg, should be approached in an endeavour to find a suitable site or sites for expansion.

In September 1991 Jack was elected President of the Committee of Management. John Dallwitz had indicated that after five successive years as President (making nine years in all) he wished to retire and supported the appointment of Jack as his successor. Jack’s major aim was to secure sites for further development and followed up his earlier suggestions by working with the Planning Committee to seek discussions with both Councils. Some sites in Essendon were considered, including land in a Council reserve to the north of the "Brickmakers Arms" Hotel in Mount Alexander Road. No land in Coburg, apart from that already owned as a result of Eric Maddison’s gift, was available even though representatives of the City of Coburg indicated to the Planning Committee that the city was short of beds for both Hostel and Nursing Home Care. The Committee, however, was keen to have further facilities closer to the "home base" on the present site.

A member of the Lions Club of Essendon, Doug Pendergast had informed the Committee that the Gas and Fuel Corporation was planning to leave their site on the eastern side of Moonee Ponds Creek. As it was adjacent to Lionsville it was considered worthwhile investigating the possibility of purchasing part or all of the property. Negotiations began and meetings were held with senior officials of the Corporation. President Jack led several delegations that included John Dallwitz, Stan Morrison and the Secretary. During 1991 and 1992 clearing up work on the site continued and little progress was made. By 1993, however,
it seemed clear that the Corporation was prepared to sell the land, except for a small area facing Moreland Road. It was suggested by the State Ministry of Planning and Housing that Lionsville’s attempts to purchase the land would be advantaged if it prepared a Concept Plan for the site, or part of the site, if that was what Lionsville wished.

Lionsville’s Planning sub-committee discussed the details of advice it should provide to the Committee of Management. There were expressions of doubt about a number of issues, including the conditions that would be placed on its sale to Lionsville. There was a general opinion that Lionsville should seek details of these conditions, but in the end the whole matter came down to valuation and whether or not the land would be sold as a complete unit or in parts. Lionsville obtained two valuations. One was for just over $1,000,000 and the second was for $1,200,000. These were considered to be within the limits Lionsville felt it could afford. The Government required, as a matter of policy, a valuation from the Valuer-General. This came in at $1,820,000! The Planning Committee’s desire to purchase cooled considerably. The Government also insisted that the land should go to auction. When that happened it was purchased for $2,460,000. It might be said that about three years of the Planning sub-committee’s time had been spent with no real result for its efforts. Substantial support had been received from the City of Coburg, although not of a financial nature and also from Ian Davis, a member of the Lions Club of Essendon, who was then State member for Essendon.

Extra land did become available, to the surprise of most Committee members. It was a small section of land owned by the City Council located at the north-west corner of the hostel site. Two years later that block was purchased and plans were prepared for the erection of a further extension to Lionsville Lodge, as described later.

5. The Purchase of a Bus for Community Use and a Bus for Lionsville’s Use

The residents of Lionsville, in both the Units and the Hostel, made use of community bus services provided by the Essendon, later known as Moonee Valley City Council. They were able to obtain transport to the several Friendship Clubs in the district, to special occasions such as Concerts and other entertainments and on weekly shopping trips. They were collected and brought back in to the Lionsville grounds.

The Committee of Management became aware of the heavy demand for the use of this vehicle within the community. The city authorities had always been very supportive of Lionsville, in fact without the assistance provided by the City Council for more than thirty years, it is doubtful whether Lionsville would have developed as well as it did. For these reasons it was decided to provide funds to the City Council for the purchase of a second bus. In August 1993 an amount of $28,370 was provided to buy an 11 passenger bus similar to the one already in use.

As the hostel numbers increased at Lionsville it was decided to purchase a bus specifically for the use of Lionsville Lodge residents. This provided a service under the control of hostel staff. Having such a bus meant that Lionsville had taken some strain off the service provided for the community in general, but more importantly the Hostel’s Activities Staff could safely plan...
outings requiring a bus knowing that their own bus would be available when it was needed and for as long as they needed it.

6. The Development of Dementia Care.
The search for suitable sites for the further development of Lionsville was not meeting with success. The Gas and Fuel land was auctioned and would be privately developed. Several sites suggested as possible by the Essendon City Council were discarded for various reasons and the Committee, during 1994, turned its attention to other projects especially the development of the Reynards Street property in West Coburg.

The Lionsville Lodge Committee was discovering that there was a growing demand for "special care" places, especially for those aged persons suffering from dementia. Early in 1994 Stan Morrison indicated that a small parcel of land at the north-west corner of the hostel site was owned by the Essendon City Council. He believed this could provide sufficient space to increase the number of places Lionsville needed to assist with dementia care. He took this information to the Lionsville Lodge Committee which referred the possible site to the Lionsville Committee. As a result the Essendon City Council was asked if it was prepared to sell Lionsville this little-used strip of land for an extension to the West Wing. The Council expressed interest in the project and after several Councillors had inspected the site Lionsville was asked to submit a plan detailing the way it would be developed. The land was already fenced off and contained a locked shed that was used as storage by the Lions Club of Ascot Vale. No other use was made of it.

Mr Graham Lyons was asked to develop a plan that would suit the area. It was soon clear that this development would require the construction of a substantial retaining wall at the eastern end of the Day Centre property. It would continue north along the rear of the next three properties, a length of about 50 metres. The Architect presented a plan that provided for 12 rooms, all with en suite facilities, a dining room and a small lounge room. With space to spare, and remembering that Lionsville Lodge, upon completion of this project, would accommodate 78 residents, it was decided to provide a hydro-therapy pool and spa as well as extra storage facilities. There would be parking space for a further 8-10 cars, an important consideration for the extra staff and visitors. Although the new wing would adjoin the existing West wing, a lounge room was provided for residents who had rooms nearby. An indoor garden and aviary were also part of the plan. It was suggested that the new section should be joined to the Special Care area in the West Wing in order to reduce the need for overnight staff, but this did not eventuate.

When Council agreed that the plan was suitable the land was re-zoned and the projected sale to Lionsville went ahead. Lionsville made submissions for the permit to proceed. Two objections were lodged against the granting of a permit but only one, from residents of a neighbouring property, was followed up. This did not succeed.

Later in the same year an application was made to the Commonwealth Department of Health, Housing and Community Services for an "Approval in Principle". This was considered, as were many others, and later in that year the "Approval in Principle" was granted and an amount of $318,350 was made available for eleven places for sufferers of dementia.
The Lionsville bus is put to good use.

The rear of the Essendon Adult Day Centre.

The first three residents chosen by Lionsville for entry into Maddison Court, 1997.
The estimated cost was around $1.5 million. Construction of the retaining wall began just before the end of 1995 and development continued throughout 1996, by which time the three properties along Pascoe Vale Road to the north of the new development had been purchased by Lionsville. This meant that from the Day Care Centre north, an area with a frontage of 150 feet and a depth of about the same measurement had been added to the land already owned by Lionsville. The Planning Committee had no preferred development in mind but some members looked forward to using it for a Nursing Home. The Lionsville Committee was busy working towards gaining Accreditation\(^1\) for the Hostel and finalizing other projects and any consideration of a Nursing Home was deferred.

**Other opportunities**

A further opportunity occurred with the purchase of a fourth house (No 270) in Pascoe Vale Road. In 1996 this provided an extra frontage of 50 feet to the present holding. The house was purchased for $300,000 and was of a superior standard to the three already owned. Discussions with members of the Health and Welfare Committee of the Lions Club of Essendon revealed that the Royal District Nursing Service, Western Palliative Care Service - a group which had recently received financial help from the Lions Club - was in need of local headquarters for its administrative, training and counselling services. The proposition was put to the Committee by John Dallwitz - who had been largely instrumental in Lionsville obtaining the various properties recently purchased - that Lionsville Inc. make available, without charge, this latest purchase for use by that organization. Some members of the Committee, including the Treasurer and the Auditor, did not favour this, however the Committee agreed to the Dallwitz suggestion and also agreed to pay for some minor improvements necessary. A licence to use the property on these terms was drawn up with the approval of the Committee and the proposal went ahead.


What made 1997 so special was that there were three such occasions in a few months - from March 5 to May 15. The Annual Report for 1996/97 provides the following descriptions:

- “On 5 March 1997 we celebrated the official opening of ‘Maddison Court’, described by Committee President, Jack Grantham as a “mini-Lionsville”, at 189 Reynard Street, West Coburg. Hon. Ann Henderson MP, State Minister for Housing led the Opening Ceremony. This was a joint project between Lionsville and the State Government to build seven one-bedroom units for pensioners. It was named after Mr and Mrs Eric Maddison who gave the land and some money.”

- “The extension to the West Wing of Lionsville Lodge containing 12 extra places for residents suffering from dementia, together with a heated water exercise pool and spa, was officially opened on 23 March 1997 by Lion Jack Grantham, President of Lionsville Inc.” It was very fitting that during the ceremony Lion Stan Morrison was presented with the “Leadership Medal” of

\(^1\) To gain "Accreditation" under the new system the Hostel had to demonstrate to external auditors that it met a series of standards relating to the care of residents and the management of the Hostel.
the President of the International Association of Lions Clubs by Lion Fred Agar, District Governor of Lions District 201 V1. This rare presentation was made for service to the community especially his work for Lionsville over more than 30 years.

- The third project was the opening, on 15 May 1997, of the “Lionsville Centre” and “home” of the Royal District Nursing Service, Western Palliative Care Service. It was officially opened by Judy Maddigan MP, Member for Essendon, in the presence of guests representing the groups involved the project.

In the five and a half years to the end of 2002 there has not been any project undertaken which was deemed important enough to warrant an official opening. At Lionsville Lodge the main lounge in the West Wing was extended to cater for the decreased agility of many of the residents and there were minor changes to the “Dispensing” area and to a meeting room, which provided space for the office of a Receptionist. In 2001 the interior garden and aviary were altered to develop a much more pleasant Activities Room and at the same time part of the new lounge room area, provided in 1997, was taken over to increase the space available for the Special Care section built in 1988/89.

In 1998 the Administrative offices in Ruthville were extended to cater for the appointment in 1997 of a professional Secretary to the Lionsville Committee. This extension included two new offices for Lionsville Inc. It was mounted on pillars at the southern end of the building.

The Hostel was equipped with a new fire-security service when a sprinkler system was installed during the year 2000. Not only was this a major safety initiative but it also marked the first occasion when Lions International through its International Fund (L.I.F) made a financial contribution to the project. The amount provided was $US 75,000, which converted into Australian currency, amounted to $127,486. The total cost of the new sprinkler system was $333,000.

Three official visits to Lionsville from International Presidents while in office have taken place between 1970 and 2000 and two others during the 1990’s, by Vice Presidents who later became Presidents. These have demonstrated world wide recognition and understanding of this Lions project. Lionsville has created interest and admiration throughout the world of Lionism. This was demonstrated by a request received by the author in 1998 from a journalist in the United States of America. She had received information about Lionsville and was keen to follow it up so she could write a piece for the North American edition of “The Lion”, a magazine distributed monthly to all members of Lions International in U.S.A. and Canada.

Details about Lionsville were provided and long telephone conservations held. In the North American Lions magazine for July/August 1999 a three-page article was published and included four colour photographs. The material contained some factual errors but presented the project to a large readership in a very complimentary manner.

The idea for the article may well have come from an Australian source. In 1995/96 two articles on Lionsville were published in the “Australian Lion”. Stan Morrison and the author had each been requested to provide material for such articles although neither knew that the other was doing so. The result was
sufficient information for two articles including some excellent coloured photographs. To the delight of the Essendon Lions the articles were judged the best submitted for the year and at the 201 Multiple District Convention in Adelaide in May 1996 the Club was presented with the annual award – the “Ted Horwood Memorial Trophy”. Favourable publicity had circulated throughout the world of Lionism.

A view of Units and Gardens. The south side of Stage 6.
Although living within two kilometers of Lionsville, Des Cronin was not an Essendonian. He was a member of the Lions Club of Coburg, where in the early 1960's that Club was seeking to find land on which to build some flats or units for aged persons in need. One of the motivating factors for the Coburg Lions was to provide a tangible memorial for a past President of their Club, Dr Stan Whiteside, who had died tragically. When the Club could not find land in the Coburg area they linked up with their Essendon colleagues and a partnership began. Des was one of his Club's representatives in this venture and remained connected with Lionsville's development from 1965 until his sudden death on 25 April 2002.

Des was an accountant by profession and lived in Pascoe Vale South. He was appointed to the joint Planning Committee for the project in 1965 and was a member of the original Committee a year later. He remained on it until the organization decided to set up a Board of ten elected members in 1999. He did not seek election to the Board. He was always especially interested in the financial management of the project and his professional opinions were respected by his colleagues and the more recently appointed full time professionals.

In 1976 he was made Auditor of Lionsville’s finances and remained in that position until he died. He was forward thinking and was especially conscious of the need for careful planning. On one occasion in the mid-1970’s he drew attention to the fact that the Gas and Fuel Corporation had indicated that they would remove the gasometer on the block just across the Creek from the Lionsville Units. Although no precise time was set for this he encouraged the Committee to “keep an eye” on such plans. No other member re-acted to his suggestion. About 15 years later, although it is doubtful if anyone remembered his advice, the Committee became very interested when the land seemed to be available.

