Cottage by the Sea

inspiration · fun · opportunity Queenscliff

2023-2024 Summer Newsletter



Introduction from CEO Adam Wake

Welcome to Cottage by the Sea's Summer Newsletter. We have been busy as ever across our programs near and far, in addition to hosting events and engaging with our donors, volunteers and other supporters. We also continue to welcome a greater number of children through on program – at a time when the need has never been greater. As I write this in the middle of November, 1,277 participants have come through our doors this calendar year.

Boutique Homes' confirmation to build a house for us again, with the sale proceeds going towards the Riptide rebuild, is a significant step towards us achieving our funding target for the project. We feel extremely fortunate to be chosen in this way again. Council plans for the redevelopment of Riptide have recently been approved and the rebuild will commence in 2024. Once construction is complete, the neighbouring building will have the capacity to house an additional 700 children per year on our life-changing programs. We aim for the new Riptide Cottage to honour the past while creating an exciting future.

In other news, after three years as President of the Cottage Board, Don Rankin stepped back at our AGM in October. We thank Don for his commitment and efforts – particularly during the very challenging Covid-19 period – in volunteering his time, skills and knowledge to help steer Cottage in the right direction. Don will remain on the Board as we welcome Vice President Scott Chapman into the role of President. Scott has been the Chief Executive of the Royal Flying Doctor Service Victoria since 2010, and has had a lifelong involvement in the outdoors and camps following his exciting professional and voluntary career.

It has been a truly remarkable start to the new financial year in many ways, and I hope you enjoy the news and stories within this newsletter.

Adam Wake
CEO Cottage by the Sea



Don Rankin



Scott Chapman

Father Christmas at Cottage

As the countdown to Christmas is on, we are reflecting on Christmas across the years at Cottage with some special photos from our archives. In the first week of December during the last Take a Break program of each year, Santa visits Cottage on a firetruck with the Queenscliff CFA. This has been a tradition for more than 100 years. Thanks to the generosity and support of our community, we look forward to sharing this experience with the participants this year and for many years to come.

We love supporting children and families through our programs each year and especially at Christmas, when our community comes together to ensure that Santa has plenty of gifts for the kids.



Corporate partnerships

Simply Energy

Cottage by the Sea is a proud charity partner of Simply Energy by ENGIE, which has been a generous donor to Cottage for more than 17 years. Earlier this year, the team facilitated the installation of solar panels on Main Cottage and an EV charger onsite. In November, 15 members of the team returned to Cottage for a corporate working bee that involved painting, cleaning, mulching and planting across our facility.

It was great to spend some time with the team and we are very grateful for this partnership.



Take a Break program

Our Take a Break (TaB) program is focused on inspiration, fun and opportunity. Children aged six–12 attend a three- to five-day program at Cottage.

Changing lives through our Take a Break program

The first glimpse we have of Rose, a teacher from Western English Language School (WELS), is on Cottage by the Sea's outdoor climbing net with the kids – they had asked her to join them. "We want to support the kids – from a distance – to build their confidence," she explains. Rose has been teaching at WELS for more than 20 years and has stayed at Cottage by the Sea on multiple occasions for Take a Break programs. "It's a great place to visit," she says.

The children on this week's Take a Break program have all recently arrived to Australia from more than 15 countries, including Samoa, Thailand, Vietnam, China, Argentina, Afghanistan, Chile, Pakistan, Iraq and many more. Their life experiences across these different cultures are varied. But what they have in common is their resilience, gratitude for the small things in life and a collective sense of joy. "They appreciate what they've been given – all the things we can take for granted," Rose explains.









Seeing dolphins during their first time at the beach is an experience that will stay with the children long after they return home.

Scan to read the full article

For the majority of these children, they have never been to the beach before. You can't help but smile at the excitement on their faces in experiencing the ocean for the first time. "Seeing their joy is priceless," says Rose. As they were building sandcastles on the beach near Cottage, one of the boys started yelling, "Shark! I see a shark!" and made a shark fin with his hand on his head. The whole group looked on to try and spot this "shark" in the water, and then one fin popped up, then another, then a few more. One of the girls shouted, "No, not a shark – it's dolphins!" She was right – there was a pod of dolphins cruising past about 10 metres from the shore. The group watched in awe as the pod of dolphins put on a show.





