

EVERGREEN Connections NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2025 / JANUARY 2026



2025, what a swell year it's been

Welcome to a double edition of Evergreen Connections

Wow, it's been quite a year! It's always interesting to reflect on where we were in January to where we are now. Overall, it's been fantastic.

We hosted some wonderful events, forged new paths and enjoyed quality time with our community. We lived out of suitcases for a few months, then got to move back into a schmick new centre, thanks to City of Boroondara! We launched our new Evergreen Connections Cafe & Information Hub and grew our volunteer workforce to about 120.

We welcomed new faces to the fold and farewelled a few as well. But what really sums up the year, and Balwyn Evergreen in general, is our unique and sometimes off-the-wall approach to life, where laughter is the best medicine. So thank you to everyone who made 2025 another year to remember. To our loyal clients and volunteers, dedicated staff, sponsors and supporters, you made it all happen!

- From all of us at Balwyn Evergreen, have a safe and enjoyable festive season, and we look forward to seeing you soon!

Events & Info Sessions

Balwyn Evergreen Open Day

Saturday, March 21
10am-2pm



This is a reminder to put March 21 in your diary, because we'd love to see you at our annual Open Day. We'd also love for you to bring a friend or two to introduce them to the Balwyn Evergreen experience. This is it, the big kahuna of events. The one where we open our doors to the community, wave our arms around and shout 'we're over here!'. It's going to be fun, colourful and a celebration of our community! We're looking forward to it - stay tuned for all the Open Day information!

In the meantime...

We're asking for donations for hampers for our Open Day fundraising raffle. Goods such as personal care items, fun food things and nice bits and pieces will be much appreciated. You can drop them off to the office.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS from Balwyn Evergreen

**Centre closed from 2pm Wednesday,
December 24 2025, reopening Monday,
January 5 2026**



Have a day out with friends in 2026

Our Outings crew enjoyed a stroll by the water during a recent trip to Williamstown.

Each week, we take two minibuses out to fun and interesting destinations, and they've grown in popularity so much so that we now run a waitlist.

We find the outings are in the Goldilocks zone of social support groups - they're just right!

If you're keen to jump on board our next outing, please contact the office.



Balwyn Evergreen Centre
45 Talbot Ave, Balwyn VIC 3103
Open Mon-Fri 8.30am-4.30pm

For bookings or enquiries
call 9836 9681 or email
office@balwynevergreen.org.au



NEWS CORNER

Updates From the Balwyn Evergreen Centre Community

Resolving to improve wellbeing

It's almost time for the annual reset, so let's choose goals that strengthen connection, spark curiosity and nurture wellbeing throughout 2026.

Instead of traditional resolutions focused on restriction or routine, we're encouraging our community to consider enriching resolutions such as trying a new activity, building social circles, embracing balance or finding small moments of joy each week.

As we age, resolutions tend to take on a new purpose. It's about setting 'goals' that bring joy, not pressure.

Whether it's joining a social group, taking up a gentle exercise class or volunteering for connection, the right resolution can spark a fresh sense of purpose.



A new approach to building wellbeing in 2026 - themes that resonate

1) Curiosity as a wellbeing tool

Older people are increasingly exploring activities that challenge the mind in enjoyable ways. Whether it is trying chair yoga, joining a trivia group, learning a craft or attending a guest talk, curiosity keeps the mind sharp and spirits lifted.

2) Micro-connection moments

Loneliness remains a growing issue for older people, meaning resolutions that build connection in small, achievable ways are the way to go. Activities such as talking to your butcher, sharing a morning tea or joining a walking group make all the difference. Just one regular touchpoint can significantly improve emotional wellbeing.

3) Movement that feels good

Rather than high-pressure fitness goals, many older people are choosing movement that suits their body and lifestyle, such as gentle strength training, balance-focused sessions, Tai Chi or yoga. These activities support independence, confidence and vitality.

4) Community contribution

A growing number of retirees report that volunteering has given structure, meaning and companionship to their weeks. Balwyn Evergreen offers roles ranging from visiting older people in the community to supporting group activities to driving the local transport minibus. Volunteering allows people to give back while forming new friendships - it's a classic win-win situation!