As auditor Des encouraged improvements in financial recording and reporting, especially following the Incorporation of Lionsville in 1985. In Committee meetings he was sometimes regarded as the “devil’s advocate” and the challenges he put forward caused members to think again about any proposals. He was not always pleased, as Auditor, with the way Lindsay Woods presented his accounts, particularly after Incorporation, and some interesting exchanges took place, especially over “double-entry book keeping”. He did, however, have a great respect for the work Lindsay performed for Lionsville over a long period.

Des was an important link with the Coburg Lions Club. After George Meagher retired in 1990 and George Carlyle in 1992, he was the only contact Essendon’s early partner club in the project had with Lionsville.
The accompanying photograph was taken when Des Cronin was being honoured by Lionsville Inc. following his retirement from the Committee of Management and marking a contribution of over 35 years. On this occasion Des’s children and grandchildren were present when a plaque and his photograph were unveiled in “Ruthville”. His wife had predeceased him.

It is appropriate that Des should be using a rostrum because he had, in his earlier years, been very interested in public speaking and was a member of Rostrum Australia, an organization which promoted excellence in this art. Another of Des’s strengths was his spirit of inquiry which probably explained why he was a successful auditor. He was able to satisfy this spirit late in life when he accompanied groups of business men on interesting overseas trips, one of which - the trip on the Trans-Siberian Railway from Vladivostok to Vienna - made a wonderful talking point when conversing with friends.

His sudden death on 25 April 2002 was a sad blow to the Lionsville community.
A view from Stage 5 looking west towards Stages 1 to 4 (above).

The entrance to the "Lionsville Centre".
Chapter Seven

VOLUNTEERS MAKE WAY FOR PROFESSIONALS

Changes were continuing as Lionsville prepared to enter the new Millenium. These were related to two major factors:

• the wonderful success of the project, which by 1998 provided accommodation for 200 aged persons in 115 independent living units and a hostel with 78 places. This success resulted in the need for professional expertise in management and organization;

• the increasing complexities of operating a large aged care facility, especially following the changes made in 1997 to the Australian government’s policy of funding aged care.

Changes were beginning as early as the latter part of 1989. This chapter describes how and why the Lions Club members were finding the tasks very time consuming and for some outside the scope of their real interests and backgrounds. Prior to 1983, when the Hostel was opened, the only payments made to those operating Lionsville were “out of pocket” expenses to the Secretary/Treasurer and some small payments to a few residents who undertook responsibility for looking after the grounds and gardens.

The committee realized that the development of a Hostel would change that. The Manager and staff of what became known as Lionsville Lodge were employed on salaries or wages. Attempts were made to keep the salaries wages bill as low as possible by providing voluntary assistance in some clerical and catering duties. By the mid-1990’s however, volunteers were not available for these duties, except for assistance with the “odd jobs” by Robin Mitchell and some clerical duties and receipt of residents’ fees by Jean Wilson and Alan McLean. By 1997, when the changes to Commonwealth funding had taken effect all the administrative and financial tasks at the Hostel were in the hands of the paid professionals.

The change from volunteers commenced earlier in the General Office of Lionsville. The transfer of the role of Treasurer to Ken Gilbertson (Treasurer of the Hostel) late in 1989, meant the old position of Lionsville Secretary/Treasurer no longer existed. This also meant that the Treasurer of Lionsville Inc. was now responsible for all financial recording and reporting throughout the project. Another reason for this change was that the new Secretary, unlike his predecessor, became involved with the Hostel Committee.

A second change occurred in March 1990 when the Lionsville Committee appointed an assistant to the Secretary. Margaret Hunter became the first person employed in this capacity with her tasks being mainly typing and clerical. Previously Lionsville’s Committee Minutes and reports had been typed by Mrs A Shurey, who also provided typing and duplicating services to the Lions Club of Essendon. Margaret Hunter remained in the General Office for over 12 years and still retains an interest by performing voluntary work at the Hostel.

Early in 1992 Natalie Randello joined the office staff as assistant to the Secretary. She undertook responsibility for the Minutes of Committee meetings and prepared and distributed these and also assisted with general typing. Natalie’s appointment allowed
Margaret Hunter to spend some time assisting the residents’ social committee. Both ladies were part-time employees.

In 1994 it was decided to provide part-time assistance to the Treasurer Ken Gilbertson. When he took over in 1989 Lionsville’s total annual income was about $730,000. By 1994 it had risen to $1,320,000 and the Committee agreed to assist him. In June 1994 the Treasurer and Secretary interviewed 6 candidates from 29 applicants and appointed Garry Carswell as part-time assistant to the Treasurer. This proved to be an excellent choice as Garry gained subsequent advancement within Lionsville. In October 1995 he took over the management of the Units working on a full-time basis and in August 1998, upon the resignation of Ken Gilbertson, was appointed Treasurer of Lionsville Inc.

Change continued. In September 1997 the Secretary retired from his position but remained a member of the Committee. The new position was advertised on the basis of three days a week. The Committee decided to limit the advertising to local papers. Mr Maurice Corkill, formerly the Business Manager at a local private school, was appointed and he took up his position in September. He was only the fourth Secretary since the building of the first units in 1966!

During the second half of the decade of the 1990s there was a feeling amongst members of the Committee that the form of governance of the organisation was not the most suitable one for Lionsville. It consisted of a Committee of Management of 20 members, one that had been developed some 30 years earlier. When the operation required much “hands-on” support, this was a very suitable arrangement. From the period around 1995 the voluntary support available decreased and the need for professional expertise increased. The demands upon committee members changed, being more of a specialized nature, especially in relation to planning for the future and understanding the financial reports, which had become more professional in their presentation. Consideration was given to alternative forms of governance, especially in view of changes to the Associations Incorporation Act that now gave the Registrar the power to require some larger organizations incorporated under the Act, to seek registration under the Companies Act.

Understandably there was opposition to change. After all, the existing method of governance had enabled Lionsville to grow and prosper, so why change it! The Secretary’s Report in the 12th Annual Report of Lionsville Inc. for 1996/1997 included some important reasons for change. As the Report states: “the approaching year - with its major government changes in Aged Care from 1 October 1997 - will be a difficult one for the Committee, Managers and for staff. It will be difficult for Management to cope with the changes especially as the details of some are not yet clear. The increased size of Lionsville, the nature of changes taking place in Aged Care and the increasing age of key members of the committee, give rise to the feeling that, as an organization, Lionsville is at the cross-roads. There is a need to examine whether our present system of governance is the most appropriate for circumstances that are changing greatly.”

Much discussion took place and in December the committee agreed to permit the establishment of an Executive committee of
nine voting members, including the Committee President and the Treasurer as ex officio members, and seven members elected by and from the voting members of the committee of Management. The Secretary, Maurice Corkill was a non-voting member. Those elected were Stan Morrison, John Dallwitz, John Hebdon, Ron McFarlane, Peter Gilbertson, Fred Peverill and Neil Baudinette. The Minute Secretary was Susan Tunchon who had replaced Natalie Randello as office assistant when she retired in 1996.

The role of this Executive Committee was:

(i) to oversee the day to day running of Lionsville Inc. ensuring that Committee of Management policies were carried out; and

(ii) to include responsibility for

(a) preparation of annual budgets;

(b) preparation of future planning suggestions for submission to the Committee for approval and policy making; and

(c) recommending to the Committee persons for senior appointments at Lionsville.

(iii) Three sub-committees were to work out of the Executive Committee viz

(a) Hostel

(b) Units

(c) Finance

(iv) Any other sub-committees that may be required would be determined by the Committee.

Former Lionsville Secretary, Neil Baudinette, was elected Chairman of the Executive Committee.

The Annual Report for 1997/98 indicates that for the first five months of its life - February to June 1998 - the Executive Committee dealt with several important issues. These included the implications for Lionsville of the changes to the Associations Incorporation Act and future planning processes. By far the most delicate and far-reaching, however, was an issue of back pay for members of staff at the Hostel which arose following a change in the award for hostel workers. The issue surfaced only when the Executive Committee was dealing with a request from Night Staff for an increase in their pay. A careful investigation was made and it was discovered that Lionsville had underpaid some staff over a period of several years. A year later it became clear, after an audit of the Hostel payroll, that a very substantial amount was owed to members of the Hostel staff.

Just prior to the end of the financial year Stan Morrison announced his retirement from the Committee. This history records Stan’s close involvement with the Lionsville project from the earliest stage, and his 36 years of service is a highlight in Lionsville’s development. His retirement in part resulted from his need to spend time with Irene, his wife, who had become ill and in need of his care.

Another change occurred when Ken Gilbertson decided that his new business interests precluded him from remaining as Lionsville’s Treasurer. He had been Treasurer of the Hostel Committee for more than eleven years and Treasurer of the Committee of Management since October 1989. He had totally
re-shaped the accounting procedures during that time and had ensured that Lionsville was now in a strong financial position and presented reports in line with current accountancy standards. He remained a member of the committee and later as a member of the new Board of Management. His place as Treasurer was taken by Garry Carswell, formerly his assistant and since late 1995 also Manager of the Units. Lionsville was fortunate to be able to obtain the continuity and knowledge of Lionsville that Garry provided. The change took place in August 1998.

As indicated already, the Executive Committee operated during 1998. Its effectiveness was dulled by differing interpretations of its role and purpose, however it became clear that it was a more effective forum for discussion of important issues as there were only half the number of members compared to the Committee. Initially it had been decided that a review of its operation should take place after one year. This review occurred early in 1999. The Executive Committee was divided about the effectiveness of its work during 1998. The view that eventually prevailed was that Lionsville Inc. had now reached a stage where it had become a large and complex business, operating in a challenging and changing environment and required a more professional approach to management. It was decided to recommend to the Committee of Management that a new Board of Management should be set up consisting of 11 members, including one representative from the Moonee Valley City Council and the remaining ten elected from the members of Lionsville Inc. The Committee of Management agreed to this recommendation.

A Special General meeting of Lionsville Inc. members and Life Governors was held on 15 April 1999 at which the changes to Rules enabling this new structure to be set up were passed. The members of this new Board were elected. They were John Argentino, Neil Baudinette, Stephen Brown, Don Daniell, Ken Gilbertson, Peter Gilbertson, Jack Grantham, Ron McFarlane, and Fred Peverill. Cr Hedley Moffat was the representative of the Moonee Valley City Council. One elected position was not filled.

The Board held its first meeting on Wednesday 28 April 1999 at which Peter Gilbertson was elected Chairman and Jack Grantham, Vice Chairman. A Committee system was set up and roles and duties of these Committees were agreed to. Within a short period the Board had developed policies for key areas of its operation. Maurice Corkill was the Secretary and Garry Carswell the Treasurer. Apart from Hedley Moffat all members of the Board were members of the Lions Club of Essendon.

Changes continued. Mrs Fay Forbes decided to retire after completing more than 13 years of wonderful service as Manager of Lionsville Lodge. The family atmosphere she and her staff created was greatly appreciated by the residents and their families. Styles of care were changing and the requirements of the Aged Care reform Act of 1997 required a different approach and a new style of management. A temporary Manager, John Nash, was appointed pending the search for a person to accept the challenges and the new styles of operating a hostel for 78 elderly people. Mrs Tina Melrose was appointed to commence duty in early August 1999. She possessed managerial experience and was entrusted with the difficult task of preparing the Hostel to meet the new Accreditation requirements of the Australian Government.
The new Board gave consideration to the structure it considered most suitable for the administration of Lionsville during this period of great change. Following consultations and discussions it was decided to create the new position of Operations Manager. The person appointed would be responsible directly to the Board and would have duties that included the former positions of Treasurer and Units Manager as well as taking over some of the duties of the Secretary. The Hostel Manager would also report directly to the Board. It was decided that as from 30 April 2000 the positions of Board Secretary and Board Treasurer, Manager of the Units and the typing and clerical staff, would cease to exist. In their places would be the Operations Manager as described above, a Personal Assistant to the Operations Manager and a part-time staff member to liaise with residents in relation to their Activities program.

From 1 May 2000 the Board appointed Garry Carswell as Operations Manager and Kay Wilson as the new Personal Assistant, a position that required accounting knowledge and experience as well as typing skills. Margaret Hunter was invited to retain her position as liaison with the Units residents, which she accepted. Maurice Corkill and Susan Tunchon completed their service on 30 April 2000.

The Board appointed the author, the former Secretary, as the new Board Secretary, a role significantly reduced from the earlier position.

During the early years of the new millennium the Board found it increasingly difficult to find members of the Lions Club of Essendon who possessed the background, qualifications and willingness to undertake the work required of a Board member.

The Board looked for members from outside the Club and chose two City Council members who had already served on the Board representing the City - Councillor Hedley Moffat and Councillor Trevor Sinclair. They continue as members in 2003. Following advice from John Anastasiou of “Mercury Search and Selection”, an invitation was given to join the Board to Mary Hevern, herself an aged care facility Manager and Graham Bailey who is involved in the health care industry. These four non-Lions Club members provide a breadth of experience to add to the commitment and enthusiasm of the five Lions Club members.

