

FEBRUARY 2026

## There's a positive feeling in the air

### Welcome to the February edition of Evergreen Connections

Hello, Balwyn Evergreen! It's good to be back. We trust you all had a nice break and are suitably refreshed for the year ahead. We've all enjoyed a bit of time off, relaxing and spending time with friends and family. But there comes a time when you just need to get back into your routine. Holidays are great, but you can have too much of a good thing!

So the best way to get back into things is to get back into things! All our activities are in full swing, and there's no better time to reboot your regular program, or even try something new.

We've got big plans for 2026, including increasing our exercise offerings - check out page 2 for David's new Falls and Balance program and page 4 for the new Women's Super Circuit class.

Our Bus Outings are also expanding to offer more variety. Raymond has been diligently working on this to come up with some fantastic locations - find out more on page 5. Then there's our Supported Lifestyle Program that continues to grow. Check out page 6 for details on our upcoming information session about the benefits of this program.

Of course, all this and more will be explored at our Annual Open Day on Saturday, March 28 (more on page 2)! Make sure you put this in your diary and have a think about who you can bring along on the day to introduce to us. Yes, there's plenty going on at Balwyn Evergreen, but that's what makes it fun.

See you soon!

- The Balwyn Evergreen Centre Team



### An exercise in social connection

Our Monday Exercise to Music ladies know how to make the most of their session.

They're pictured here at last year's Christmas break-up, where everyone brought something along to share, including their plans for the festive period.

Exercise to Music is an active workout - Jo puts the group through their paces, then they enjoy morning tea afterwards.

**To find out more about our exercise program and to book a free trial, please contact the office.**



### Events & Info Sessions

#### Balwyn Evergreen Open Day

**Saturday, March 28**

**10am-2pm**



*Join us for a day of fun, friendship and a whole lot of colour at our annual Open Day! Check our page 2 for more info*

#### Chatty Café

**Thursday, February 26**

**1pm-2pm**



*Drop in for a chat and a coffee in the café at our monthly Chatty Café session. Everyone is welcome.*

#### Introducing the SLP

**Friday, February 27**

**11am-12pm**

*Find out all about our Supported Lifestyle Program and how it can benefit your loved one. Presented by Activities Coordinator, Raymond.*

*All events and information sessions are free to attend unless stated otherwise. Please book your spot with the office and check in with the office upon arrival.*

# NEWS CORNER

Updates From the Balwyn Evergreen Centre Community



## Don't miss our 2026 Open Day

Make sure you put **Saturday, March 28 from 10am-2pm** 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 the big kahuna of events where we open our doors to the community, wave our arms around and shout: 'We're over here!' For some strange reason, there are people out there who haven't heard about us - we know, it's weird!

Anyway, there's lots to look forward to on the day, including exercise demonstrations, BBQ, cake stall, coffee, community partner showcase and market stalls. It's going to be a fun and colourful celebration of our community, so please help us spread the word and share the love with friends and family.



## 'Tis the season to celebrate our volunteers

We love a good food-related activity, and there's no better excuse for a big meal than Christmas! Here are a few photos of our festive lunch, which coincided (almost) with International Volunteer Day. Once again, a huge thanks to our volunteers and staff who make the magic at Balwyn Evergreen happen.



## Falls and Balance class in the works

Great news! A structured Falls and Balance program will be added to our exercise program over the next few months.

David is putting together a six-week progression course that will be challenging in all the right places.

What you need to know:

- Run throughout the year in six-week blocks
- Led by exercise physiology-qualified instructor, aka David!
- Testing at the start and end of the course to monitor progress

This evidence-based course will work with the individual with the aim of improving confidence, strength and independence, and reduce the risk of falling.

**To find out more and put your name on the waitlist, please chat with David or contact the office.**

Motivated by a keen interest in people and a strong desire to give back are just a few things that make **Theresa Webster** a fantastic part of our community. She shares her interesting story with us.