Feedback from TaB participants

"Thank you for everything. Thank you for playing with us. And thank you for being kind to us. Thank you for making the camp fun!"

"Thank you for everything. Thank you for playing basketball and soccer."

"Thank you Kim for the lovely food you prepared and thank you for cooking gluten-free food."

"Thank you for everything. Thank you for playing basketball with me. Thank you for the camp!"

"'Thank you for playing with me in the 4 days that we went to the very tall building. When we walked at the beach, we saw 5 dolphins! And thank you Mr Kim, the food is so good! The rice and the noodles. Thank you Sean, Belinda, Dave, Will, Louise, Bonnie, Brad, Tori, Shelby, Sheree, Sam and Kim."











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REEF program

Our Recreation, Education, Environment, Friendship (REEF) program fosters confidence, leadership and personal development. REEFies aged 11-14 attend 10 programs over a two-year period.

More than just a snow trip

The REEF participants get to experience a careful program of incrementally designed experiences, building on each, which provides them with a platform to take into their teen years. One of these programs is the ski trip, which enriches the participants' learning and development, and strengthens the bonds that they have created with each other over the past 16 months in the program. This offsite experience gives the participants a greater sense of community and respect for each other, often resulting in great behaviour, personal achievements and increased engagement when back at home and school.

The snow trip provides excellent opportunities for participants to develop independence, confidence, self-esteem and leadership, while adapting to new environments. Experiencing new cultures first-hand often brings to life things that they have been studying at school, such as art, history, languages and sport. This "real world experience" is thought to be a very successful learning mechanism.

Throughout this week on the snow trip, the participants dug deep. They navigated the challenges of walking in ski boots to pushing themselves on the slopes – continually getting up after they fell down – with the ultimate goal of getting all the way down the Bourke Street run. Not only does this week provide a physical challenge of learning how to ski, there is also a mental challenge of living with a large group of people, sharing duties such as dinner prep and clean up, in addition to getting themselves ready to tackle each day that they are away from home.

So while the ultimate goal was to ski – and ski they did – the participants also learned and gained so much more. The Programs Team at Cottage by the Sea could not be more proud of what the REEFies achieved throughout this week.

We are fortunate that each year benefactors cover these extra offsite programs, including a wonderful Geelong-based Foundation covering all the costs for the REEF snow trip in 2023. And we say "extra", because we often are able to take the opportunity to run a program concurrently onsite in Queenscliff, so even more children benefit from our programs each week.

Mentor program

As many of you will know, our Mentor program is for graduates from the REEF program, and focuses on personal development through carefully structured and incrementally designed programming. Mentor participants are aged 13-18 and attend five to six programs per year over five years. The underpinning goals of the Mentor program are for young people to be actively contributing to their community, school and home, as well as at Cottage.



Moulamein offsite adventure

We recently held our annual offsite Mentor program in Moulamein for our All Mentors group. This property is situated in bushland by the banks of the Edward River. The week's outdoor education/ adventure therapy program is packed with fun-filled activities such as fishing, adventures on the tinny, yabbying, bonfires, campfire storytelling and, a favourite of all, ferreting.

> The Mentors had a great time and learned new skills, especially persistence and a willingness to try new things.

One of our Camp Leaders, Ebony, attended Cottage by the Sea as a child and visited Moulamein as a program participant in 2015 when she was in Year 8. She undertook similar activities to the ones the children experience on the trip today, reinforcing the long-standing impact of our programs. It was a full-circle moment for Ebony, now attending as a staff member.

Ebony has transitioned from experiencing the impact of Cottage programs first-hand to sharing these benefits in a professional capacity as a valued member of our Programs Team.

Thank you to the APCO Foundation and APCO service stations, as well as the Anderson family for their continued support.