The period of five years leading up to the commencement of the new millenium was one of considerable change. The development of the Adult Day Centre, the Ministry of Housing Development at Reynard Street, Coburg and the Palliative Care project known as the “Lionsville Centre,” had taken planning and significant financial involvement. The extension of the West Wing of the Hostel was an exciting venture especially because of the difficulties of the sloping site. The changes to the management and administration, driven as they were by the changing nature of aged care and of the part played by the Australian Government after 1996, had resulted in the Lionsville project now being very dependent on professionals. The shift from the volunteers and the well-meaning amateurs to the experienced professional operators was almost complete.

Those Lions who had been so influential in the establishment and growth of Lionsville were remembered, and through this history will continue to be remembered. Five of those who have given so much to develop and extend Lionsville, have been recognized in the past decade by Management.
Lindsay Woods who retired from the Committee in 1995 was the first to be honoured with a photograph and plaque in Ruthville Hall. This was to be unveiled in December 1996. Unhappily Lindsay died suddenly several days before the unveiling and the ceremony did not take place until 27 February 1997.

The second Lion recognized was Stewart Edgar, a President during the early years and a wonderful contributor to Lionsville’s growth for almost 35 years. The unveiling of a photograph and a plaque took place in Ruthville on 19 December 1997 in his presence and that of his daughter and son-in-law.

At the conclusion of the Special General Meeting on 19 April 2000, the Board of Management paid tribute to the retirement from an active role in Lionsville’s management of both Lions Stan Morrison OAM and John Dallwitz. Each had been connected with the development of Lionsville since 1962. They unveiled photographs and plaques recognizing their invaluable service. A few months later it was announced that the Board had decided to name the wings of the hostel, Lionsville Lodge, after these pioneers – the east wing became the “Morrison Wing” and the west wing the “Dallwitz Wing”.

During 1999 the Board decided to recognize the long service of Lion Des Cronin, at that stage the Auditor of Lionsville. Having had a connection with Lionsville from the earliest days in 1965, as a representative of the Lions Club of Coburg, as a Committee of Management member for 34 years and Auditor for 26 years, the Board had him unveil his photograph and plaque during June 2000. He remained Lionsville’s Auditor until his sudden death on 25 April 2002.

The year 1999 ended with a visit – the third in almost 30 years – from a Lions International President this time, Lion James Erwin. He used his visit to sign an important Declaration of Agreement between Lions and the Apex Clubs of Australia. This recognized service in the Apex Clubs as service given to the community if and when retired Apex members joined a Lions Club. Due to his heavy program, the International President’s visit was a brief one. The Board Chairman, Peter Gilbertson and President of the Lions Club of Essendon, Ron McFarlane escorted him on a tour around the complex. During his visit to the Hostel the International President received a gift for his wife from Mrs Edith Wright, the remaining resident of those first twelve who moved into the original Units in October 1966.

The new Board of Management faced a number of serious issues as the world prepared for the new millennium. First it was necessary to complete the resolution of the “Back Pay” issue at the Hostel. The Board accepted that it had a responsibility to meet every aspect of back pay discovered and also to ensure that utmost privacy was kept. The effect on the cash resources of the organization was marked.

The second task was to support the Hostel Manager and staff in their preparations for the Accreditation of the facility by the Australian Government’s Standards Agency. The new Manager, Tina Melrose, took over responsibility for this task at a very difficult time, as there had been some industrial action taken by a small group of the Hostel staff. The difficulties were overcome and in the year 2000 Lionsville was accredited for its Hostel, Lionsville Lodge, for a period of three years. The Agency
representatives made follow-up visits to ensure that some matters requiring attention were being dealt with.

The new procedures for receiving Commonwealth financial assistance set up as a result of the Australian Government’s 1997 reform of Aged Care, required significant changes in the operation of the Hostel. Lionsville created a new position called Care Co-ordinator, the role of which was to ensure that accurate records were kept about the care provided to each Hostel resident. The first person appointed to this position was Gayle Toporosa. The amount Lionsville could claim from the Commonwealth depended on the degree of care each resident’s health condition required. These procedures created significant changes to the way the personal care workers operated. It was now essential to have detailed, up to date notes on what care was provided to each resident. Residents were classified by the Commonwealth into eight categories ranging from 8 to 1. The less care required, the higher the category. A resident requiring very little care would be “an 8” and one requiring considerable care and attention would be classified “a 1”.

Some problems developed in the Hostel in relation to the implementation of this new system. Personal care workers varied in the skills they demonstrated in writing up their care procedures and for several months the claims made by the Hostel were below the standard of care being given. The Board brought in a Consultant to advise the Manager, the Care Co-ordinator and the staff on the approach needed by all to remedy these weaknesses. This assistance continued into early 2002 and by then the problems had been largely overcome. Claims made reflected the Care provided, but the whole process revealed a weakness in the administrative structure of the hostel. The Consultant provided advice to the Board and a new Management and Administrative Structure was developed. It provided for the appointment of two new officers – an Administrative Assistant to the Manager and a Senior Personal Care Worker, who would understudy the Care Co-ordinator. The Board accepted this advice. As a result Barbara Scott’s position of Supervisor was ended. Barbara left after thirteen years of loyal service to Lionsville and the residents of the Hostel. The new position of Senior Personal Care Worker was taken up by Susan O’Keefe who had worked at the Hostel in a variety of roles for more than ten years. The position of Administrative Assistant was not filled until early in 2003.

Although this move from volunteers to professionals was inevitable, there has been a feeling amongst residents, particularly from the Units, that this move has created a changed atmosphere within the Lionsville community. This change has been described by May Weatherhead, who has lived in a unit at Lionsville with her husband Jack, for over 18 years, as a falling away in the "comradeship that there used to be". She does not believe it is because she is older and less active. She and her husband attend activities organized at Lionsville as often as they are able and continue to mix well with other residents. Her view is shared by others who mention it in different ways. Monica Bowker, who has been a resident for over 15 years, also describes the change. She attributes it to the pressures under which the professionals work these days, especially those working in the Lionsville office. "When the volunteers worked in the administration they had the time to move amongst the residents and talk to them." She also
International President Lion Jim Erwin paid a brief visit to Lionsville in December 1999. He is shown (second from left) with Club President Ron McFarlane, Barry Carswell, Lionsville Operations Manager and Peter Gilbertson, Board Chairman.
expresses the belief, one shared by others, that the collection of Service Charges in the past was an occasion for mixing and "getting to know". Lindsay Woods and later the author, would set up tables in "Ruthville", and with other volunteers from the Committee of Management, collect the residents' Service Charges every second Friday morning. It certainly was an occasion for mixing and for others to meet new residents. It was a good time for advertising forthcoming events and selling tickets for them. It would extend for about an hour and a half and during that time most of the Units' residents would pass through the Hall. Such a system these days would take up valuable time, so more efficient methods of paying the Service Charges are used.

Another resident whose personal residency is not long but whose experience of Lionsville goes back well over twenty years, is Elaine Hardwick. Her mother entered a Lionsville Unit in 1980, so Elaine's experiences provide an interesting perspective when considering the changes in the Lionsville community. She makes the point that in her mother's era a large number of people entered at about the same time and special friendships were formed in a short time. There was a special comraderie amongst the group. Residents enter now a few at a time or even one now and again, so there is good reason to understand why May Weatherhead is led to say that comraderie is not what it used to be.

There is little doubt that residents who have spent ten years or more at Lionsville indicate differences between the present and the past. Some will be due to changes in the size and complexity of the organization, but there are other reasons. Society has changed and the "togetherness" atmosphere of the general community has changed with it. Lack of participation in the activities developed within Lionsville has certainly changed. Numerous longer-term residents point this out, usually saddened by the seeming indifference of a growing proportion of residents. Elaine Hardwick, however, indicates that in her experience new residents are entering the Units having strong contacts with groups in the community that they wish to retain.

The Lionsville society has certainly changed and part of the change is due to the changed nature of the organization. Changes, however, also reflect the general changes that are taking place within a society where change, even rapid change, is a feature we must all live with. Those residents interviewed stressed that, in describing the changes, they were making no criticism of the professionals for whom they had much respect.
The name Gilbertson is very well known in Essendon. The family ran a large meat works, had a chain of butchers shops and at one stage owned “Dons Smallgoods”. Three members of this family – John (better known as Jack) and two of his sons Ken and Peter – have had close and important associations with Lionsville’s development extending from the 1960s to the present.

Jack was a member of the Lions Club of Essendon when the project was commenced. He was a generous donor and was made a Life Governor in 1966. He was a member of the Committee in 1966/67 but was not able to sustain this level of interest due to his business commitments and especially following the death of his older brother Bob in 1972. In 1982 he was invited to become a Trustee of Lionsville and continued in this position until its Incorporation in 1985.

When his business interests diminished he accepted a position on the Committee as a Vice President in February 1991 to fill a vacancy due to the death of Lion Ern Coldrey. In September of that year he was elected to the position of President. When reporting on his first year in office in the Annual Report for 1991/92, he made these comments:

“Being my first year, I was interested to find out what makes Lionsville function so successfully. This was very evident early in my term of office and is expressed in the loyal and devoted service of many people, seeking to make life a little happier, a little brighter for those who have reached the even tide of life.”

Jack’s major aim as President was to obtain extra land for Lionsville’s extension and as history records, the main thrust was to obtain the Gas and Fuel Company’s land to the east side of the Moonee Ponds Creek. Unfortunately this attempt was unsuccessful which was a great disappointment to him. He always recognized the value of the work done at Lionsville by members of the Lions Club of Essendon and expressed the view that this was vital for the continuing future of the project. Jack resigned from his position towards the end of his third year in office.

Ken, the eldest son in Jack’s family, was associated with the Essendon Lion’s Club in the 1970’s as a member of the Leos Club and thus had first hand knowledge of the Lionsville project. He became a professional accountant and worked in that role in the family business. He became a member of the Lions Club in 1983, and in 1986 was elected to the Lionsville Committee at a time when the financial and accounting expertise of Cliff Williamson had been lost when he moved to Queensland. He was appointed Treasurer of the Lionsville Lodge Committee and as part of his contribution was able to access the family business’s computer system to assist in the financial control of the Hostel.

Ken became assistant Treasurer of the Committee and provided very useful advice and practical assistance to Lindsay Woods, especially when Lindsay was ill in the period prior to his retirement. In September 1989 he agreed to accept the position of Treasurer when the
role of Secretary/Treasurer was changed. Ken remained in that position for nearly ten years during which time he re-shaped the accounting methods and presented financial reports that met the demands of both the statutory authorities and the expectations of the auditors.

He opened a new business in 1998 and the demands of the venture made it very difficult for him to continue his work at Lionsville. He resigned from the position in April 1999 and was replaced by Garry Carswell who had been his professional assistant. For his services to Lionsville he was made a Life Governor.

Younger brother, Peter, like Ken, was a member of the Leos Club before he joined Lions in 1989. Peter graduated in Mechanical Engineering and went into the family business, working there for 15 years, 10 years in the manufacturing area before spending 5 years as the Manager of “Don’s Smallgoods”. When the business was sold he became a partner in a firm of consultants. His business background has been of great benefit to Lionsville since he joined the Committee in 1995. He was one of the members who recognized the need for a change in the way the project was managed and supported the moves to reduce the size of Committee. When the new, and smaller Board of Management was formed in April 1999, Peter was elected Chairman, a position he has held with distinction since. He was made a Life Governor in 2001.

The new century has brought new challenges to Lionsville. The aged-care industry is now so regulated and so competitive that the honorary, well-meaning, but largely amateur officials of the past, have given way to the present professionally managed and carefully governed bodies. At Lionsville the Board is examining ways in which the former facilities can be changed or modified to meet the needs of the future. Peter has demonstrated that he has the capacity to lead this organization through a challenging period. His ability to grasp the essential aspects of the business, his open and friendly approach to colleagues, Managers and staff alike and his dedication to the maintenance of the special ethos of this Lions project, make him ideally suited to the task of leading Lionsville in the difficult years ahead.

The Gilbertsons have created a wonderful record - three Lionsville Life Governors from the one family - a performance unlikely to be matched in the future.

The Photograph shows (from left) Ken, Jack and Peter.
Residents passing the time away in the sunshine, 1991 (left).

Hostel residents enjoying an outing arranged by the Lions Club members (below).
In 1962 the dream was to provide safe, secure, comfortable and reasonably priced accommodation for elderly people in the community. It was envisaged at the outset that the project would take a few years to complete and would enable about forty elderly people to be housed in “a small cluster or block of suitable bed/sitting-room units”. The history reveals that the initial proposal was so successful and the need so great that the forty places deemed desirable increased considerably.

The project, expected to take four or five years to complete, continued for seven times that length and still invites further progress. The question is has Lionsville been successful? Has it achieved what it set out to do?

