CBTS
Winter
Newsletter
2026

Cottage by the Sea
QUEENSCLIFF

Every child deserves a break



Trust, Risk-taking & Hope

As we move into winter, I'm proud to share a new research paper by Deakin University, Turning Points for Children Experiencing Vulnerabilities: The Role of Outdoor Adventure (2026), which uses Cottage by the Sea's programs as a case study. It captures something we've long known: that adventure – particularly in the outdoors – has the power to be life-changing, especially for children and young people experiencing vulnerability.

At its heart, the research explores how adventure-based experiences shape both present wellbeing and future aspirations. What it confirms is what we see every day: when young people are given the opportunity to challenge themselves in a supportive environment, they build resilience, strengthen relationships and develop the confidence to imagine new possibilities for their future.

Three themes stood out strongly in the findings: trust, risk-taking and hope.

Trust forms the foundation. As children build confidence in their peers, in our program leaders, and importantly in themselves, they begin to feel secure enough to step forward. From there, they take risks – moving beyond their comfort zones, navigating uncertainty and embracing challenges. And in those moments, something powerful happens: they begin to feel hope. A belief that they are capable of more than they previously thought and for some, hope that their future can look different.

One young participant said it best:

"I learnt that I got more in me than I thought… so I can do more things than I thought about."

– Take a Break participant

Cottage by the Sea would like to acknowledge the Wadawurrung people, who are the traditional custodians of the land on which the Cottage stands. Cottage by the Sea would also like to pay respect to the elders past, present and emerging of the Wadawurrung nation and extend that respect to other First Nations people.

For many, these experiences are truly transformative. As one Cottage alum reflected:

"As a child you just want happiness and hope to actually do and be and say what you want…it's just nice that there are certain places [CBTS]…that can provide the tools to dream."

– Cottage by the Sea alumni

At a time when our sector is facing increasing pressures and rising costs, this research is a timely reminder of why it matters. Outdoor adventure has the potential to create a turning point. It builds resilience, strengthens connection and opens the door to new futures.

This report validates what our team delivers every day, but it also challenges us to do more – to advocate the importance and the life-changing potential of access to outdoor adventure.

So, this winter, I encourage you to step outside, experience nature, and share it with the young people in your life. And most importantly, continue to support opportunities that allow every child to grow.

Thank you for being part of this work.



Adam Wake

CEO, Cottage by the Sea



Riptide is officially open and given the tick of approval!

We're delighted to share that Riptide Cottage is now officially open. From the outset, our ambition was to create the leading facility of its kind in the country – and I believe we have done that. Most importantly, our first group of children have already experienced a stay, and I'm very pleased to say it more than met their expectations.



Scan this QR code to watch what we think is the BEST VIDEO EVER

Their time with us was rich with adventure. From canoeing in Point Lonsdale to a boat charter on Port Phillip Bay, each day offered new opportunities for adventure, balanced with moments to slow down – sharing meals, playing games, and simply enjoying each other's company. They were the first to experience the new bunk rooms, relax in the suspended hammock, and spend time in the upstairs rumpus room, taking in the expansive views across Swan Bay and Queenscliff.

Riptide building image by Pam Hutchinson

As one participant reflected,

"This camp's gonna be one of the memories that sticks with us forever."

– Take a Break participant

which is exactly what we strive for – creating life-changing experiences and lifelong memories.



We invite you to enjoy this snapshot of a week at Cottage, and to reflect on the impact this new facility will have – enabling an additional 700 children each year to benefit from Cottage experiences.

Thank you again to our supporters, whose generosity has made this possible.



Cottage news

Boutique Homes Charity House

In support of Cottage by the Sea – Boutique Homes, Warralily and supporting partners have come together to build and now sell a family home in Armstrong Creek with all proceeds from the sale donated to Cottage.

“This is a truly stunning home and a testament to the generosity, craftsmanship and dedication of the trades and suppliers involved. More than an exceptional property, it represents a meaningful opportunity to support the children of Cottage by the Sea,” shared the project’s Construction Manager Clint Aquilina.