### Growing up in South Africa

"I had an idyllic childhood," Theresa Webster says of growing up in Cape Town.

"My father had a dry sense of humour, and my mother was much more serious," she recalls.

Her mother was a businesswoman, which was unusual for the time, and her father worked in local government on big construction projects. An only child, she was looked after by her grandparents and later on by her nanny, Ethyl, who remained part of the family until her mother moved to Australia in 2014.

"My father was present and played a huge role in my life – he taught me to cook and took me to activities. My friends were jealous of my dad," Theresa says. As a teenager, Theresa enjoyed sports and being outdoors – "Table Mountain was my playground," she says of the famed Cape Town landmark.

As university in South Africa was prohibitively expensive, Theresa opted to get a job as a stenographer at Cape Town City Council with her best friend. This led to a PA role with the Mayor and Mayoress of Cape Town - "this was a huge role," she says, "I learned a lot about city life."

But the changing social climate and increased rates of civil unrest meant South Africa was no longer as idyllic as her childhood, and together with her husband and young daughter, the family decided to emigrate to Australia, arriving in Melbourne in November 1976.

### A newsworthy career

A fortuitous meeting at a family BBQ helped Theresa pursue her dream career in newspapers.

"My dream was to be involved with newspapers. I loved the idea of the action, the instant nature of the work and that tomorrow was something new and exciting."



A guest at the BBQ worked in the classifieds at the Herald and Weekly Times and encouraged her to apply for a role there. From there, Theresa worked her way around various departments, including becoming PA to the Women's Editor in 1977. "I absolutely loved my job. It was everything I could have dreamed of."

She stayed with HWT until retirement in 2016, when she took a redundancy.

In her personal life, she divorced her husband and in 2006 met Richard, whom she describes as her 'soul mate'. He sadly passed away in 2024. "We had a beautiful relationship with a lot of shared interests." She was also fortunate to spend time with her mother during her later years, when she moved to Australia to live with her. Her mother passed away aged 94, and Theresa says they got to know each other better and on a different level, which she's grateful for.

Also close by are her daughter and grandchildren, whom she spends time with most weekends.

### Connecting with Evergreen

"I'm so pleased that I found this place because the people are always friendly and welcoming. I love how Tina wanders around and says hello. There's a nice, warm, fuzzy feeling about this place."

Theresa is at activities here almost every day – Strength Exercise, Yoga and Meditation, Seated Tai Chi, Bus Outings and the Senior Divas, plus she volunteers with Raymond. If that's not enough, she's also part of a group called VIEW – Voice, Interest and Education of Women, which is part of The Smith Family charity. "I wanted to do something useful and give back to the community."

Coming to Australia has taught me a lot. It's given me the freedom to express myself. Freedom from crime on a daily basis. I had the feeling I had to give back."

### A community full of positivity

Thanks to everyone who completed our Annual Consumer Survey 2025 - we had 84 responses, which was fantastic. Overall, the survey reflected a highly engaged community that continues to place trust in Balwyn Evergreen and the staff who make it work with passion and enthusiasm. Here's a little roundup of the survey results...

#### **A community that keeps showing up**

Almost 88 per cent of respondents had visited the centre in the past week, a notable increase on previous years. Participation ranged from people who have only recently joined to those who have been attending for more than 20 years.

#### **Respect, safety and feeling welcome**

The results also show the centre is delivering strongly on the fundamentals that matter most. More than 92 per cent of respondents said they are always treated with respect, while 94 per cent said they always feel safe and welcome.

#### **Social connections that support wellbeing**

Responses for this topic repeatedly returned to the same themes: friendly staff, caring volunteers, supportive instructors and the friendships formed through classes, outings and shared routines. For many clients, especially those living alone, Balwyn Evergreen provides structure to the week and meaningful social contact.

#### **Independence supported by practical care**

Access to transport, assistance with navigating aged care systems and affordable programs were consistently valued.