The project can only claim success if the lives lived by the residents proved to be happier and more secure than they would otherwise have been. How could that success or failure be determined? One measure would be the continuing demand for places at Lionsville as time went on. Had the housing and care been poor or even mediocre, there would not have been a continuous flow of applications for residence. In 2002, even with the range of choices available to the elderly these days, Lionsville is still in demand. Furthermore, the present members of the Board of Management, would not be expected to continue to give hours of their time in a voluntary capacity, unless the project was achieving what its founders set out to do. Nor would Lionsville be regarded so highly by the International Association of Lions Clubs, as it has been over several decades, unless it was meeting the high standards expected of it by the Lions movement. The support received from the local municipal authority has always been strong and continues to be so, an indication of the high standing in which Lionsville is held. Since 1997 the City of Moonee Valley has nominated the Mayor as its formal representative on the Lionsville Board each year. In addition two former Mayors, Hedley Moffatt and Trevor Sinclair, are amongst the members elected to the present Board of Management.

There is a good deal of evidence to indicate that Lionsville has been, and continues to be a success. The challenge for the present Board is to maintain the quality of accommodation and care to the degree where Lionsville will be able to compete with the increasing choices elderly people enjoy now and in the future.

Some details of the number of residents who have made Lionsville their home are of interest. These describe the size of a project that has continued to build on its early success.
### Lionsville, Essendon

Number of Elderly People Accommodated on the Moreland/Pascoe Vale Road Site 1966-2002.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year (at December 31)</th>
<th>Residents in Units</th>
<th>Residents in Hostel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>12 (12 units)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>15 (16 units)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>24 (22 units)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>40 (38 units)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>74 (69 units)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>103 (94 units)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>127 (114 units)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td></td>
<td>35 + 1 respite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td></td>
<td>64 + 2 respite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>128 (115 units)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td></td>
<td>76 + 2 respite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>120 (115 Units)</td>
<td>75 + 2 respite</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*8 of the 13 double units were occupied by single residents.

The figures are available to determine the total number of residents who are or have been residents of these facilities.

### A Units

Total residents at 31/12/2002 120

Total residents who have moved out for whatever reason between 1966 and 2002 320

Total 1966-2002 440

### B Hostel

Total residents at 31/12/02 75*

Total residents who have left the Hostel for whatever reason 293*

Total 1983-2002 368*

* Does not include those residents who are or have been “in respite care” at Hostel

Total of all residents (excluding those in respite care) from October 1966 to December 2002 788

No details are provided of the average length of stay of each resident. There have been extremes in the Units with the shortest tenure a few weeks, to the longest, over 30 years. Mrs Edith Wright was one of the “original 12” who took up residence in October 1966 and remained in her Unit until frailty overtook her in July 1998 and she moved to the Hostel. 32 years in Unit 10 is the longest stay at present.

At Lionsville Lodge the average stay has been shorter, owing to frailty, but one present resident Mr McIntosh has lived there since 1984 and several others have spent more than 15 years.

It ought not to be imagined that the residents sat back and waited for things to happen. Most went about their lives in a normal way – visiting and being visited by families and friends, shopping and becoming involved in community activities. There was, however, an extra dimension to their lives. They lived in a growing community where activities were arranged, sometimes by themselves and sometimes by others.
The provision of the “Ruthville” hall in 1970 enabled residents to hold activities such as bingo, cards, concerts and other entertainments. Regular Church services were organized. From 1992 onwards the range of these increased greatly with the extensions to “Ruthville”. Activities such as exercise groups, Midwinter Christmas parties, films, video evenings, indoor bowls and numerous other entertainments have been features of community life at Lionsville.

At Lionsville Lodge there are many other activities provided as the more limited physical abilities of residents restrict their opportunities to go elsewhere for entertainment. The purchase of an eleven-seater bus has enabled wider participation by Hostel residents in outside activities and the provision in 1996 of a hydro-therapy pool has enabled residents of both the Units and the Hostel to swim or exercise in a heated pool, under supervision if necessary.

When the number of residents was less than the present 195, such as before the Hostel was opened, or certainly before it was extended, many residents were taken on annual picnics by the members of the Lions Club of Essendon. Usually the outing was to a property owned by a Club member. Amongst these were the Dallwitz property at Avenel, Jack McCraith’s at Rosebud and the Cloonan’s place at Fern Hill. Others were arranged to Torquay and Werribee Park. During the 1980’s “pokie” trips were popular. These would be to border towns along the Murray River as Victoria did not have clubs that had gaming licences at that time. Other day trips were a feature and in the early 1990’s the Lionsville Committee made funds available to pay for a bus or buses for one special trip each year. On several occasions these were taken for several days and nights in conjunction with the Lions Club and were very happy events that enabled Club members to have closer contact with the residents.

In the “early” days when Lionsville was growing from the 12 original units to 69, then five years later to 94 and eventually to 114, some residents gave great assistance to Lionsville by helping with management, gardening and general maintenance. The Annual Reports have regularly expressed appreciation for such assistance.

The first resident to do so was Alf Anstee. An original resident, occupying Unit 8, he became George Neuss’s “man on the spot”, providing assistance with gardening and more important, being manager of the twelve, then sixteen units and by 1970, the 38 units completed. He was able to liaise with George Neuss and provide information about the health and needs of the residents at a time when Secretary/Treasurer George was a busy bank manager. In the President’s Report for 1968/69 Ken Mckerrell expressed “special thanks to Alf Anstee for his wonderful work with the lawns and gardens, which are a credit to him and for his help in the management.” George Neuss used Alf to take counts of the numbers using the Rifle Range next door. The information was very helpful in determining how Lionsville’s representatives dealt with the Rifle Club’s attitude about moving to another site. Alf’s health deteriorated after 1974 and his ability to help was restricted. He left Lionsville in early 1975 and died in 1978. His contribution was recognized by the Committee when he was made a Life Governor in 1969. Alf was
Two Units’ residents care for a recently planted Jackaranda (above).

Musical entertainment for residents in the newly extended “Ruthville”.
the first of a significant number of residents, mostly, but not always men, who became members of what Secretary/Treasurer Lindsay Woods described as the “Yard Squad”.

Others who provided wonderful service were Evan Doughty (1970-1979), Frank Hayes (1971-79), Arthur McFarlane (1971-74), Harry Laing (1975-87), Bob Martignoles (1979-1985), George Curley (1979-82); Jack Caroon (1979-82), and Lorna Gorman (1981-89) George Brown, who commenced his assistance in 1985, is still assisting, when possible, 17 years later, and Lloyd Craven (1986-95). During the late 1980’s the lawns were so extensive that the Committee employed an outside contractor to provide a regular mowing service. In the mid 1990’s the professional service was extended to include general oversight of gardening maintenance. Since then the gardener has been Colin Peverill whose father Fred was a member of the Lionsville Committee for over 20 years and a Life Governor. Fred still retains his interest in the project by assisting his son. VIP franchise holders have provided the mowing service during recent years.

Evan Doughty came to Lionsville in 1970 and very soon made an impression with his assistance around the units. This was so significant that in the Annual Report for 1971/72 President Joe Clift declared that “for his wonderful work in all matters relating to Lionsville”, Evan was made a Life Governor. This important contribution continued at the highest level until 1976 when he spent time in hospital. Lindsay Woods when noting this fact, did so in this manner in his Annual Report for 1975/76: “Each year I seem to be repeating myself as I sing the praises of the “Yard Squad”, but I can never find words to express my admiration for these residents of Lionsville who keep the gardens and lawns in such a manner that they are always the subject of admiration of all who visit Lionsville. Evan, Frank and Harry (Laing) really work hard at “Keeping Lionsville Beautiful”, and apart from the gardens, Evan is always in commission in some way or another Mr Fixit in person. At the time of writing this report, Evan is in hospital recovering from an operation.” He kept up his contribution as the leader of the group well into 1979 but his ill health caused him to leave his Unit and on 7 March 1980 he died. As Lindsay put it “the loss of Evan, will be severely felt, but the other boys have re-acted grandly and we are coping very well.”

The Committee decided to recognize Evan’s work and a small plaque was unveiled on 15 June 1980 as part of the ceremonies associated with the Official Opening of Stage 7.

Harry Laing and his wife Myrtle came to Lionsville in 1975 to occupy Unit 69 above “Ruthville”. They were specially chosen because their role would be important with Harry helping in the grounds and Myrtle assisting with looking after the hall. They made an impact on the life of the Lionsville community for more than 10 years. Lindsay reported in 1985 that two of his key men were “feeling their age” and that one of them, Harry, “has recently had a slight stroke and is not the Harry of old.” Despite this set back Harry continued to assist for several more years. He had also organized “Pokey” trips during the 1980’s but by 1988 these were not so popular. Harry was made a Life Governor of Lionsville in 1983.

Bob Martignoles came to Lionsville with his wife in 1977 when the “Yard Squad” had lost its leader, Evan. Bob displayed a similar
Hostel Personal Care Worker, Susan O’Keefe, watches a Hostel resident enjoying exercises in the hydrotherapy pool.
enthusiasm to Evan and for seven years became a leader within this group and assisted Harry Laing to keep up the high standard of care for the gardens and grounds. Secretary Lindsay recognized his worth in these words expressed in the Annual Report in August 1986. “I am very sorry to record that during my recent holiday we lost Bob Martignoles. Bob was a jack of all trades who had time for everybody’s problems.”

The first member of the Lions Club of Essendon to become a resident, Lloyd Craven, was a wonderful help to Lindsay and later to Neil. He, too, was full of enthusiasm and undertook work in the gardens and as another “Jack of all Trades”. He was also a member of the Committee of Management and was very valuable in keeping the person in charge of the Units aware of needs as they occurred.

Early in 1990 Lion Stewart Edgar, a former Committee President, recommended for residence a man who had previously been employed by him in the local building industry. Following an interview and when a vacancy occurred, this man, Bill Paice, was accepted into residence. He brought skills that made him a very welcome addition to the Lionsville “team”. During 1989 it was becoming clear that maintenance work undertaken by volunteers was not always to the standard that ensured problems did not recur in a short time. Lionsville employed an experienced local man for buildings maintenance but at a cost that hit the budget hard. Once Bill Paice had settled in he was asked if he could undertake these tasks. When he agreed it was clear that maintenance costs would be reduced. Bill had been assisting in a voluntary program by providing training in carpentry to a group in Brighton. He continued with this for some months after he came into residence, however when his work at Lionsville became more demanding he gave up this activity to concentrate on helping at his new home.

It was of great assistance to the volunteers who were managing the units to have someone on the spot, especially during weekends, to attend to minor matters such as leaking pipes, damaged lights or broken windows, without having to get in touch with the Manager. The Secretary’s report for 1991-92 expresses Bill’s importance in these words: “(he) deserves special recognition for his willingness to be available at almost any time when residents or management require his services. He is a gem and we are proud to have him at Lionsville.” It was a great delight to many when Bill Paice married a fellow resident Tric Sperring in the grounds at Lionsville later in 1991. As indicated previously, the reception for this wedding was the first official function held in the newly extended “Rutherville” community hall.

This dedicated work by Bill Paice continued to receive recognition and commendation during the next few years with thanks being expressed in the annual reports of the Lionsville Secretary. These were linked to the notes of appreciation to tradesmen who were very helpful, such as Neil Moore, who had been the unofficial electrician at Lionsville for a period that extended well into the years of Lindsay Woods’ management period. The plumber who was regularly called was Mark Kingsley, the son of a member of the Lions Club of Essendon during the late 1970’s and the 1980’s. Several residents became very important as assistants to management such as Berdina Sernee who was the office cleaner
The residents have had plenty of opportunities to enjoy trips and picnics.
for a number of years after the development of the new offices late in 1991. Alby McFarlane, who with his wife Joan, were the first occupants of the new double unit built as part of the “Ruthville” extension, became a great helper, first by assisting Bill Paice with maintenance needs, also as the Hall Keeper and then from the late 1990’s with Joan, as cleaners of the enlarged office block. Another long-term resident who was always ready to assist was Margaret McInna who arranged suppers at the Committee of Management meetings and for the “service charge” collectors every second Friday. Brenda Scott ensured that units were cleaned for new residents, a task she continues to undertake in 2002.

During this period of the 1990’s numerous residents assisted with gardening around the Units. Some gardens near blocks of units showed how the residents cared for their surroundings. The work performed by Colin Peverill and his father Fred continued and takes care of areas that are general gardens rather than those for which residents take responsibility adjacent to their own units.

The general maintenance of the buildings throughout the complex is the responsibility of a firm - Programmed Maintenance - which specializes in this activity, however, there are the usual needs of minor maintenance which are attended to by Bill Ross, a professional builder and carpenter. The age of most of the Units places pressure on this part of the budget. One specific area relates to gas appliances - heaters, stoves and hot water services - and Lionsville has been well served by Tony Randello, a contractor in this field. Despite their heavy work loads the Operations Manager, Garry Carswell and his Personal Assistant, Kay Wilson, find time to help, especially with replacement of light globes, tap washers, smoke alarm batteries and the like. In recent years at the Hostel Paul Edwards has been the Maintenance person for his area. Paul’s parents had been Lionsville residents, first in a double unit and then at the Hostel.

The Hostel Manager has had the responsibility for dealing with hostel maintenance issues, except the gardens, and has used a variety of contractors including those for plumbing and electrical problems.