Please support our Christmas Food Drive

The festive trolley is back where it belongs - in our foyer, waiting for donations of non-perishable items for our Christmas Food Drive. Spearheaded by Simon Wheelton (of Men's Exercise fame), all items collected will go directly to those in need at:

- The One Church Pantry in Blackburn
- Park Orchards Community Pantry
- The Dining Room Mission at Croydon
- International Students living at Deakin University
- The Baptist Food Barn Box Hill
- Uniting Care Burwood
- Several single mums who need material support

These charities do a fantastic job all year round, but there's an especially pressing need during the festive period. Next time you're in, please bring a can, jar or packet of dry goods and drop it into the trolley. Simon will collect and distribute the items directly. Thanks for your support!



SPOTLIGHT

International Volunteer Day

This month, we're casting the spotlight on our volunteers, who make the wheels at Balwyn Evergreen turn.

We talk to **Raylene Golder** about her experience and special connection with The Senior Divas.

A community built by volunteers

Balwyn Evergreen is celebrating International Volunteer Day by honouring the remarkable people who give their time, compassion and skill to support older people across Boroondara.

From friendly phone calls and social groups to exercise programs, driving, companionship and one-on-one visits, volunteers remain at the heart of everything Balwyn Evergreen does.

There are around 120 volunteers who contribute to its programs each year. Together they help older people stay connected, active and engaged - especially those who live alone or face mobility or health challenges. Balwyn Evergreen's CEO Tina Hogarth-Clarke says volunteers bring a richness to the organisation that cannot be captured in numbers.

"Our volunteers create the warmth and humanity that Balwyn Evergreen is known for. They form genuine bonds, build confidence, share joy and offer stability to people who often need it most. Every gesture - a conversation, a cuppa, a gentle check-in - makes a meaningful difference."

"International Volunteer Day is a moment to celebrate the full tapestry of our volunteer community. Their diverse backgrounds and talents strengthen our services and help ensure older people feel supported and valued."

Spending time with The Senior Divas

Among those volunteers is Raylene Golder, a familiar face in Balwyn Evergreen's Senior Divas social group. While she represents only one thread of Balwyn Evergreen Centre's volunteer community, her reflections speak to the shared purpose that unites them all.



Established about seven years ago, The Senior Divas is a vibrant group of ladies who love to lunch, laugh and enjoy a guest speaker.

Raylene is integral to the success of the group and says she "absolutely loves it".

For older women in the community, the Divas is a unique social support opportunity and a chance to make new connections in a welcoming environment.

"Spending time with people in their third age and hearing their life stories, you realise the importance of connecting with others. It is very satisfying to see them enjoy new and old friendships and know that you have helped them in some way. Volunteering has given me far more than I ever expected," Raylene says.

We couldn't do it without you

Volunteers support all programs and services provided by Balwyn Evergreen, including bus outings, Evergreen Connections Visitor Program, Supported Lifestyle Program and a suite of wellbeing activities that keep older people active and socially connected.

Many volunteers have served for years, while others are beginning their journey after retirement, career changes or a desire to give back to their community.

International Volunteer Day is a reminder that we simply wouldn't exist without our volunteers.

For more information about volunteering with Balwyn Evergreen or joining any of our social support groups, please contact the office.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

Healthy Ageing with Balwyn Evergreen Centre

Hands up for exercise programs in 2026

Last month's Seated Tai Chi trial was a roaring success, so we've added it to our regular timetable!

Enjoy the benefits of Tai Chi from the comfort and support of your seat. This gentle class is ideal for those who need to incorporate movement into their week in a safe and beneficial way.

Seated Tai Chi is on Fridays from 11.15am-12.15pm. For more information, talk to David.



Get active in 2026 with Balwyn Evergreen

David is working on some exciting new programs and classes.

Health and fitness checkups: a simple 15-minute test to assess your balance, muscle and bone density and track improvements.

Falls and Balance Program: A six-week course designed to improve confidence and reduce the risk of falls.

Exercise classes: We're looking into Core Strength and Posture, Seated Yoga and Meditation - stay tuned!

Refer a friend to exercise in December and win a hamper!

We're getting in the Christmas spirit and really want to give away a fantastic hamper that was generously donated to us! Simply refer a friend to exercise with us in December and go into the draw. Winners will be notified on Tuesday, December 23. Happy referring!



Staying safe with the Senior Road User Hub

The Transport Accident Commission (TAC) has launched The Senior Road User Hub - a free online resource to help older Victorians and their families to make informed decisions about their driving future. Why it matters:

- Between 2022–2024, people aged 60+ made up 30% of road fatalities in Victoria.
- Drivers aged 75 or older have the highest risk (per distance travelled) of being killed in a crash.