This house is not just a home; it is also a catalyst for change – helping ensure that children experiencing vulnerability can access the support, confidence and joy that Cottage provides.



New staff members & volunteers

The following new staff members have recently joined the Cottage team:



Falguni



Josh



Kyle



Kylie



Sandy



Jake

- Lauren – Camp Leader
- Kyle – Camp Leader
- Jake – Camp Leader
- Josh – Camp Leader
- Lily – Camp Leader
- Sandy – Camp Leader
- Kylie – Cottage Chef
- Linda – Executive Assistant
- Falguni – Accounts Officer
- Jan – Kitchen volunteer



Lauren



Lily

Riptide launch

In February, after many years in the planning and fundraising, our new state-of-the-art Riptide facility was officially opened by Deakin University’s new Chancellor Claire Higgins and Board Chair, Scott Chapman AM. More than 180 guests gathered, honouring the contributions of many people who facilitated the rebuild. In addition to supporting up to 700 more children annually on Cottage’s programs, Riptide will be used as a respite facility for families in need of a break by the sea.



Cottage CEO Adam Wake, Deakin University Chancellor Claire Higgins + Cottage Board Chair Scott Chapman AM holding the Riptide Honour Board

Programs

Take a Break – First waves, big smiles

Cottage provides tailored short-stay programs for children and young people who have experienced disadvantage, including children from low socio-economic areas, those affected by family stress, isolation, family violence, and those impacted by natural disasters such as floods and fire.

The Lancaster cluster is a group of very small remote schools in the Loddon Campaspe region of Victoria and earlier in the year, 34 students aged between 9 and 11, experienced a Take a Break camp accompanied by 5 local teachers.

The group's adventure began on the train, and the Cottage staff collected them from the South Geelong Train Station, all eager to begin their coastal camp experience.

It was a welcome change of scenery for these country based children of which some, had never stepped foot on the beach before and couldn't wait to feel the sand between their toes.

Despite being from different schools, the children interacted wonderfully with one another and excelled in the team-building activities.

On reflection of their stay the children remarked that they enjoyed meeting new people, making new friends and trying new things.

Whilst at Cottage they threw themselves into a variety of coastal adventures. Boogie-boarding and sandcastle-building on the beach quickly became favourite activities, the children built confidence in the water and cheered each other on.

Trips to the Queenscliff Marina gave the children the opportunity to go shrimping and spot the famous local stingrays gliding through the water. Meanwhile, visits to Point Lonsdale allowed the participants to explore rockpools, walk along the pier and take in the scenic views from the lighthouse precinct.

It was heartwarming to see these country children having a chance to experience the coast and all the wonderful experiences it has to offer.

"Probably one of the best camps I have been on in my 21 years in education"

– Teacher, Lancaster Cluster



“I learnt to be brave!”

– REEF participant



REEF – New friendships & adventures begin

New REEF participants come together to begin a two-year journey of growth, teamwork and adventure.

The REEF program is built on connection, with “F” standing proudly for friendship. And from the very first moments of this year’s program, ‘Friendship’ was on full display as two groups of students from two different schools came together for the first time, beginning a two-year journey of growth, challenge and discovery.

The REEF program is specifically designed to foster confidence and leadership in young people aged 11-14 through 10 programs over 2 years and the first Cottage visit can be a little daunting for some participants. New places, new faces and an unfamiliar environment can understandably feel overwhelming at first. But for these ‘Reefies’, that hesitation didn’t last long.

Within just a couple of hours, new friendships began to form as if they had known each other for years. A strong sense of belonging quickly took hold, and the group settled confidently into the experience.

From the beach to the Cottage itself, energy and excitement carried through every activity. It was clear this group wasn’t just there to have fun – they were already beginning to work as a team. Whether solving challenges together or encouraging one another to try something new, the foundations of trust and teamwork were already taking shape.

Over the next two years, these young people will take part in 9 more unique programs across Queenscliff and beyond. Along the way, they’ll be intentionally supported to build essential life skills including resilience, leadership, teamwork and communication – all key skills as they transition from Grade 6 into Year 7 and the years that follow.