As one would expect the frailty of the residents of the Hostel has made it difficult for these residents to take active roles in the general operation of the hostel, however there are significant examples of some who have played a part. The best known of these is Alex McIntosh (or “Mac” to most staff and residents.) “Mac” was the mail man taking letters to post at the box in Moreland Road and picking up the mail for Lionsville Lodge from the Box near the main Moreland Road entrance. He carried out this duty for about fifteen years. During the last few years he was becoming slower and slower but would not give in, except during periods of poor health. The journey from the Hostel to the mail box was not a great distance, but it was uphill and it was sad to see how the task for “Mac” was becoming more difficult. At least the journey back to the Hostel was downhill and easier, despite the weight of the incoming mail. “Mac” had another duty - he folded the paper serviettes for use at hostel meal times.

Units residents have provided assistance at the Hostel throughout its life of nearly twenty years. They assisted by serving evening
meals and washing the dishes from 1983 onwards into the early 1990’s. Some still assist in different ways as they come to the Hostel to visit their friends who have left the Units to reside at Lionsville Lodge. Judy Smith, a Units resident, takes a Craft Group for Hostel residents each Friday and Irene Miller was of great assistance to the Activities Officer in providing diversion therapy until she moved to Horsham during 2003. Present residents of the Lodge are assisting. Joy Tranter operates the trolley that carries various small items such as confectionery, goods for personal use, special soaps and tooth pastes and those items elderly residents may have been able to obtain when they shopped for themselves. Margaret Hutton looked after the trolley and operated it once a week to provide a personal touch to meet residents special needs. Margaret’s mother, Mrs Olive Kellet, was one of the first residents occupying the new Hostel extension opened in December 1990. When Margaret’s mother left Lionsville Joy Tranter took over the trolley. She makes a great effort to purchase, store and provide items which residents ask for in specific terms.

Joy also assists with the arrangements for the Church Service held in the Hostel lounge room each Friday afternoon. Harold Rollason is also involved with this Service and in December 1996 arranged with the Reverend Ian Collings (then a member of the Lions Club of Essendon) to hold a communion service once a month.

Several residents including Molly and Joe walk the dogs that are brought each day by the Manager and staff. Helga Taubman, a former resident of the Units and now at the Hostel, has taken over Mac’s role as the postal officer. Families of residents and of staff have been involved in working bees and other activities. Eva Dench, a hostel resident, has a daughter who helps by regularly making cakes that Joy Tranter sells on the trolley. Lionsville has been greatly assisted by volunteers over many years continuing the spirit of service to others which was the spark that ignited the whole project in the early 1960’s.

The social life of the residents, particularly those in the Units, was given considerable impetus with the extension of “Ruthville” in 1991, as outlined previously. The residents developed their own Committee each year for a period of about eight or ten years. With Margaret Hunter the liaison officer for Management, the Committees, elected annually, prepared programs of events, both within Lionsville and through outside trips and tours, so that the residents had plenty to choose from. Some residents were not very interested, which was their choice, but the variety of events attracted many of the residents who took part in those which appealed to them.

Each year the regular Bingo enthusiasts enjoyed themselves, usually twice a week. Some played cards in the Hall. Exercise classes drew those who were so inclined and these were successful in the early 1990s. Indoor bowls has received an infusion of new life in recent years. Concerts have always been popular especially those provided by school children. On one occasion in 1993 a band from a Junior High School in USA was a great hit with residents. Other regular features have been “Christmas in July”, Mother’s Day, St. Patrick’s Day and celebrations for sporting events such as the Melbourne Cup and the AFL Grand Final. Video nights are a recent activity for a small group of enthusiasts.
The availability of the new facilities in 1991 provided a setting where the social opportunities for the residents was limited only by the imagination of the organizers. The patronage varied but when the activity captured the imagination many residents enjoyed very happy experiences.

During recent times the Personal Assistant to the Operations Manager, Kay Wilson, has shown considerable interest in the welfare of residents and has initiated and carried out a number of social activities. Despite her other responsibilities she has encouraged resident participation in a variety of activities. Many residents have, over the years provided leadership or support in these activities. They are too numerous to mention but their efforts contributed to the general welfare of the Lionsville Community.

Some Personal Reflections

As the Hostel operates, with most residents requiring only low to medium care, it is unusual for the residents to reach an age beyond early nineties. In the years prior to the late 1990’s any resident requiring high care (usually nursing care) left for a Nursing Home or even a hospital, but there was one who reached his 100th birthday whilst still in residence. That was George Carman who entered the Hostel from the Units in April 1983 and remained in residence for eight years. His very special birthday was celebrated with a party in 1990.

Since then two other residents have reached that wonderful mark. On 16 August 1998 Edith Lyons, who entered the Hostel on 16th March, 1992, celebrated the occasion with her family and friends at a function at “Ruthville”. Mrs Lyons was the mother of Mrs Merle Peverill, whose husband Fred is a Life Governor and who served on the Lionsville Committee and Board for 23 years, and the grandmother of Colin who has been the Gardener at Lionsville over recent years. On 2 August 1994 her photograph appeared in the “Herald-Sun” accompanying an article on the health of elderly people. With the permission of the Herald and Weekly Times it was used on the front cover of the Lionsville Annual Report for 1993/94 and also on the cover of an extended “Short History of Lionsville” prepared in 1999 with the title “The Real Spirit of Lionsville”. Mrs. Lyons died on 15 August 2000 just a few hours short of her 102nd birthday.

The cover of the Lionsville Annual Report for 2001/2002 featured another centenarian. This time it was Mrs Betty Corfe who was pictured with the Mayor of the City of Moonee Valley (Cr Eugene Hammer). Betty has been a well-known identity at the Lionsville Hostel for 13 years entering 18 June 1990. Over the years visitors to the Hostel have seen her sitting in the comfortable area near the main entrance reading her braille books or just relaxing amidst the sounds of the passing parade.

Early in 2002 there were four Hostel residents who were to turn 100 by July. Unfortunately Betty Corfe was the only one to achieve the goal at Lionsville. One lady became very ill and was hospitalized, a second was transferred to a Nursing Home and the third, Edith Wright, a foundation resident of the Units, had a heart attack and died in hospital the same day, just five weeks before that very special birthday.

Those Lions who have been connected with the project for lengthy periods have known individual residents whose re-
Hostel residents enjoy a visit to a farm.
actions to living at Lionsville have demonstrated how worthwhile the work and effort have been. One such resident is Mrs Elizabeth Flaxman who has lived in Unit 12 for over twenty years.

Elizabeth was born in Hobart in 1906. She was married there and in 1936 moved to England with her husband, surviving the rigours of wartime life. During her time in England she gave birth to twins, a healthy girl and a boy who suffered from epilepsy. Her husband "could not take the pressure" and left her, so she returned to Australia with her twins in 1947 and settled in Melbourne. She moved houses several times and her son, whose illness made life very difficult for her, died just before his 21st birthday. She lived in a 'granny flat' in Ormond before obtaining a Housing Commission Unit in Heidelberg West. Her daughter married and lived at Altona so Elizabeth tried to obtain a flat in the Williamstown Lions Club project. She was unsuccessful, but in 1972 was able to obtain Unit 12 at Lionsville where she has remained. Elizabeth, although well into her nineties, still shops for herself and "carries it home". She washes her clothes and does her own housework. Her daughter and her two grandsons ring her up and visit her and as she says "one of my grandsons still brings me Dairy Milk chocolate when he comes". She has a 90 year old 'younger brother' still in Hobart.

Her comments reflect that she possesses a realistic attitude to life even after so many difficulties and setbacks in her earlier years. "I have nothing to trouble me. I have brought my family up and am now freed from family worries. I continue to be happy in my own way. I have lots of people around me if I ever need them." She is very clear about her life at Lionsville. She speaks strongly when she says ... "this is the longest I have lived anywhere and the happiest I have ever been."

Other longer term residents have interesting stories such as Monica Bowker and Jack and May Weatherhead, each of whom has been mentioned earlier in relation to their attitudes to the changes in atmosphere that have taken place at Lionsville as the volunteers have given way to the professionals.

Monica Bowker entered Lionsville with her 80 years old husband in August 1987 having heard of Lionsville from Jack and Aimee McCraith for whom both Bowkers worked. Jack McCraith was a prominent member of the Lions Club of Essendon. The Bowkers lived in their own house in Yarraville but it needed "a lot done on it" so they decided to find something else. They, too, tried the facility run by the Williamstown Lions without success. They looked at a Unit at Lionsville and as Monica described their reactions "it was a double unit and very satisfactory. Lionsville looked good and we decided to come here to live." It was also convenient to their son who lived at East Keilor. Her husband died 16 months after they entered and Monica moved to an upstairs single unit in another block. As age caught up with her she moved into a single unit downstairs which she continues to occupy.

Monica described her life at Lionsville as happy, believing that her ability to mix well with people was a real advantage. She joined the Residents' Social Committee and came to know many of the residents and took part in activities, which met her social needs. The Bowker family enjoy the facilities of "Ruthville" each year just before Christmas for what has become a traditional "get-together". She
Then the farm comes to the Hostel.

About to enjoy a ride on a Harley Davidson. What a thrill it was! (below)
spoke enthusiastically about the greatly improved facilities that developed with the extensions to “Ruthville” in 1991.

Jack and May Weatherhead became residents of Lionsville in 1985 moving from further north along Pascoe Vale Road in Glenroy where they had lived for 36 years. Various reasons contributed to their decision to move but a major one was that they wanted to make the decision themselves and not leave it to the time when their children were forced to make it for them. They had visited Lionsville with their Church group whilst providing entertainment for the residents. As May explained “we were not strangers to Lionsville when we were accepted for entry”. Jack was an Essendon boy and actually attended Primary School with Lindsay Woods, who was Secretary of Lionsville when they were admitted. May and Jack emphasised how pleased they were they had made the decision to live at Lionsville and how happy they had been but rather wistfully, yet uncritically she concluded “Lionsville has altered. There is not the comradeship that they used to be.”

They, like Monica, had been volunteers at the Hostel, helping to serve the evening meal to those in care and on occasions washing and drying the dishes. They have joined in the activities that have been available and remain happy members of the community.

A newer resident is Jack Dodemaide who entered his Unit in 2002. He had come back to live in Melbourne from Queensland in 2001 and was staying with his son. He heard about Lionsville so took a drive past the complex and decided to stop and look around. He was attracted by the gardens and grounds and made inquiries. He was shown a bed/sitting room unit, found that it provided all he needed, so applied for entry. He was accepted and declares he has been very happy, attributing this to his willingness to join in with various activities and, as he put it, “making use of the facilities Lionsville offers.” He expresses some disappointment, however, at the lack of support from many residents for the social activities provided for them. He understands from some of his fellow residents that new residents are entering Lionsville at an older age than formerly and that they are not very interested in joining in. He is not greatly worried from his personal point of view as he is a very capable organist and a member of a group outside Lionsville, but is disappointed that these residents are missing out on what could be a happy and beneficial part of their lives.

One resident who has a different perspective is Elaine Hardwick. She is the only resident in Lionsville to date who is the child of a former resident. Her mother, Doreen Hardwick, became a resident in 1980 when the first units in Stage 7 were available. She took up residence in Unit 100 in September 1980 and her unit was one of the few in the block of 16 that had services available. Elaine remembers her mother boiling water for others so they could enjoy a hot drink. She also recalls how her mother enjoyed meeting her neighbours “straight away”. “There was an advantage being an original resident of that block because the group became very friendly having experiences in common”. Twenty-four entered within a few days of one another.

Elaine was happy to join in with activities that were part of the Lionsville community. She expressed pleasure at being able to use the heated pool that became available in 1997, as she was keen to retain maximum fitness. She had been an outstanding

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1 Elaine’s father was a famous boxer, (fighting under the name of Jack Carroll,) and was the Welterweight Champion of Australia in the 1920s and 1930s. In later years he became a leading boxing referee.
Many residents enjoyed this concert given by the Diamond Valley Nostalgia Orchestra (left).

The Units’ Residents Social Committee, 1997-98.
Basketballer and inherited her father’s interest in retaining physical fitness. She also accepted responsibility within the residents’ committee for financial affairs for a period, liaising with Margaret Hunter at the Lionsville office. She described her pleasure at meeting some lovely people in the Lionsville community and discovered one who had been at primary school with her mother.

When describing her feelings about living at Lionsville she was quick to emphasise the secure feeling she had. “It is a very safe and secure place and I never feel frightened.” She spends time away quite frequently but is never worried about her unit and her property.

Expressions of concern and disappointment with the lack of participation in the social life of the Lionsville community were made. Elaine, however, did say that new residents were entering the Units having developed interests outside Lionsville which they wished to retain while still able. As a result they don’t mix much with other residents. She takes the pragmatic attitude that “you have an option of participating or not.” She is fit enough to be able to find outside interests and does not need Lionsville as her social centre.

Those brief glimpses of the lives and feelings of a few residents are simply a snap shot of the Lionsville community. There are many stories to tell of the feelings present and past residents have experienced at Lionsville during the later years of their lives. These above are merely a few reflections. Perhaps some day a collection may be made of the impact that this “Miracle By the Creek” has had on the lives of its residents and their relatives and friends.
Born at home in Brixton (outer London) on 23 May 1902, Edith Gladys Smith, the third of what would be a family of 13 children, was to become one of the first 12 residents of Lionsville 64 years later.