Clients spoke about transport services enabling them to continue attending even when driving is no longer possible. Others highlighted support with My Aged Care registrations and digital assistance as critical to staying informed and confident.

#### **Warm words from our community**

"Thank you to all volunteers at the centre who donate their time."

"Thanks to all the staff for the welcoming feeling they have created."

"Grateful thanks for providing such a wonderful service."

***To read the more in-depth survey report, head to the News section on our website.***

### News class alert: Ladies Super Circuit!

Ladies, if you're in the market for a new active group exercise class, then check out our new Super Circuit, on Fridays from 9.30am-10.30am! Led by Exercise Coordinator, David, the class will involve moving through different strength and cardio stations with the aim of a higher-intensity workout.

***For more information and to see if***

***Super Circuit is right for you, please talk to David. And don't forget, if you're new to exercise with us, your first class is free.***



### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

*with Ruby Cheung*

Hello, friends, how are we holding up in this heat?

Summer can leave us feeling drained, dehydrated and not wanting to move, but the right foods can help maintain muscle strength and keep the body cool and comfortable.



Focus on hydrating foods like cucumbers, watermelon, and oranges, which are packed with water and essential vitamins. These can help with hydration, prevent fatigue, and support muscle function.

Citrus fruits, like oranges and lemons, are also rich in vitamin C, which aids in muscle repair and strengthens the immune system.

Protein-rich foods, such as grilled chicken, tofu, eggs, and legumes, are crucial for maintaining muscle mass and supporting recovery.

Leafy greens like spinach, kale, and silverbeet are rich in magnesium, which helps relax muscles and reduce cramping.

Staying hydrated is equally important, as even mild dehydration can worsen muscle cramps and fatigue.

To help cool off and enhance digestion, incorporate cooling herbs like mint and basil into meals or teas. These herbs not only help to reduce body temperature but also provide a refreshing flavour boost. By choosing light, nutrient-packed meals this summer, you can support both muscle strength and comfort, making these warmer months more enjoyable for older adults.

*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. Before making any significant dietary changes or if you are worried about your health, please consult your doctor.*

# 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
- Failure to notify of cancellation by 9am on the day will incur a fee

### February Outings

#### Tuesday, February 3

##### HEALESVILLE: Healesville RSL

Flanked by a national forest and the fruits of the Yarra Valley, Healesville is a popular destination for anyone looking for a day trip. The historic main street and tight-knit community ensure a welcoming vibe to anyone from out of town. We'll take in the local sights, then head to the Healesville RSL for lunch. This stronghold of the community is ideal for senior visitors.

#### Tuesday, February 10

##### CALDERMEADE: Caldermeade Farm & Cafe

##### EARLY START 9am

Settled in 1875, Caldermeade was originally one of Gippland's premier beef cattle properties. Today, it is a modern, fully operational commercial dairy farm focusing on educating and entertaining visitors. We'll explore the farm, sample its produce and enjoy lunch at the on-site cafe, which features award-winning pies and Devonshire Tea.

#### Tuesday, February 17

##### WHITTLESEA: Whittlesea RSL

Part of Melbourne's thriving outer northern suburbs, Whittlesea is a popular destination for day trippers and hikers. It's home to a diverse community and is also one of the fastest-growing municipalities in Victoria. We'll drive around the main streets, enjoy the view of the hills, then head to The Royal Mail Hotel for lunch. The newly renovated bistro has a huge menu with seniors' options.

#### Tuesday, February 24

##### HASTINGS: Pelikan Societe

At the gateway to the Mornington Peninsula, Hastings offers a quiet respite from the bustle of the city. The historic fishing village has a picturesque foreshore with thriving wetlands and conservation reserves. Lunch is at the Pelikan Societe, which offers a fantastic meal with a view over the water.

*For a copy of the extended Outings Newsletter, which gives you a sneak peek up to June 2026, please contact [office@balwynevergreen.org.au](mailto:office@balwynevergreen.org.au).*

### Coming soon... more Outings!

We've listened to our audience and are adding more outings from next month onwards!