“This support at this time is so important, if a child disengages from school at this stage it can be most difficult to get them to re-engage”

– Sean, Program Co-ordinator

Mentor – Exploring Wilsons Prom

Our Mentor program is designed to support young people aged 13-18 with programs held annually over 5 years. Our mentors recently visited Wilsons Promontory National Park on the southernmost tip of Victoria for an offsite adventure.
A camp leaders diary excerpt.

We made our way to 'Wilsons Prom' on the southernmost tip of Victoria for the Mentors' offsite adventure. Stunning white sand, granite mountains and turquoise beaches had the participants in awe on arrival.

We walked to Squeaky Beach, where we passed wallabies and saw giant orange and granite boulders that lined the walking track. Once there, we took off our shoes and enjoyed the squeaky noises our toes made in the sand learning why the beach is well named: squeaky.

We ventured to Walkerville, where we were greeted by a quiet bay and the bluest ocean. We quickly popped on wetsuits, collected our snorkels and entered the water. As we snorkelled our way around the point, we took a moment to explore the large cave and rockpools before returning to shore for lunch.

Our afternoon activity was the boat charter to Skull Rock. We gathered at the meeting point where we collected our oversized coats and listened to the safety brief. The Mentors jumped into the front seats, knowing full well they would be the bumpiest and wettest seats on offer. As the boat rolled into the water and the engines took off, we realised this wasn't going to be the usual slow sight-seeing tour.

As we bounced over the waves, the spray soaked those seated at the front, and squeals and laughter followed. Between the thrilling bursts of speed, we paused to take in the spectacular surroundings, enormous bird nests perched high on rocky cliffs and seal colonies resting along the shoreline.

Intentionally, this Mentor adventure wasn't just about visiting beautiful places. It was about shared experiences, building confidence, strengthening friendships and creating memories that will stay with them for years to come.



Alumni – Cottage conversations: former participant now Camp Leader, Ebony

We chat with former Cottage participant now staff member Ebony about her 17-year journey (and counting!) with our children's charity.

Q: How did your journey with Cottage begin?
A: "I started at Cottage as a Take a Break program participant when I was in Grade 3 at Tate Street Primary School in 2009. Then, my school was selected to participate in the REEF and Mentor programs, where we came up to four times a year through Year 6 to Year 12 – it just helped with the transition in school. Then, I got a job here as a Camp Leader and I've been here ever since! I'm now 24."

Q: What makes Cottage so special?
A: "It's another place you can call home. But it's also got so much adventure and so many new things – although it's new things that feel familiar because of how comfortable you are here."

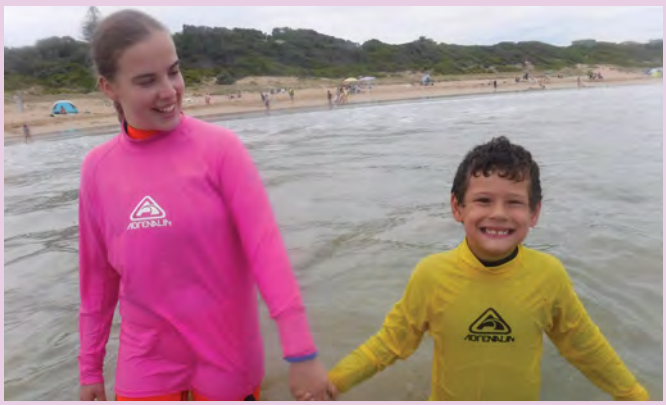
Q: What inspired you to come back to Cottage to work?
A: "When I was a kid here, I always looked up to all the staff members and my Camp Leaders – they really changed my life. They got to do so many cool things and I was like, that would be the coolest job ever! Then, after having felt the impact, I thought it would be awesome if I could do that for someone else."

"It feels incredible to be a leader in this space because when I see a kid smile and laugh during their experience at Cottage, I know from first-hand experience how genuine and lifelong those small moments of joy are. It just makes it all the more special to know I get to be part of that."