Her first employment apart from helping to care for her 10 younger siblings, was “in service” in the home of well-to-do-local families. As her two children said many years later despite this background “for some incomprehensible reason she has always loved housework.” A younger sister, Ivy, at the age of 18, decided to migrate to Australia, as her brother Joe had done when he was only 16. Lucy, another sister was chosen by the parents to accompany Ivy, but at the last minute she pulled out and Edith, much against her own wishes, accepted her mother’s demands to replace Lucy. Edith and Ivy sailed in early May 1923 and Edie celebrated her 21st birthday on board. They were “bound for South Australia” and upon arrival at Port Adelaide stayed overnight at a Government Hostel. Their aim was to join their brother Joe at a place called Cullburra, a small settlement 80 kilometres west of Bordertown on the main road to Adelaide.

Edie and Ivy went to work as housekeepers at different farms in the Cullburra outback. It was there that Edie met Peter Dickson whom she married. They lived with Peter’s parents in Adelaide and Nell was born there in September 1925. They moved to Port Pirie where Peter was employed at the Smelters. Tragically Peter was killed in an industrial accident in August 1926. Edie and Nell moved back to Adelaide and lived again with Peter’s parents. Early in 1927 her brother Joe “invited” her (as described by her children John and Nell) to return to Cullburra where other brothers had joined him.

Soon after, she met Alfred Wright and married him in Adelaide at the end of July 1927. By this time her parents were now living at Cullburra having joined most of their children in Australia. Early in 1929 John, her second child, was born in Cullburra. This baby came early and was delivered by Edie’s mother - Granny Smith - whose only qualifications as a mid-wife was that she had mothered 13 children herself. Some time later Granny confessed that she got her first grey hairs that day.

This was the start of the depression years and times were tough. In 1932 they moved to Melbourne and lived at Maribyrnong. Early in 1936 Edie and her two children moved to Adelaide to live with her parents, who had now moved to the suburb of Blackwood. After a year there they returned to Melbourne and with Alf, settled into rented premises in Moonee Ponds. As her children indicated Edith lived in rental accommodation all her life. The war came and Alf went overseas for two years with the AIF. After his return Judy, the third child, was born. She died, aged 36 in 1980.

Eventually the family grew up. Nell married in 1950 and John in 1954. Both purchased properties in Essendon, so Edie had family nearby. She lived in Huntley Street, Moonee Ponds until October 1966, when she was one of the 12 successful applicants for new independent
living units at Lionsville. Edith Wright lived in Unit No 10 from October 1966 until 1998 when at the age of 95 she moved to Lionsville Lodge to receive extended care.

In April 2002 her children Nell and John sent out invitations to family and friends to join in the celebrations for Edith’s 100th birthday on 23 May at "Ruthville", the large community hall at Lionsville. Sadly, soon after the invitations had been dispatched, on 19 April, just five weeks short of her century, Edith had a heart attack and died the same day.

Edith’s life at Lionsville was a quiet one. She was not an outgoing person, but a dignified, self-reliant and lovely lady. It might be said that she personified the aged persons for whom Lionsville was built. She lived for over 35 years in security and comfort, amongst people who needed company but who could remain independent and who could live at Lionsville well within their means. She became well known in the Lionsville community for two main reasons - apart from her quiet and peaceful disposition. She was a great walker and for over 25 years walked to Moonee Ponds to do her shopping. She was familiar with those shops and market and found it convenient to do so. She compromised in the mid-1990’s by walking to the tram, a distance of about one kilometer. Edith was also a renowned knitter. During the 30 or more years prior to her death she knitted jumpers for intellectually handicapped children, totalling more than 2000 articles often purchasing the wool from her pension money. Her children described her prowess in this way "... when Granny got to knitting you could almost see the jumper appear as the needles clicked, this while watching a bloodthirsty movie (her favourite) on the telly." Although slowing down a little she continued to knit until her death producing small jumpers for Care Australia.

During the 1990s Lionsville was host to a number of international visitors, especially senior Lions from overseas. It was always a pleasure to take them to visit Edith in her Unit. She was by this time the only one of the original residents of 1966 still at Lionsville. She graciously hosted two Lions International Vice Presidents and their wives and in December 1999, whilst at the Lodge, was chosen to present the Lions International President, Jim Ervin with a gift for his wife during his brief visit. Whilst occupying a unit she was renowned for always having hers attractive, tidy and welcoming.

Edith Wright lived at Lionsville for longer than anyone up to this stage. She, however, like many others, found living at Lionsville a friendly and comfortable experience. She had the advantage of her daughter living nearby, which many did not, and had her knitting and piano playing to occupy her time. She did not have an easy life, as her story discloses, but she was the proud mother of three, grandmother of ten, great grandmother of eleven and great-great-grandmother of one.
A meeting of the Lions Club of Essendon during 1986, with President Jack Gilbertson on the left.
Lion Ern Basford, President of the Lions Club of Essendon in 1962/63, described to his members the dream he had. That the Club might, in some way, assist with the provision of secure, comfortable and affordable accommodation for elderly people in the community. The history of the fulfillment of this dream - beyond all expectations - has been told in the preceding pages. It has shown that a small group within the community, if it sets its sights high enough, can achieve wonderful things - perhaps miracles.

Our story has outlined the work of a number of those closely associated with the leadership of the group responsible for the achievements. They were "key" people, but they could not have worked successfully if they had not been tremendously well supported. These pages contain the names of those who, from the period from 1966/67 to 2002/2003, were office-bearers and members of the Committee, and later the Board of Management - a total of 65 persons. This is a relatively small number for such a long time but only emphasizes the large proportion of those 65 who served for lengthy periods. Twelve members served for more than 20 years, including three from the Lions Club of Coburg. Five of these twelve were associated in this way for 30 years or more.

As would be expected over such a long period most of the pioneers have died. Ern Basford died late in 2002 and that leaves three - Stan Morrison, John Dallwitz and George Evans. Two important pioneers were George Holmes and Ken McKerrell. They were very influential during the earliest stage of development. George, after a period of successful service on the Provisional Committee became the first President of the Committee serving in 1966/67 and 1967/68. Sadly he died in 1968 two weeks after completing his annual Report for 1967/68 in which he wrote, that "this year has seen the culmination of our efforts with the erection and occupancy of Stage 3 with plans and specifications for Stage 4 ready for the builder." His good friend Ken McKerrell was the Secretary of the Provisional Committee for two years and continued in that position when the Committee was formed in 1966 completing four years as Secretary. He, too, suffered from ill health, but despite this, accepted the position of committee President for 1968/69. It was in his year - on 27 April 1969 - that Stages 2, 3 and 4 were officially opened by Mr Phil Stokes MP. At this opening a plaque was unveiled "commemorating the work done for Lionsville by George Neuss and Ken McKerrell." Unfortunately he died in 1969. As George Neuss wrote of him in the Annual Report for 1969/70 "Although in poor health over the past four years his interest in Lionsville never waned. We were fortunate to have a man of his calibre and ability during the early stages of Lionsville. . . . . . On the foundation of his efforts Lionsville was built." Very significant words from the man known as "Mr Lionsville".

It is sad that two men such as George and Ken did not live long enough to see how well their initial hard work and dedication bore fruit and led to the wonderful facility that has developed.
During these early years and well into the 1970’s there was a group of Essendon Lions who could be regarded as “the builders”. They were Stewart Edgar, Joe Clift, George Evans and during the later period Cliff Williamson. As the early part of Lionsville’s development was taken up largely with building and enhancement of the site it was a wonderful asset for the organization to possess men of their expertise, interest and dedication. **Stewart Edgar** was President of the Committee for the two years 1969/70 and 1970/71. When his Presidency ended in August 1971, Stage 5, which included the "Ruthville” Recreation Centre, was complete and the site works well underway. Stewart maintained his interest for a long period finally retiring in 1996, a wonderful period of 30 years. His knowledge of building in particular was of continuing assistance to the Committee, especially through the Building Committee, and his general interest in the facilities available to residents marked his very important contribution. The Committee recognized his service upon his retirement when a photograph of him and a plaque were unveiled in his presence and with his daughter and son-in-law early in 1997.

Another of this group of builders was **Joe Clift**. From the earliest period Joe, as a Lion, was keen to help where he could and when paths were needed amongst the units Joe was the member called on to help with the supervision. He, with Stewart Edgar and George Evans, gave invaluable advice during the construction of the first five Stages of the project. Joe became President of the Committee for the 1971/72 year, but his most notable achievement, as described in the preceding pages, was to come out of retirement to build Stage 6 and save Lionsville a considerable sum of money. It is interesting to note that during the early 1990s Joe became a resident of Lionsville Lodge for a short period.

The third member of the group, **George Evans**, was a Charter member of the Lions Club of Essendon and is one of the three Lionsville pioneers still alive. George’s business was building supplies and his contacts and expertise were of great value. He was President of the provisional committee in 1965 and with George Holmes and Ken McKerrell was prominent in the early building process. He was a member of the Committee for over ten years and was President for the year 1972/73. He was quiet by nature and paid tribute to others rather than claiming anything for himself. His report to the Annual Meeting in 1973 included this tribute: - "Lionsville is a fitting monument to those men, who in the early days had the vision to see the need and the dedication to pursue their high ideals to create Lionsville, a reminder to everyone that Lions do, in fact, honour their pledge of service to the community in which they live. Because of these men I have been proud to occupy the position of President for the past 12 months, a position which I vacate feeling humble because my contribution has been so small compared to the continuing service of the dedicated men of Lionsville". George is a Life Governor of Lionsville and displays a continuing interest. He was present at the Annual Meeting in September 2002 and provided the author with valuable material on the "early days" of Lionsville.

Although **Cliff Williamson** did not join the Committee until 1974 he was associated before this time with Joe Clift in the latter’s business. Cliff was an accountant and these skills were of great
Value to the Lionsville organization. As a result of his work with Joe Clift he had experience in the building industry and in 1975/76 when Stage 6 was under consideration that experience and his accounting training made him a wonderful support to Joe when they undertook to build those 25 units. Cliff’s work received much acclaim. In his President’s Report for 1975/76 Stan Morrison, in expressing Lionsville’s thanks to Joe and Cliff, wrote that they “have been magnificent in their dedication with the erection of Stage 6, with Joe coming out of his ‘building retirement’ and Cliff working such long hours in the face of so many difficulties.”

Cliff, during this period - 1973 to 1976 - was Lionsville’s honorary auditor and for several years was Lindsay Wood’s assistant Treasurer. In this capacity he was able to provide Lindsay with help and encouragement. When the idea of a Hostel became a reality Cliff was appointed to that Committee where his financial talents made him a vital member. In fact he spread his time and talents over a wide area. As Secretary/Treasurer Lindsay Woods wrote in his report for 1983/84, commenting on Cliff’s workload at Lionsville: “Building sub-committee meetings, Lodge Management Committee, Builder’s site meetings (having the technical know-how to argue points with the builder, architect and consultants) meant that he hardly had a free day, even to practice his very poor golf. In the meantime doing most of the book-work at the Lodge.” With this background it was not surprising that he was elected as President of the Committee of Management for 1984/85 and was re-elected in 1985/86. During this time he played an important part in having the legal status of Lionsville changed from an Association with Trustees to an Association Incorporated under a relatively new Act of the Victorian Parliament. Although some members were “in the know” Cliff surprised many by announcing in his Annual Report for 1985/86 that he had “been proud to be associated with such a dedicated group of community minded people, and will take many pleasant memories with me to Queensland”. He and his wife Alexa moved to live near Caloundra. His work has spoken for itself!

Two Lions who each led the Committee as President for four years were John De Zoete and Jack Grantham. John De Zoete, also affectionately known as Jack, was involved in the early years of development commencing on the Committee in 1967. His services were used in the negotiations with the Ladies Rifle Club and it was in his years as President that Stage 7 was planned and built. His contribution was made over a period of 13 years of which four were spent as leader of the Committee. Ill health reduced his participation during the latter years and it was sad that he was too ill to attend the Opening of Stage 7 in 1980. John described the completion of this stage as “truly the crowning point of my four year term of office”. Soon after his term as President he and his wife Mary moved to retirement in Queensland.

Jack Grantham joined the Committee in 1988 soon after retiring as an engineer with the State Electricity Commission. He is still a member of the Board in 2002. It was not long before the committee realized that Jack was a very capable and willing member. He was appointed as Chairman of the Maintenance Committee and set about developing a system of progressive and programmed maintenance of the buildings. This was
Lion Robin Mitchell reports to the meeting while Lion Eric Hattam takes notes. Both men were very energetic members of the Lionsville Committee.
accepted in 1989 and is still operative. He became a member of the Hostel Committee and in September 1994 became President of the Committee of Management. A year or so later he succeeded Stan Morrison as Chairman of the Hostel Committee. He held both these positions until April 1999 when the Management structure was changed. He was elected to a position on the Board of Management on which he continues to serve in 2002. His contribution over almost 15 years has been greatly valued by his many friends in the organization. Sadly ill health has recently restricted his time at Lionsville and his contributions to the project on which he has done so much valuable work.