The hub offers practical tools and information, including a confidential self-reflection quiz, tips for adapting driving habits as we age, and guidance on vehicle safety features.

It encourages planning ahead and exploring alternative transport options when needed.

Find it here: www.seniorroadusers.vic.gov.au.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

with Ruby Cheung

Hello, friends. To round off the year, we're going to look at how nutritional needs change as we age and how this can make us more susceptible to food safety issues.



Recent research shows that a slower metabolism and a weaker immune system make older adults more vulnerable to foodborne illnesses and malnutrition. Older adults often need more of certain nutrients, such as protein and Vitamin B, because the body doesn't absorb or use them as efficiently as it once did. Protein plays a key role in maintaining muscle mass and strength, but with age, the body becomes less effective at using it.

Staying hydrated is also crucial, as dehydration can cause confusion and dizziness, while a diet rich in fibre, fruits, and vegetables can help manage chronic conditions such as high blood pressure and heart disease.

Eating foods high in potassium and limiting salt intake are linked to better heart health and lower stroke risk.

Food safety is another important focus. As the immune system weakens with age, the risk of serious illness from bacteria such as Listeria, E. coli, and Salmonella increases. Higher-risk foods include cold deli meats, soft cheeses, pre-made salads, and undercooked eggs. Safer options such as cooked meats, hard cheeses, and freshly prepared salads can help reduce this risk. Before making any significant dietary changes or if you are worried about your health, please consult your doctor.

Ruby Cheung is a registered nutritionist who has a Master's in Nutrition and Population Health. Along with contributing to our newsletter, she's also an Evergreen Connections volunteer visitor and was our Men's Kitchen Class facilitator.

DAY TRIPS

Tuesday Bus Outings

Enjoy a day out with friends

Our Evergreen Ramblers Program takes you on a tour around Melbourne's outer metropolitan area every Tuesday. Discover or revisit lovely suburbs and townships, stopping to enjoy lunch together at an eatery that we've hand-picked for you. Transport is in our iconic minibus, with pick up and drop off at your doorstep, so all you need to do is get comfortable and enjoy the ride.

Bookings essential - please call/email to save your seat

- Pick up from 9.30am (unless stated)
- Drop off at about 4pm
- Bus cost: \$28 (CHSP assessed + approved), \$36 non-assessed
- Lunch and tours are an additional cost
- Let us know if you have a food allergy or special dietary requirements
- Outings require a minimum of six people to go ahead

December Outings

Tuesday, December 2

YOU YANGS REGIONAL PARK: Picnic lunch

You Yangs Regional Park in Melbourne's west is part of an Aboriginal cultural landscape in the traditional Country of the Wadawurrung People. Famous for magnificent views, birdlife, and walking trails, this local treasure features distinctive granite peaks that rise abruptly from the plains, while Flinders Peak and Big Rock have panoramic views back towards the city.

All this makes it the perfect spot for a picnic lunch, prepared by our centre cook and bakers. There are easy walking options available.

COST OF LUNCH: \$20

Tuesday, December 9

WARRAGUL: Warragul Country Club

Today's adventure is to the hub of Western Gippsland, Warragul. Famous for its booming dairy industry, Warragul is also home to stunning local produce and an emerging arts scene. We'll enjoy the country drive through the verdant pasture and historic township before heading to the Warragul Country Club for lunch. Flanked by playing greens, the club offers multiple dining options and a menu of crowd favourites.

Tuesday, December 16

RYE: Rye RSL

EARLY START 9am

It's the perfect time of year for a day trip to the Mornington Peninsula. The sun is (hopefully) shining, and the holidaymakers are yet to take over. Today's seaside spot is Rye, with its iconic jetty and sweeping coastline. Lunch is at the Rye RSL, which prides itself on being the 'most exciting RSL' in Victoria. We can be the judge of that and their menu, which features plenty of seafood.

For a copy of the extended Outings Newsletter, which gives you a sneak peek up to February 2026, please contact office@balwynevergreen.org.au.

January Outings



Tuesday, January 13

WOODEND: Victoria Hotel

EARLY START 9am

Woodend is in the centre of the Macedon Ranges. It's the quintessential modern rural village and the gateway to many attractions throughout the region, most notably Hanging Rock. We'll enjoy what this picturesque town has to offer, including perusing the local shops. Lunch is at the Victoria Hotel and features generous country pub meals.