– Cottage Camp Leader
& former program participant Ebony



Q: How did your background studying nursing and paramedicine relate to your time at Cottage?
A: "They wanted to give us life skills through Cottage's REEF and Mentor programs, so we did our White Card training, barista training and first-aid training. The first-aid course was my first exposure to first aid and medical support in any sort of industry. That inspired my future aspirations to become a nurse and a paramedic."



Q: Is there anything else you'd like to add?
A: "Cottage by the Sea has given me so much confidence, connections into the real world, leadership experience … and heaps of experiences that I would never have been able to do at home and through normal life. You meet so many new people through the programs and it opens your mind to so many new things that now I know I can do. Maybe I didn't know I was capable of it before, but they've encouraged me so much that I'm stronger."

"My story here at Cottage is ongoing – I'm always getting new experiences now as a Camp Leader, but hopefully I can be a testament to how much Cottage by the Sea does affect one person. And if you put that same experience onto the 1,900+ children we get a year, hopefully we can have that same effect on all those young kids."



Partnerships

ABN Group/ Boutique Homes

As mentioned in Cottage News, 2026 has marked some of the most significant and rewarding periods in our partnership with ABN Group/Boutique Homes – the successful sale of their second charity home for Cottage and the official opening of our new Riptide facility. None of this would be possible without the extraordinary contribution of the trades, suppliers and partners who have supported this build, in addition to the generosity of ABN Group/ Boutique Homes.

Port Phillip Sea Pilots

Port Phillip Sea Pilots is a valued supporter of Cottage by the Sea. With over 185 years of service, operating 24/7, 365 days a year to ensure vessels cross Port Phillip Heads safely, they are a trusted presence in our local community. Their support goes beyond their day-to-day operations, regularly attending Cottage fundraisers and making generous in-kind contributions when needed, and we're grateful for their support.

Boardriders Surf Day 2026

In March, we held our Annual Boardriders Surf Day. This year, the event took place with Take a Break participants from Ararat in rural Victoria. The morning kicked off with a surf at Cosy Corner, followed by a well-earned burger break at 4 Pines in Torquay before participants received a special gift bag to take home. We thank the Boardriders Foundation for their ongoing commitment, in addition to the valued support of Quicksilver and Billabong Australia.





Melbourne Community Relations

Baptcare Strathalan Knitting Group

Donna's connection with our Melbourne supporters continues to grow. "Thanks again to our Melbourne donors, both new and long-time, for supporting the children and helping us reach many more."

Welcoming our new supporters

- **Baptcare Strathalan Knitting Group, pictured with the beanies they've lovingly made**
- **Probus Club of Burwood East Combined**
- **Templestowe Central Probus Club**
- **Holy Family Parish - Mt Waverley**
- **Joy van Neuren**
- **Liz Ballantine**
- **Helen French**
- **Margaret Dorrington**
- **Mothers Union - Mt Waverley**



Julia from YES- Youth Education Support Inc.



Sandy, President of Probus Club of Burwood East Combined with Donna

Special recognition & appreciation

Spectrum provided a wonderful variety of goodies for the children.

YES - Youth Education Support Inc. supplied a large amount of toiletries, thank you to the YES Team and Julia Mosely

Applewood Craft Group once again hosted their Winter Warmers fundraiser stall, featuring crafts and delicious soup.

Sew What, Sew Good invited Donna to lunch and filled our Cottage vehicle with wonderful donations.



Waverley Day View Club toilet paper donation

Waverley Day View Club continued their wonderful annual tradition, with every member contributing toilet paper and packing our Cottage car high. Thank you, we truly appreciate your generosity.



Holy Trinity Doncaster

Holy Trinity Anglican Ladies Guild in Doncaster celebrated their 100th anniversary. ''Congratulations!' Your many years of support for Cottage are truly appreciated, thank you, ladies.

Riptide Green Brick Appeal

A big thank you to the many supporters who responded to our callout. Your contributions to the Riptide building mean so much, and your names on the bricks will stand as a lasting reminder of your support.