Dr Max Velik was another influential person at Lionsville throughout the period from 1966 until 1985. He was an original Trustee and continued in that position until Lionsville became an Incorporated Association in 1985. He was Medical Adviser to the Committee assisting with advice when needed, watching over the health and welfare of the residents of the Units for nearly 20 years. He understood the need for a hostel as part of Lionsville’s service to its residents and was a strong supporter of Stan Morrison’s attempts to have the Committee accept this concept. His work was often undertaken quietly and without much being known to the Committee as he considered it to be personal and privileged information. At meetings he could be relied on to provide considered and impartial advice on matters provoking difference between members.

Eric Hattam was the President of the Lions Club of Essendon when the first block of 12 Units was opened in October 1966. That was the start of 28 years of service on the Committee and only ended in 1994 due to his ill health. Apart from his dedicated and loyal contributions to the Committee he stands out in Lionsville’s history for his part as Chairman of Official Openings throughout the 1970’s and 1980’s. He carried out these duties with skill, thoroughness and decorum and contributed largely to the success of each. One in particular was the Official Opening of the West Wing of Lionsville Lodge when the Prime Minister of Australia, Hon R.J. Hawke, paid such wonderful compliments about Lionsville and efforts of Lions Club members. The second important contribution he made was as an archivist collecting photographs, press cuttings, reports, minutes of meetings and other material that would be of use to those who, in the future, might be interested in the progress of both the Lions Club of Essendon and Lionsville. The compilation of this history has been facilitated by his forethought.

Three members of the Lions Club of Coburg contributed wonderful service to Lionsville. One, Des Cronin, with his 33 years of service was involved for the longest and the other two were George Meagher and George Carlyle. Although the direct support of their Club did not proceed beyond the 1970’s, nor was it expected to, these three remained interested and continued their association. Meagher was a Committee member from 1969 to 1992 and Carlyle a Committee member in the period 1986-89 but before that was a Trustee for 19 years from 1966-85. Each served for 23 years making a total contribution for all three of 79 years.

Ken Chadwick and Robin Mitchell have been mentioned within the text but their work was outstanding and deserves full recognition.
An aerial view of the complex 1982. The Units are now complete.
Each contributed about 13 years of service both on Committee and as "hands-on" workers when volunteers were playing a significant part in the development and operation of Lionsville. Both were involved at Lionsville Lodge, the Hostel, as well as throughout the complex. Ken was Secretary of the Hostel Committee and when he moved in retirement to Queensland Robin took over this role. It is interesting to note that during this period of the early 1980's Ken's wife Val made a significant contribution to the progress of the Hostel through her contribution to some of the necessary clerical duties. It can be said with complete confidence that no matter what the task was that Ken and Robin were called on, or volunteered, to perform - whether outside or inside, manual or intellectual - they became heavily involved and exemplified the spirit of Lionism with their selfless efforts.

Jim Richards served the great project well, over a long period. He was a Committee member for 24 years and included in his special contributions were his role as Assistant Secretary to Lindsay Woods and his work on the Building sub-committee of which he became Chairman. He served during the very busy period 1988/92 during the construction of the West Wing of Lionsville Lodge and then a year or so later, the extensions to "Ruthville". He was called upon again during the 1995/96 extensions to the West Wing of the Hostel. Throughout this period of extensive construction works he rarely missed meetings of the sub-committee and his attention to detail ensured the careful filing and preservation of the important documents and plans of these buildings and of the meetings with both architects and builders. He was a loyal and busy member of the Committee whose quality of service to the project over a long period was another example of the spirit of Lionism at work.

During the same period Fred Peverill served Lionsville and its residents with distinction. His professional background was with the Public Trustee and as a result he was always careful to ensure that the Committee and its officers knew and observed essential legal requirements. His contribution was especially important on the financial side of the Committee's discussions. He served as Assistant Treasurer for a number of years. His "hands on" work has also been of great value especially in the gardens and grounds of Lionsville. He continues in 2002 (despite his deteriorating health) to assist his son Colin who is the contract gardener for Lionsville. Fred was elected to the Board of Management in 1999 after 21 years service on the Committee and retired from the Board in 2001. He was never one to push himself forward but his quiet effective service to the project has been recognized with the award of a special commendation from the Board at the Annual Meeting of Lionsville in September 2001.

The success of Lionsville, both in its development as a first-rate aged care facility and as a provider of care for the aged, has been achieved through the work of many. The selection of a few of the wonderful supporters who have been prominent, does not detract from the service of the many, both Committee and Board members and other Lions of both Clubs, Essendon and Coburg, and members of the community.

Thanks must be given to the Councillors and Commissioners of the City Council, first Essendon and then Moonee Valley, for their support.

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1 Commissioners were appointed to municipal councils by the State Government during the period 1995-1997
Another aerial view. This one taken during 1984. Now we see the new Hostel.
Following the development of the City of Moonee Valley the Council representative appointed each year since has been the Mayor. Two of them, Hedley Moffat and Trevor Sinclair, were appointed to vacancies on the Board once they had completed their Mayoral period.

Officers of the Council have reflected their Council’s interest, two of them, Jim Scott and Barry Beattie, deserve a special mention. It was Jim Scott, whose co-operation with Ern Basford and other Lionsville pioneers, made it possible to find and eventually obtain the Crown land on which the first 38 Lionsville Units were built. His continuing advice and support was of great assistance in the developmental years.

The Lionsville community made Barrie Beattie, Essendon City Council Manager, a Life Governor of Lionsville for his wonderful service to the Committee. His assistance was invaluable during the attempts in the late 1970’s and early 1980’s to convince the Council, the Government and the MMBW to make the land to the north of the units available for Lionsville’s further development. The land was not only made available but was sold to Lionsville, thus enabling the Committee to apply for and receive financial land grants with the building of the East and West wings of the hostel, Lionsville Lodge. Stan Morrison in the Lionsville Annual Report for 1981/82 described the contribution of Barry Beattie, as “of inestimable assistance during the whole exercise”. (of obtaining the land.)

As has been described earlier in the history, during the first phase the administration of Lionsville was solely in the hands of volunteers. This situation ended early in 1983 when a professional was appointed as Manager of Lionsville Lodge. The first Manager was Jan Wigg. Her title at that time was Supervisor and her work was overseen by the Lionsville Lodge Committee. This Committee was, in turn, responsible to the Lionsville Committee of Management. The history describes the difficulties that were encountered in making a profit at the Hostel during the first few years of operation. The residents, however, were comfortable and secure and well cared for. In October 1985, after less than three years in the position, Jan Wigg resigned. The Committee sought a new Supervisor (Manager) and had in mind someone with experience in such a position, a person who would continue the initial aim of providing a home-like atmosphere where the residents were provided with necessary care in a secure and loving environment.

Late in 1985 Mrs Fay Forbes was chosen and was soon described by Stan Morrison in the annual report for 1985/86 as a lady “who put her eight years of Hostel experience to good use”. Fay Forbes was to guide the operation of the Hostel for a long and successful period. Her work and influence were greatly appreciated by all - Committee, staff and in particular, the residents. In the 1990/91 Chairman’s report on the Hostel, Stan Morrison wrote that “Fay Forbes has our deep respect and is held in the highest esteem for the standard she sets and maintains ……”

The hostel grew in size - from 30 to 66 in 1990 and then to 78 in 1996. The load for Fay Forbes became heavier yet her standards of care and the respect in which she was held did not waver.
An Aerial view 1984 from a different angle.
During the ‘nineties the scope of her responsibility widened to include care for aged persons who were suffering from extreme frailty, including dementia. The new 12 bed, extension in 1996 was built with this in mind and now made a total of 20 residents "in special care". The Lionsville Community displayed its respect and thanks to Fay when, at the Annual Meeting in September 1993, she was made a Life Governor of Lionsville.

In 1997 the Australian Government introduced new methods of providing financial assistance to hostels. The new procedures have been explained in the history but basically the changes meant that a hostel would be funded by payments for the degree of care they provided to the residents. These new requirements also indicated specifications for buildings and equipment and for ensuring the administration and care standards were met. To check on these standards it was proposed to have teams of auditors who would make regular inspection to "accredit" hostels and nursing homes and ensure that the required standards had been met. This new system was to create significant changes in the type of aged persons who would be accepted in hostels if they were to remain financially viable. Lionsville was to be visited for the first Accreditation in March, 2000. Mrs Forbes did not have Nursing qualifications and under the new system these would have been valuable. She set in motion the measures necessary for this first Accreditation visit, but decided in mid-1999 that she would retire from this demanding, but satisfying career.

Many tributes were paid to her for what she had achieved at Lionsville. These can be summed up in the words of Board President, Peter Gilbertson taken from his Annual Report for 1998/99 - "Her love of people and support for the ideals of the organization were a key part of the success of the Hostel." Success it had been. From the time Fay took over the running of Lionsville Lodge - her title changed over the years from Supervisor to Administrator to Manager - the financial position improved from loss making to a steady financial surplus. When she retired the financial position of the Hostel was very sound. Above all, however, the caring atmosphere was highly regarded by residents and relatives and by those who had been responsible for the general oversight of the operation of the Lionsville complex. She was a hard act to follow!

After a relieving Manager had provided oversight for a brief period, the Board of Management appointed Ms Tina Melrose as the new Manager and she commenced duty in August 1999. Tina was a Division 2 Nurse and had previous experience in hostel management. She led the important task of preparing Lionsville Lodge for its review by the Accreditation team. It was not an easy task as no one had experience of such visits. It was pleasing to find that Accreditation was provided for three years and Tina received the thanks and congratulations of the Board.

In 1994 the Committee of Management agreed to provide assistance to Treasurer Ken Gilbertson through the appointment of a part-time book-keeper. The advertisement for the position drew many applications and the selection Committee of two - the Treasurer and Secretary - short-listed 8 names. Following interviews the recommendation was to appoint Mr Garry Carswell who had provided an impressive curriculum vitae. The Committee agreed
This aerial view, taken when "The Miracle By The Creek" is nearly complete. The Moonee Ponds Creek is on the right.
and Garry was appointed and commenced duty for two days a week in late May 1994. He soon made a very favourable impression, especially in relation to his ability to provide computer assistance. It was decided to separate the duties of Secretary and Units Manager during 1995 and Garry was appointed as Units Manager now moving to a full-time position in October of that year.

Garry’s conscientious attitude, his accounting and computer skills and his ever-growing knowledge of Lionsville and its ethos made him an invaluable asset as the demands of the administration grew heavier. He was sympathetic to the aims and objectives of Lionism although he was not a Lions Club member himself. He assisted the Club through his co-operation with the Christmas Cakes program and agreeing to maintain the link between the Club and the Lionsville office by allowing Club typing and photo-copying to be undertaken at the office.

In the early part of 2000 the Board of Management decided on a restructure of the administration. A new position of Operations Manager was created and Garry was appointed to it. The Board appointed a Personal Assistant to support his work. The Operations and Hostel Managers were now to be responsible to, and report directly to the Board. He provided full financial reports, as his role included that of Treasurer, and also on matters relating to the Units. From early in 2002 added to these was a Secretarial report as Secretary Neil retired from that reduced role and it was absorbed into the duties of the Operation Manager.

To recognize his contribution to Lionsville Garry was made a Life Governor which was announced at the Annual Meeting in September 2001.

It is important to state how fortunate Lionsville has been to attract and hold such a capable, co-operative, sensitive and forward-thinking executive as Garry has proved himself to be. As Lionsville approaches a very uncertain future, the organization is fortunate to have the services of such a valuable professional. It ought not to be forgotten, also, that his wife, Margaret, a talented educator, has assisted Lionsville by leading the organization towards the development of a Vision and Mission Statement. Also she has encouraged students from a school in the vicinity to carry out some visiting and provide physical assistance to both individual residents and the Lionsville complex.

The Assistant to the Operations Manager is Kay Wilson who was appointed in 2000. As already indicated, she has been involved in assisting residents’ social activities in addition to her other important duties.

Finally, but certainly not least, thanks are due to politicians who have supported the aims and purposes of Lionsville. In particular a special tribute should be paid to the late Sir Kenneth Wheeler for his wonderful co-operation and more recently to Judy Maddigan, the present member, who has always been available when needed and has supported the development of Lionsville in this present period of change.
The Real Spirit of Lionsville

This coloured photograph illustrates the spirit that Lionsville has endeavoured to foster within its community. It is produced by courtesy of the Herald and Weekly Times Ltd. and features Mrs. Edith Lyons, a former resident of Lionsville Lodge.

The original appeared in "The Herald Sun" on Tuesday, 2 August 1994 and accompanied an article on the health of elderly people. Mrs. Lyons celebrated her 96th birthday two weeks after its publication. She remained a resident in the Lodge until she died in August 2000 just a few hours before her 102nd birthday.
For the thirty-five years from 1962 to 1997 planning was synonymous with extension at Lionsville. From the earliest stage the Committee of Management appointed an Extension Committee, its brief being to plan the buildings and develop the grounds. With the completion of the 114 Independent Living Units in 1980 attention was turned to providing a hostel for those residents, and other members of the community, who could no longer live independently. This time the planning for such a facility was entrusted to a Committee of members who supported such a move. It was named the Lionsville Lodge Committee and continued to operate until the final extension of the Hostel was completed in 1997. During the second and third stages the Committee of Management supported the Lodge Committee by the appointment of a new Building Committee whose task it was to liaise with the Architects and Builders and report to the Committee of Management through the Lodge Committee. The only additional building since 1997 was the construction of two new offices for the use of the Operations Manager and staff of Lionsville Inc.