Moulamein 2022
Thank you!
Peter, Marianne & Damien,
Morris & Pete and Will,
for providing an amazing camp
for our Mentors.

Scholarship program

Scholarships are funded by philanthropists and assist participants in both school and home but also allow many to pursue dreams that may have once felt out of reach.

Reaching their full potential in umpiring

On a recent school visit, a Mentor participant spoke of how the scholarship program helped with her football umpiring job on the weekends, leading to her being asked to umpire the Grand Final! Her manager commented that she had put in a lot of hard work towards the end of the season and that she stood out with her new uniform and shoes. She expressed how proud she was of herself for putting in the hard work and it paying off.





Exploring a passion for figure skating

For one of our Mentors, figure skating is a passion that they have fostered through learning how to ice skate. They first applied for a scholarship in January to receive a six-month "Gold Freestyle Pass" that would allow them to begin figure skating, compete in competitions and hopefully one day teach kids how to figure skate. After the pass had completed, the Mentor reapplied for another scholarship to continue their figure-skating journey. They told the Programs Team how much they had improved and that the original scholarship had helped them so much in achieving certain goals. In addition, they shared just how much joy they get when they are skating on the ice and that the lessons were helping with their mental health. The Mentor's mother has spoken to the Programs Team about how much the scholarships have helped their child through difficult times – especially through building resilience and determination – and is so proud of their commitment to wanting to improve themselves through something they love.

Scan to read the full article

Staff & Ambassador news

Our Ambassadors are fantastic out in the community, helping spread the word and raising funds. They turned out in droves for our AGM (thanks Phil, Jan, Mal, Alan and Cove) and our Patron Bec Maddern was also at our Melbourne Cup Tour event – more on both of these occasions later in the newsletter. Our CEO Adam recently sat with Ambassador Warren Davies for an hour in his well-received podcast "Beyond the Back Paddock" – you can listen to the podcast episode via the QR code below. Warren is known for being "The Unbreakable Farmer" and the speaker, workshop facilitator and mental health advocate shares wisdom on the lessons he's learned about resilience, persistence and determination from his life-defining experiences as a farmer.



Scan to hear the podcast

Our Programs Team is growing to help meet the greater need for what we do now and will need in the future as the Riptide rebuild is completed. In addition to our Programs Team undertaking new training in Remote Area First Aid and trialling raft building as a new programs activity, we have recently welcomed three new casual members – Charlie, Kaylan and Max.

- Charlie's previous employment included working for Camp Wyuna. He loves working out in the field – teaching and mentoring participants in a range of activities.
- Kalyn hails from the United States and holds a Master of Arts degree in counselling and a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and Developmental Disabilities. Kalyn's previous work history includes being an au pair as well as being a trauma team member at an elementary school.



Charlie and participants



Kalyn



Max

- Max loves his footy and any water activity, from surfing to snorkelling and anything in between. His previous employment has been with Sea All Dolphin Swims as well as support work.

Melbourne Community Relations

I have been wonderfully busy, meeting individuals and group supporters every day in my role. I have been attending events, dropping in to community groups with our Winter Newsletter and Spring Wish Lists and picking up kind donations from our Melbourne community. We appreciate your support.

Below is an example of just some of these wonderful community groups – thank you all:

- **Applewood Craft Group** donated a generous cheque in August. They also held their Christmas Stall in October to raise funds for Cottage. I had the pleasure to attend this wonderful event and saw for myself their great enthusiasm. They continue to also donate goods.
- **Westgate Diners Group** had their awesome annual drive in October, where they donated goods such as clothes, pantry items and funds for Cottage.
- **Good Vibes Society Charity Group** has been continuously supplying us with many goods over the past few months.
- **Hadfield Ladies Exercise Group** has more than 20 women as members, who have been continuing to donate their goods to the children.
- **Women of the University Fund** is a generous group who continuously donate goods all year round, and have donated generous funds this year.
- Anne from **Wantirna Village Group** has been a supporter of Cottage for many years, through past clubs she has been involved with. She has recruited many new supporters over the years and gave us another huge donation, including rugs, beanies, scarves and clothing for the children.