Tuesday, January 20

CRANBOURNE: Royal Botanic Gardens

EARLY START 9am

Discover the iconic Australian landscape and enjoy live commentary in the comfort of an open-air electric bus. From the Red Sand Garden, journey through the themed display gardens ending with the Eucalypt Walk, featuring only Australian plants. Lunch is at the on-site cafe.

COST OF BUS TOUR: \$14 (must bring a seniors card)

SOME WALKING IS INVOLVED WITH THIS OUTING

Tuesday, January 27

SEAFORD: BBQ at Keast Park

We're getting our dose of sea air today as we head to Seaford. Relax and take in the coastal scenery as we wind our way to our destination, with Port Phillip Bay as our backdrop. We'll then enjoy a delicious barbecue lunch at Keast Park, overlooking the dunes and water.

COST OF LUNCH: \$20

ACTIVE LIVING

Keeping Social Connections Strong

Social connections proving crucial for clients and carers

Have you heard about our Supported Lifestyle Program? It's designed for people living at home with cognitive decline or mild to moderate dementia.

Running every Wednesday and Friday, the program creates a safe and welcoming space where participants can connect with others, maintain their independence and find joy in shared experiences. For many, it provides a rhythm to the week - a reason to get out, move, laugh and feel part of the community again.

Activities Coordinator and program lead Raymond Kolesnikoff says the program provides trusted day respite that enriches lives through social connection, gentle exercise, and meaningful cognitive engagement. "It empowers people living with dementia to stay active, connected and fulfilled - while offering carers valuable time to rest and recharge."

Each session runs from 10am to 3pm, with morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea all prepared fresh on site.

Participants start their day with gentle exercise, before moving into a series of tailored activities, from music and memory games to movement and sensory experiences. Transport is included as part of the program, making it easier for people to stay connected safely.

Differing in their objectives slightly, Wednesdays focus on memory and music. Activities such as sing-alongs, bingo and storytelling spark conversation and shared laughter. Fridays introduce more physical games such as bowling and dominoes (pictured above), which are designed to activate both the mind and body while encouraging social interaction.

Each activity has a purpose: to maintain cognitive function, support emotional wellbeing and keep participants engaged in a fun and familiar environment.



The program also provides invaluable respite for carers, knowing their loved ones are enjoying a safe and engaging day that enriches their wellbeing.

For John, 82, and his wife Patricia, the program is something he looks forward to each Friday.

"My husband John has Parkinson's, and we were very happy to have John join the Supportive Lifestyle Program. As John's carer, I was initially, I think, more nervous than John when he was picked up in the Balwyn Evergreen Centre bus for transport to the centre!" Patricia says.

"However, after the first couple of times, John was really happy and really looking forward to his day at Balwyn Evergreen Centre.

"As his wife and carer, I am very grateful to the wonderful staff who do the utmost to provide a good program with good humour and a big heart."

For more information about the program and to see whether it would suit you or your loved one, please contact the office or talk to Raymond.

Handy hints to help you get around

Travellers Aid: Thanks to our client, Jill, who told us about Travellers Aid, a free service to help people with luggage and connections at major railway stations and Melbourne Airport. For more information, visit travellersaid.org.au.

Free weekend travel this summer

To celebrate the opening of the Metro Tunnel, public transport users will have free weekend travel across Victoria until February 1, 2026!

Supported Lifestyle on Channel 31

We're back on Channel 31's *Over 50, So What!* with our Supported Lifestyle Program. It's an excellent overview of our program that provides social support for people with mild dementia and respite for carers. As always, a huge thank you to Carol O'Halloran and her team for taking the time to visit and chat with us and help us share our stories. To view the clip, scan the QR code or search *Over 50, So What!* on YouTube.



EXERCISE & SOCIALISE

at Balwyn Evergreen Centre

Join our popular classes, led by dedicated instructors, and enjoy a social morning or afternoon tea with your group and trainer afterwards.

If you're new to exercise with us, your first class is FREE!

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
10.30am Exercise to Music with Jo G	9.30am Challenge Your Balance with Denise	10.15am Seated Strength Exercise with David	9.30am Men's Exercise with Tom	10am Tai Chi with Lilei
12pm Seated Strength Exercise with David	11.30am Seated Exercise to Music with Jo M	10.15am Strength Exercise with Tom	9.30am Movement to Music with Jo M **45 minute class**	11am Seated Strength Exercise with Yanmei
	1.45pm Seated Strength Exercise with David	11.30am Line Dancing with Jo C	1pm-3.30pm Table Tennis self run	11.15am Seated Tai Chi with Lilei
	1.45pm Strength Exercise with Tom		2.30pm Meditation & Yoga with Elizabeth	

Legend

Gentle

Moderate

Active

Cost of Group Classes

\$12 CHSP assessed and approved

\$16 non assessed

Meet our team of qualified trainers who bring a wealth of experience and expertise to our exercise programs. They're always on hand for a chat to discuss your requirements and goals.