Mt Waverley Uniting Church Women's Fellowship High Tea in August

Mt Waverley Uniting Church Women's Fellowship
Correction - It was incorrectly reported in the Summer Newsletter that the Mt Waverley Uniting Church Women's Fellowship raised $300 at their August high tea event. The correct amount raised was $3,000. We apologise for the error.

A Cottage wishlist is created each season, to stay updated on our Wish List, contact Donna or scan this QR code

Donna drives across Melbourne to collect donations. Please contact her to arrange a pickup. Thank you to our Melbourne community for supporting our children's charity.

Donna Campisi
Melbourne Community Relations
Cottage by the Sea

Mobile: 0436 191 010
Email: donna.c@cottagebythesea.com.au

Future Giving – gifts in Wills

Leaving a gift in your Will is one way to support Cottage, without affecting your current income or bank balance. It allows you to leave a legacy of money, property, shares or goods beyond your lifetime, which will support generations of children to come.

Guardians by the Sea: Your gift, their future – forever by the sea

Guardians by the Sea has recently been established to honour the generosity of those intending to leave a gift in their Will to the Cottage.

As a member of Guardians by the Sea, you will be helping us plan our future with confidence and security. A precious security for thousands of children who we will care for in the years to come. We invite you to be a part of this friendly group, knowing that together we are making an extraordinary difference. Membership is complimentary and voluntary.

Every gift Cottage by the Sea receives is deeply treasured.

Free online Wills service for Cottage supporters

Cottage by the Sea has partnered with Gathered Here, an online Wills and Estates law firm that hosts a free and easy step-by-step service to writing your Will online at http://wills.gatheredhere.com.au/c/cottage-by-the-sea or via the QR code.

Already have a Will?

Cottage by the Sea has a Codicil-style, Gift in Will Instruction Sheet, which will allow you to easily include a gift to Cottage by the Sea in your existing Will without incurring the expense of rewriting it.

We are always deeply grateful for any gifts left in Wills. They make a phenomenal difference to Cottage by the Sea, allowing us to protect our work for generations to come.

Scan this QR code to view the Gift in Will Instruction Sheet



Event invitation: High Tea by the Sea

Guardians by the Sea is a special group that has been established to honour the generosity of those who have chosen to leave a gift in their Will to Cottage by the Sea.

We warmly invite you to join us for a high tea, where you'll learn more about this community of supporters and the impact of your gift.

Date: Monday 31st of August 2026

Time: 11am at Cottage by the Sea, 29 Flinders Street, Queenscliff

RSVP:giftinwill@cottagebythesea.com.au or call 03 5258 1663.

Fundraising & events

Geelong Access Hire Race Day

Thanks to the support of more than 170 guests, this year's Geelong Access Hire Race Day was a great success, raising over $43,000 to directly support our programs. These funds will support programs that empower children, build confidence and assist them reach their full potential.



Adam Wake, Phil de Fégely and Ian Cover OAM

Flinders Golf Day

Our annual Cottage by the Sea Flinders Golf Day returned in February at Flinders Golf Club and raised more than $40,000 for our children's charity.



Flinders Golf Day

Barwon Heads Triathlon

Thanks to the Bellarine Branch for running a sausage sizzle at the Barwon Heads Triathlon, raising over $2,200 for Cottage.

Giving Day

On March 3, we held our annual Giving Day fundraiser and together with our generous matched givers we raised a record-breaking amount – $596,697! Thanks to the remarkable show of community support and understanding of the growing need to provide children and young people who experience disadvantage with opportunities to assist them navigate life's challenges and strengthen resilience said Adam Wake, CEO Cottage by the Sea "This reflects the incredible power of community and the day's success was wonderfully heartwarming!"

Fun at Rippers Summer Drinks and May Luncheon

The Rippers Committee have been busy and have held both their annual Summer Drinks followed by their annual May Luncheon both with spirited auctions and raffles in our scenic seaside space. The combined events tallied close to $30,000 for Cottage.