We connected with Knit One Give One (KOGO) who welcomed us as a partnering charity, donating knitted clothing, scarves and bed socks for Cottage children, and deliver to us directly. They are also highlighting our organisation as a Community Partner in their November Newsletter.

We have featured twice in The Victorian Probian Aug/Sept issue, reaching an audience of more than 57,000 readers. This coverage has provided further support from Probus Clubs.

If you're in Melbourne and would like a visit, please let us know by emailing donna.c@cottagebythesea.com.au or calling 0436 191 010.

Donna Campisi
Melbourne Community Relations



Anne from Wantirna Village Group



Di from Applewood Craft Group and Donna Campisi



Sylvie from The Good Vibe Society

Future giving

Include a Charity Week is an Australia-wide campaign, and was held in the first week of September in addition to a six-week campaign supporting the significance of incorporating charitable gifts when writing a Will, alongside motivating individuals to establish their own Will if they haven't already.

Leaving a gift in your Will allows you to leave a legacy of money, property, shares or goods beyond your lifetime that will help the generations of children to come. Anyone can write a free, legally binding Will, with free and unlimited updates for life via our trusted partner, Gathered Here.



Events and fundraising

Our events and fundraising are crucial to supplementing the contributions of the Cottage Foundation towards our administration and fundraising costs, of which the Foundation covers the majority.



Race Day

We had a great day at the Geelong Racing Club for our annual Tender Print Cottage by the Sea Race Day. We raised more than $70k, thanks to the amazing support and generosity of the 180 guests and sponsors on the day. Big shout-out to those who helped make it a success: Cottage Ambassadors Ian Cover OAM as MC, Phil de Fégely as auctioneer and Mal Campbell and Robyn as event organisers; Tender Print as the day's key partner and sponsor, the Geelong Racing Club and Bellarine Distillery. Taking over from the long-term support of Tender Print, we are thrilled that Roderick Insurance will be sponsoring the 2025 Cottage by the Sea Race Day.



Geelong Business Excellence Awards presentation night

The Geelong Business Excellence Awards is a prestigious and comprehensive program that supports and recognises clever, creative and innovative business.

In October, some of the Cottage team attended the GBEA presentation night at GMHBA Stadium. It was a fantastic night celebrating the wonderful work of regional businesses, business leaders and entrepreneurs in our community and we won the Medium to Large Business of the Year Award! We were also one of the top four finalists in the Business of the Year Award. Our CEO Adam acknowledged that winning this award was very much a team effort and by "team", that includes everyone within the Cottage community – donors, volunteers, staff and, most importantly, the kids.

At the awards night, a gentleman said to Adam, "I never knew Cottage by the Sea would be part of this. It's made my day. My family went through a break-up in the early 70s and I came to you as a kid in 1974. My life wouldn't have been as good as it has if it hadn't been for that time".

We are of course a “charity”, but it is very important to run the back-end of any charity as a business from money management, to donor and team support, and all things corporate governance.

Scan to watch an interview with CEO Adam Wake from the awards night

Melbourne Cup Tour to Queenscliff

As a nominated charity partner of the 2023 Lexus Melbourne Cup Tour to Queenscliff, a spectacular celebration took place all over town this October across a range of community events with the 18-carat-gold Cup. Such a great community day reinforces the importance of “community”, which is one of our values at Cottage.

The participants at Cottage were able to meet two Melbourne Cup-winning horses and feel the Cup in their own hands – some children were even able to feed carrots to the horses. We aim for experiences at Cottage to leave a lasting impact on children, and this visit from the Cup was no exception.