Since 1997 the planning process has changed markedly. The new Board of Management developed a Planning Committee as its only Committee. Planning was no longer synonymous with extension but it was concerned with the future use of the present plant and the facilities that would be needed to promote the continuance of Lionsville’s mission and vision.

As explained earlier, since the mid-1990s the Australian Government has made major changes to the way it provides assistance to those organizations that are caring for aged persons, particularly those providing hostel and nursing home care. This has, in turn, resulted in changed methods in operating such facilities. Another important influence on present planning has been the increased proportion of the total population now in the “over 65” age group, leading to a potentially higher proportion in need of aged care in one form or another. This has led to a growing private sector interest in aged care accommodation. The construction of privately developed “retirement villages” in Lionsville’s main catchment area has resulted in much more competition than in the past, a development that must be factored in to present planning. These changes in the aged care environment have presented challenges to the Board of Management.

In some respects the previous Committee realized that changes in the planning process were necessary. That was apparent when the then Planning Committee, under the guidance of Bruce Cameron OAM, at that time the representative of the Moonee Valley Council Commissioners on the Lionsville Committee, undertook in 1992, with the assistance of a professional Consultant, a process known as a SWOT analysis. The Lionsville community, including the members of the Lions Club of Essendon, gave consideration to what it considered the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with the project. Useful information was gathered, but at that stage the Lionsville Committee became involved in other
matters, including changes to the governance and the administration of the Lionsville organization, as well as the usual "bread and butter" matters of management.

During 1998 and 1999 the Committee felt the need to prepare a statement of what it believed was the Vision and the Mission of the Lionsville project. For over thirty years the members had worked for the development of the early dream, yet there was no formal statement of what they really hoped to achieve. Not that the lack of such a statement had held them back - far from it. Under the guidance of Margaret Carswell, the wife of the present Operations Manager, the Lionsville community set out in writing what it felt it was established to achieve and how it should proceed to continue to carry out these aims. Following adequate process the Committee, and then later the Board, arrived at its position. This Statement of Vision and Mission appears as an end paper to the history.

When the Management was restructured and the Board established, it set out to gather a body of information to assist with the development of a Master Plan for the continuing development of the complex. It held a Planning Process Forum, from which a Brief was prepared for architects. In 2001, Gerard Smith of Smith and Tracey, Architects was engaged to prepare a Master Plan for the site, including the properties in Pascoe Vale Road, owned by Lionsville. This plan created much discussion within the Board as it involved significant changes to the status quo. Subsequently the Board identified specific financial and residential parameters for future action. Chairman Peter Gilbertson revealed in his Annual Report for 2001-2002 that "Mercury Search and Selection have been engaged to provide a robust plan for the implementation of the future development. The plan will position Lionsville to provide a sustainable service to the aged and the disadvantaged in the area."

As 2002 ended there was much discussion and debate about the ways in which Lionsville would proceed to implement future development. Several important factors required full consideration.

- The stock of buildings, especially the Units built before 1975 and the East Wing of Lionsville Lodge Hostel were now considered to be at the end of their useful life. Bed-sitting room units, particularly those upstairs, were not in great demand and the East Wing of the Hostel, now known as the Morrison Wing, was in need of upgrading. Effectively this meant rebuilding.
- The degree of competition from other facilities, especially at the upper end of the market, had increased considerably. The housing boom of the late 1990s and the early years of the new century, resulted in housing prices rising rapidly in the Essendon district. Elderly people were able to sell their houses for high prices and buy into privately owned "villages".
- The Board of Management continued to accept the key role of providing suitable, low cost accommodation for those who were financially disadvantaged, but it realized that to do so it must also attract those who could afford something more. To ignore this would be financially unsound.
- For those who needed Hostel accommodation the Board had to keep in mind the changes in the way the Australian government
had altered the method of calculating the amount of funding it would contribute to the care of these residents. This change has been explained in detail earlier in our story but it meant that to maintain financial viability it was necessary to attract those who required higher degrees of care and to retain in the Hostel those whose care requirements increased. Unfortunately the facilities available, particularly in the Morrison wing, will not permit this and new facilities will be necessary. Such higher care will also require the employment of two or three Division 1 nursing staff at a significantly higher cost than at present.

• As a result of these changed circumstances the Board has been giving consideration to changes to the Administrative structure of the complex. It may be time for the appointment of a Chief Executive Officer to provide oversight of the running of the Hostel as well as the general management of the complex. Such an appointee would need to be a Division 1 Nurse, preferably with experience in running a large aged care facility.

The Board of Management has been presented with much detailed information to assist it in making informed decisions on Lionsville’s future. Advisors have provided, and continue to provide, advice in relation to the numerous choices facing it. Members of the Board will keep in mind the vision of those who have gone before. They continue to accept the main issues contained in the Statement of Vision and Mission of Lionsville. **All the future planning will be based on a continuance of the dream for the attainment of which so many Lions Club members and their supporters have worked over the past forty years.**
### Office Bearers 1962-2002

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On 15 April, 1999 Lionsville Board of Management created:

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Tru stees of Lionsville

1966 - 1984  Dr Max Velik
1966 - 1977  Lance Beech
1966 - 1985  George Carlyle*
1966 - 1976  Edward Petherbridge
1978 - 1982  Laurence Cloonan
1978 - 1985  Stan Morrison
1982 - 1985  Jack Gilbertson

In April 1985 Lionsville became an Incorporated Association

*George Carlyle was a member of the Lions Club of Coburg.

Members of the Lionsville Committee of Management:
1966 - April 1999

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**Members of Lionsville Board of Management from 29 April, 1999 to 30 June, 2003**

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<td>Moffat, Cr</td>
<td>Hedley</td>
<td>1999-2003</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peverill</td>
<td>Fred</td>
<td>1999-2001</td>
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<td>Sinclair, Cr</td>
<td>Trevor</td>
<td>2000-03</td>
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Neil has been associated with Lionsville for nearly 30 years after being elected to the Committee of Management in 1975, a position he has held for most of the time since. He served as President of the Lions Club of Essendon in 1978/1979, and ensured that the Lionsville complex remained as a key focus for the club.

In April 1989 he took over the role of Secretary/Treasurer of Lionsville Incorporated following the retirement of the then incumbent Lindsay Woods. Later that year his role became that of Secretary only, a position he held until 1997. It was a position requiring a concern and interest in aged care, and Neil undertook the role diligently and gave freely of his time and considerable ability and organizational skills, spending up to 30 hours each week at Lionsville.

In April 1999 having been a significant player in the move to restructure the Lionsville administration, Neil accepted the role of Secretary of the Board of Management, albeit this time with reduced responsibilities. He continued in this role until April 2002 when he retired, but has continued as a member of the Board to this time. The Board is fortunate to have a person with such a knowledge and interest in Lionsville and are deeply grateful for the time and effort that has been spent in compiling this history. For his services to Lionism he was made a Melvin Jones Fellow and has been presented with a James Richardson Honour Award.

Neil was born in Glenhuntly and had his primary education at the local Primary School. In 1938 he was chosen as a chorister for St Paul’s Choir in Melbourne which was directed at that time by the redoubtable Dr. A.E. Floyd. This resulted in him gaining a scholarship to attend Trinity Grammar School in Kew. When he left the choir in 1942 he remained at Trinity on a continuing Scholarship until 1944, when he was awarded a Senior Government Scholarship to study Commerce and Education at the University of Melbourne.

He commenced his long involvement with education in 1950 with his appointment to the staff of Ararat High School, where he spent one year. This was followed by two years at Portland High School. In 1953 he was on the move again for a 3 year appointment to Kyneton High School. It was during this time that he married his wife Pat. In 1956 the couple moved when Neil received promotion to Rosebud High School where he taught for 4 years. During this time the Baudinettes were blessed with the birth of daughters Anne and Jenny. A further promotion to Portland High School saw the family on the move again in 1960, where Neil was to teach for a further 4 years, and the family increased to 6 with the birth of daughters Robyn and Susan.

After teaching for 14 years Neil received promotion to the position of Head Master of Yea High School in 1964. In 1967 he
received an offer from the Australian Government to spend a year lecturing for the Commonwealth Institute, London. He and his family lived in Surrey, and during the year Neil lectured in schools and colleges throughout the UK, from Northern Scotland to the Channel Islands. In 1968 the family returned to Yea where Neil resumed his former position where the title was now changed to that of Principal.

Late in 1971 the Baudinettes moved to Essendon West when Neil was appointed to the position of Principal of the Strathmore High School. During his time at Strathmore Neil was involved in work with the Education Department related to the orientation of overseas teachers into Victorian schools, particularly those from Canada and the USA. In 1979 he was chosen to be the first Secondary School Principal to go overseas, on exchange as a Principal. Neil and Pat and their youngest daughter Susan, spent 1980 in Toronto, Canada where Neil’s position was Assisting Principal at a large Collegiate Institute. He returned to Strathmore High School in 1981.

In 1983 Neil transferred to Keilor Heights High School where he spent four very happy years as Principal. He retired from teaching towards the end of 1986. During the next two years he was a consultant with the Ministry of Education working with Principals and School Communities on issues of school development. He also maintained an interest in Adult Literacy Programs.

Neil has maintained his interest in singing, using his fine tenor voice in various choirs and musical ensembles wherever he has lived. He played cricket in his earlier days and now plays competitive Bowls with the Buckley Park Bowls Club. Ever ready to take on positions of responsibility he has been, for many years, on the Management Committee and served as both the President of the Club and President of the Men’s Section.

Neil was presented with a Spirit of Moonee Valley Award by the City of Moonee Valley in 2001, for his services to Youth and Older Persons. He was also a worthy recipient of a recently announced Commonwealth Government Centenary Medal, given in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the community.

*Lion Ron McFarlane*
The Independent Living Units are set in attractive gardens and grounds.
LIONSVILLE INC
Lionsville Aged Care Facility
Statement of Vision and Mission

Preamble
The Lionsville Aged Care Facility is a project of the Lions Club of Essendon which offers accommodation and care for aged persons, as well as other services directed at the welfare of the aged.
As a Lions Club initiative, Lionsville embraces the Ethics and Objects of Lions Clubs International. It directly involves the members of the Lions Club of Essendon, other like-minded members of the community and skilled consultants in fields pertinent to aged care.

Our vision is that Lionsville....
• offers the highest standard of professional care
• provides accommodation and levels of care appropriate for independence and need
• is available to all aged persons regardless of status, ethnic background or physical condition
• regards service to the aged as its highest priority
Lionsville is a place where residents
• are treated with dignity
• live in harmony with each other and with those who care for them
• find safety, support and comfort, enjoying permanency within the community regardless of the type of care required
• feel part of their community
Lionsville strives to offer all those associated with the facility, be they residents, employees, service providers or volunteers, a place where individual contribution is valued, acknowledged and appreciated.

In attempting to live this vision, the Lionsville mission is to ....
• employ staff of only the highest quality, offering them on-going professional development
• encourage residents to have input into their life-styles
• promote social and recreational activities
• provide a high standard of environment, care and support
• maintain fiscal responsibility with prudent financial planning
• continually seek ways to improve.
A view of the rear of the Essendon Day Care Centre taken from an upstairs Unit in Stage 6.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

* Chairman Lion Peter Gilbertson and the Members of the Lionsville Board of Management for their support.
* The City of Moonee Valley for their support of a Financial Grant.
* Dorothy Bugg for Typing the Drafts and the Manuscript.
* Garry and Margaret Carswell for help and encouragement.
* Adrian Jones for showing me the right path.
* All who have helped with interviews, information and photographs.
* My wife Pat for her continuous support, particularly through a difficult 2003.

Most of the photographs, press cuttings and other illustrations have come from the archives of Lionsville Inc. and it is regretted that it is not possible to make appropriate separate acknowledgement of them as most are unknown. The author is grateful to all concerned.
This is the story of the way in which the members of the Lions Club of Essendon, Victoria took up the challenge of the “dream” of their President in 1962. His challenge to them was to provide secure, independent and reasonably priced accommodation for elderly people in their community who were not adequately housed.

History demonstrates that in taking up that challenge the Lions members achieved a success beyond the hopes and imaginations of even their most fervent supporters. The project, known as Lionsville, was to become one of the greatest Club projects in the history of Lionism. In the early years the optimistic aims were supported by colleagues from the Lions Club of nearby Coburg and as Lionsville grew, financial support came from numerous sources including generous personal donors, the fund-raising efforts of the members of the Lions Club and from Australian Government subsidies.

The story, which relates the struggles and successes, is told in detail as a tribute to the many Lions and other supporters who have worked tirelessly and with skill and determination throughout the past forty years. From 16 residents in 1966, Lionsville now houses around 200 elderly people in 2002.

The book is produced to mark the 50th Anniversary of the Chartering of the Lions Club of Essendon in April 1953.

The “dream” of 1962 has become a remarkable reality. It is truly…

“The Miracle By The Creek”