"We extend our deepest gratitude to the many volunteers, staff, donors, businesses and community groups who make our fundraising and events so successful. We really couldn't do this without you"

– Adam Wake, CEO

Bellarine Estate Winery's Easter Festival

Bellarine Estate's annual Easter Festival partnered with Cottage by the Sea, with all proceeds from the event going directly to supporting our programs. The day was brought to life by a fantastic community turnout and the support of five Cottage volunteers who helped ensure everything ran smoothly. From the Easter Bunny and grapevine egg hunt to live music, family activities and market stalls, the festival delivered a vibrant day of fun while raising $10,000 in support of Cottage by the Sea.



Helen, Jade, Andrew, Adam & Keith

Annual Fair

In January, Cottage hosted its Annual Fair and raised a record-breaking amount – $103,000! The Fair's success is based on a considerable effort from a wonderful team of staff, branches, and other volunteers. Their extensive experience, their hours of preparation and work on the day was very much appreciated.



Branch members Carol, Sue & Lorraine - jams & condiments

Upcoming events

- **Guardians by the Sea High Tea on Monday 31 August, 2026 at 11am**
- **Cottage by the Sea Annual General Meeting on Friday October 30, 2026**

Branch news

Highton/Ceres Acorn Branch

In January, the group ran the toys and jewellery stall at our Annual Fair, and in May came together for a special fundraiser at the Scarecrow Patch in Ceres, featuring guest Mrs Jennifer Bantow OAM, raising funds for our children's programs.



Queenscliff Branch: Judy Pinder (front right) with some Branch members

Queenscliff Branch

The Queenscliff Branch members have made important contributions to the Cottage in recent months through their fundraising and their public promotion of the Cottage.

At the January 2026 Cottage Fair, all branch members supported eight stalls between them – which was an amazing and much appreciated effort.

On 8th May 2026, they held a Wine & Cheese Evening with Mr Scott Chapman AM as guest speaker. Whilst Scott is currently President of the Cottage Board, spoke about his work as the recent CEO, Royal Flying Doctor Service, Victoria and as current Chairman, International Africa Medical Flying Doctor Service.

Their Annual Luncheon is planned at the Cottage, on 7 September, incorporating a fashion parade. And recently, the Branch farewelled two long standing members who have made significant contributions: Judy Pinder (with almost 20 years' experience) and Jenny Blake. They are sincerely recognised for their generosity, commitment and compassion.

Open the door to adventure this tax time

Help a child build confidence, connection and a brighter future.

Why adventure matters:

Adventure can be life-changing for children experiencing vulnerability.

New research from Deakin University, using Cottage by the Sea's programs as a case study, confirms what we've already known from years of practice: adventure can be life-changing for children experiencing vulnerability. When given the chance to challenge themselves through meaningful experiences, they build resilience, form stronger connections and gain the confidence to imagine new futures.



Support a child's life-changing adventure this tax time.

All donations of $2 and more are tax deductable.

QR code to tax appeal:

I would like to donate (please circle)

$55 **$100** **$250** **$500** **Other $**.....

Title: ..... Name: .....

Address .....

.....Postcode .....

Phone .....

Email .....

Cottage by the Sea, Queenscliff Inc.
ABN 21 987 748 593 INC. A 0006878E

NEW BANK DETAILS ↓

☐ **Direct debit / bank transfer** (please use your name as the reference)
Account name: Cottage by the Sea, Queenscliff Inc
BSB: 083 646 **Account number:** 58 728 4224

☐ **Mastercard** ☐ **Visa** ☐ **Amex**

Cardholder name: .....

☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐
Card Number

Cardholder Signature: .....

Expiry Date ☐☐ ☐☐ **CCV** ☐☐ ☐☐

Please make this a regular donation. ☐ **Monthly** ☐ **Quarterly** ☐ **Annually**

Cottage by the Sea
QUEENSCLIFF

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DONATE

The Australian Tax Office endorses Cottage by the Sea for charity tax concessions, including donations $2 and over, which are tax deductible. Cottage by the Sea is entered in the public register maintained by the Australian Business Register at www.abr.business.gov.au.

REGISTERED CHARITY
acnc.gov.au/charityregister