Scan to see the celebration

A spectacular celebration like this doesn’t come without a huge team working tirelessly behind the scenes to make everything happen. Thank you to the generous support and involvement of the community organisations that helped bring this day of events to life, which included Searoad Ferries, Port Phillip Sea Pilots, Queenscliff Lonsdale Yacht Club, the Bellarine Railway, Queenscliff Music Festival and Queenscliff Brewhouse. In addition, a big thank you to everyone at Cottage by the Sea – including visiting teachers and participants – for helping to make the day such a success and giving our community an event to remember for a lifetime.





From top to bottom: Phil de Fégely with 2007 Melbourne Cup-winning horse Efficient; CBTS participants with the Cup; images by Michael Chambers







Annual General Meeting

On Friday October 27, we hosted our 133rd Annual General Meeting (AGM) at Cottage by the Sea. The AGM is an important day that gives us an opportunity to engage with members and supporters.

We had a great turn out from the Board, Branches, Ambassadors, donors, volunteers and staff. We were thrilled to have Prue Forster and Eril Deighton in attendance, both with many years on the Board through the 1980s/90s. It is brilliant that so many years on they have the opportunity to visit and feel that their hard work has paid off and there is an ever-increasing confidence in the future for us to continue to do what we do. Guest speaker and Cottage Ambassador Phil de Fégely delivered a heart-warming and engaging speech, telling some amazing stories he has heard first-hand from children themselves.

There was a wonderful buzz in the room and it was hard not to feel a sense of pride to be involved in the Cottage journey together.

Branch fundraisers

Our Branches have been busy fundraising and spreading the word about Cottage across their special events. The Branch members do important work in the community by generously donating their time and resources. Here is a summary of their latest fundraisers:

- The Bellarine Branch hosted its annual bridge event at Barwon Heads Golf Club in July. Thanks to the 132 guests who attended the enjoyable event, they raised over $6k.
- The Queenscliff Branch hosted its annual luncheon at Cottage in August, raising $6,422. 105 guests enjoyed a delicious lunch prepared by our Chef Kim. The guests experienced Cottage first-hand in the same way as our program participants by eating lunch in the dining room.



Scan to read the full article

- The Queenscliff Branch hosted a floral art morning event in September at Cottage, where guests arranged flowers, created posies and bouquets and explored botanical art decoration in our art room, finished with morning tea in our dining room overlooking the sea. The creative craft event also returned in late November with a Christmas-inspired feel.

Scan to read the full article

- The Bellarine Branch recently raised funds during an Open Garden Victoria event that welcomed the public to two beautiful residential gardens in Point Lonsdale. Selling coffee, tea, slices and raffle tickets, the Branch raised $7,443 for Cottage.



- The Geelong Branch had an enjoyable Christmas in July function. In September, the Branch held an afternoon tea at Windsor Park Retirement Village. Our CEO Adam spoke at the function, and it was another successful day.
- In November, the Highton/Ceres Branch held a fundraiser at Blue Illusion in Geelong West. A percentage of the cost of items purchased on the day were donated to Cottage.

Please mark your calendars for two of Cottage's biggest upcoming fundraisers in 2024: Annual Fair on January 13 and Giving Day on March 5

We would like to finish this year's Summer Newsletter with this story … on one of our recent Take a Break programs, one of the teachers shared that a lot of the children in this group experience behavioural difficulties but since being on program at Cottage, none of those difficulties have been present. While it can be difficult to quantify exactly why this has occurred, what we do know is that providing children with opportunities to spend time in nature, eat healthy food, challenge themselves in a safe environment and build positive relationships with peers and adult role models helps them to learn and grow when they return back to their families, schools and communities.

2023 highlights at Cottage by the Sea



Cottage Annual Fair



Mentor program - Sydney Harbour Bridge climb



REEF program - snow trip



Take a Break program - low ropes course



Ambassador Joel Sewlwood with REEF participants



Bellarine Branch fundraiser



Mentor program - trip to Melbourne



Take a Break program - snorkelling

Please sign up to donate and support Cottage by the Sea

Our programs are completely non-government funded, so we need your support.



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.

Please consider making a monetary donation, we are seeing an increase in demand for our programs.

All Donations of $2 and over are tax deductible

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Cottage by the Sea Queenscliff

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