For more information, please contact our Exercise Coordinator, David.



David Watson



Denise Mokasdi

Evergreen Gym Studio + Personal Training

Small Group Circuit Sessions

Thursdays 11am & 1.15pm (45 mins)

Personal Training

Contact David to arrange day/time

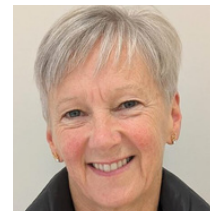
Refer a friend and be rewarded!

We're sharing the love...

refer a friend to our exercise program and both you and your friend will enjoy a free class on us!



Yanmei Chen



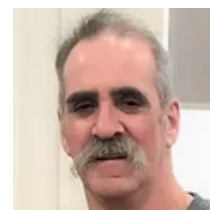
Jo Morris



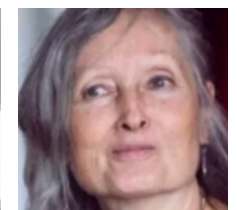
Jo Golds



Lilei Enright



Tom Scott



Elizabeth Mackenzie

Notes

- Please check the online Activities Calendar for any timetable changes
- Make sure you wear appropriate sneakers. Sandals are not permitted

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Checking in during the holidays

Koon (right) and June have become great friends, thanks to our Evergreen Connections Visitor Program, which is part of the Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme. Their bond provides a welcome connection for both and is another example of how this program is positively impacting lives.

This is also a timely reminder to the community to check in with someone who might be struggling over the holiday period.

To find out more about Evergreen Connections and to get involved, please contact the office.



Support our work with a donation



As a not-for-profit organisation and registered charity, we rely on donations from our community to keep the wheels at Balwyn Evergreen turning. If you're able to, please consider making a donation – all contributions go towards supporting the delivery of our programs and services that, in turn, support our community. Donations over \$2 are tax deductible and an official receipt will be provided. Thanks for your support!

Remembering Georges

Balwyn Historical Society is hosting Georges Remembered event on Thursday, April 16, from 1.15pm at the Hawthorn Arts Centre. Featuring music, memorabilia and a fashion parade, this is an event not to be missed. To register your interest email BHS at balwynhistory@gmail.com. The cost is \$40, which will go towards digitising archives.

Join our mailing list

Enjoy our newsletter online by signing up to our mailing list either by contacting the office or on our website!

CYBER SNIPPETS

with Bo Cui

Computers can fail or get hacked, so backing up your important files is essential.

This month, we look at backing up data and data backups and securing your home network.

Back up important data

- Use an external hard drive or a cloud service to back up precious photos and documents
- This way, you won't lose everything if your computer gets hacked or damaged



Secure your home Wifi

- Change your router's default name and password
- Use a strong password for your network to keep out intruders

If you need help, give us a call! Have a cyber safe festive season - see you in 2026!

Bo Cui is the Operations Lead at Balwyn Evergreen and also our resident tech whizz. He runs the Be Connected digital training program that offers regular one-to-one sessions on whatever tech problems are irking you. To book with Bo, please contact the office.

Heading away? send us a text!



You can now contact us by text message to let us know of any illness or planned absences. Make sure you include your name and relevant details. This is a text-only service, please don't call this number. If you'd like us to call you back, please state this in the message.

Mobile: 0451 516 079

Hot weather policy

Please be aware if the temperature is forecast to be 35DegC or above, and we deem it to be a health risk, activities and classes may be cancelled. We'll do our best to keep you updated. If you have any questions or concerns, please get in touch.



Hire our space for your next event

Balwyn Evergreen has had a spectacular facelift, and our revamped spaces are available for hire! Whether you're looking to host a one-off event or find a new home for a regular group, our versatile rooms could be the answer to your 'where can I find a great venue?' problem.

For more information and to arrange a tour, contact hire@balwynevergreen.org.au.

Connect with us



@balwyn_evergreen



'Balwyn Evergreen Centre'



'Balwyn Evergreen Centre'