#### Fortnightly Thursday Community Outings

For people who enjoy active, engaging experiences beyond our regular Tuesday offerings.

These special outings will focus on:

- Guided tours and exhibitions
- Museums, galleries, and cultural attractions
- Destinations not open or available on Tuesdays
- Gentle walking and stimulating experiences in a supportive group setting

Come along, discover new places, and enjoy great company along the way!

#### Monthly Monday Premium Outings

Treat yourself to something extra special with our monthly top-shelf outing option.

These will feature more premium or higher-cost destinations, such as:

- The Melbourne Zoo
- Exhibitions
- Iconic attractions and special experiences

Make Mondays something to look forward to!

*For more information and to get on the waitlist, please talk to Raymond.*

### Out and about...

A snapshot of our recent outings

Travelling in style at the Cranbourne Botanic Gardens last month. It's always great to get out and see a bit of nature.



# ACTIVE LIVING

Keeping Social Connections Strong

## Discover the benefits of our SLP

If you're keen to find out more about our Supported Lifestyle Program, then join us for a special FREE information session hosted by Activities Coordinator, Raymond.

This is a great opportunity for families and carers to find out exactly what the program entails and how beneficial it can be for someone living at home with mild dementia or cognitive decline. Raymond is experienced in the social support space and has specific training in dementia. He'll discuss what the program is, what it entails and how it's delivered, all with supporting evidence. Find out about:

- The engaging, varied activities that support the mind and body
- How the program is delivered in a welcoming community setting, not an institution
- Meet our dementia-trained staff and caring volunteers
- Not to mention the added extras – nutritious food and door-to-door transport

*If you've been curious about whether this program would suit your loved one, don't miss this chance to find out more!*



### INTRODUCTION TO SLP

**When:** Friday, February 27, from 11am-12pm

**Where:** Evergreen Connections Café & Information Hub

**Cost:** FREE – tea/coffee included

**For more information and to book, please contact the office.**

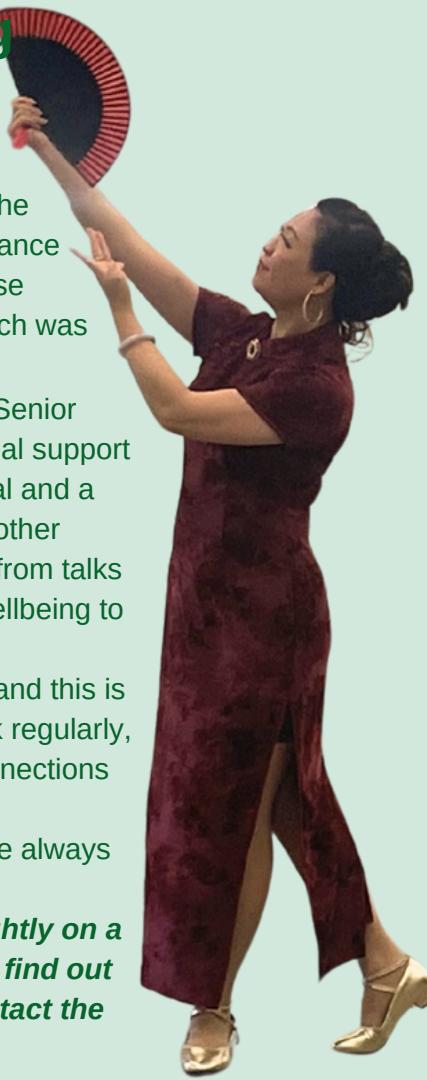
## Learn something new with The Senior Divas

Happy early Lunar New Year! The Divas were treated to a performance by Veronica Fu from The Chinese Health Foundation recently, which was an engaging display of culture.

If you haven't heard about The Senior Divas? They're a fortnightly social support group that meets to enjoy a meal and a guest speaker, performance or other organised activity, which range from talks on local history or health and wellbeing to a practical art workshop.

But the best thing about Divas, and this is what keeps people coming back regularly, is the friendships made and connections formed. While this group is well established, new participants are always welcome.

***The Senior Divas meet fortnightly on a Thursday from 11am-2pm. To find out more and to book, please contact the office.***



## Aged Care and Elder Rights Information Session

Dr Monique Ryan, the Independent Member for Kooyong, is hosting a topical information session presented by Elder Rights Australia.

**WHEN: Friday, February 6**

**FROM 11am-12pm**

**WHERE: Balwyn Evergreen, Hall 1**

The session will cover:

- Your rights and roles in your aged care journey, the changes to the aged care system and what it means for you.
- They will talk about accessing aged care and understanding the steps, changes and challenges.
- Also on the agenda are aged care advocacy – what are your rights and how to protect your rights.

Whether you're an older person, carer or community member, this session will provide practical knowledge to help you or someone you support feel informed and connected.

To RSVP, please scan the code, call 9326 2900 or visit [moniquryan.com.au](http://moniquryan.com.au). This session is organised and run by Dr Monique Ryan.



# 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
<b>10.30am</b> Exercise to Music with Jo G	<b>9.30am</b> Challenge Your Balance with Denise	<b>10.15am</b> Seated Strength Exercise with David	<b>9.30am</b> Men's Exercise with Tom	<b>9.30am</b> Women's Super Circuit with David
<b>12pm</b> Seated Strength Exercise with David	<b>11.30am</b> Seated Exercise to Music with Jo M	<b>10.15am</b> Strength Exercise with Tom	<b>9.30am</b> Movement to Music with Jo M <i>**45 minute class**</i>	<b>10am</b> Tai Chi with Lilei
	<b>1.45pm</b> Seated Strength Exercise with David	<b>11.30am</b> Line Dancing with Jo C	<b>1pm-3.30pm</b> Table Tennis self run	<b>11am</b> Seated Strength Exercise with Yanmei
	<b>1.45pm</b> Strength Exercise with Tom		<b>2.30pm</b> Meditation & Yoga with Elizabeth	<b>11.15am</b> Seated Tai Chi with Lilei

## 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

## Notes

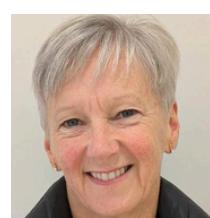
- Please check the online Activities Calendar for any timetable changes
- Make sure you wear appropriate sneakers. Sandals are not permitted

**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

# WHAT'S HAPPENING

## Helping you get here

According to our latest survey, parking was a major bugbear for clients. Unfortunately, it's about to get worse with scheduled drainage improvement works in the immediate surrounding streets for six weeks beginning February 2. Please plan your trip to Balwyn Evergreen accordingly.



With limited parking onsite, you may want to consider parking a little further away and walking to the centre. If you need a lift, we can pick you up in our minivan or car. This door-to-door service ensures you get here and back safely.

**For more information on our transport service, please speak with the office.**

## CYBER SNIPPETS

*with Bo Cui*



Many Australian banks offer transaction alerts and online fraud monitoring. Always be suspicious of "urgent" or "act now" claims.

This month, we look at how you can keep your bank accounts safe.

### Enrol in bank security alerts

- Your bank may alert you if they detect suspicious transactions
- Ensure your email or phone number is up to date in their system

### Be suspicious of 'urgent' requests

- Scammers rely on urgency to pressure you.
- Always take a moment to verify the request by calling the official number of the agency or individual.

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.*

## 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](mailto:hire@balwynevergreen.org.au).**

## 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!

## Transport policy

As a reminder, we require written or verbal notification of cancellation of our local transport and outing services by 9am on the day of the booking. Failure to notify us will incur a cancellation fee.

## Update your details

Make sure you let the office know if there are any changes to your personal details.

## Join our mailing list

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



## Connect with us



@balwyn\_evergreen



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