



Tasman  
NELSON

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14 Browning Crescent  
Stoke  
NELSON  
7011

Phone: 03 547 6867  
Fax: 03 547 6837

E-mail:  
[oc@tasmanrh.co.nz](mailto:oc@tasmanrh.co.nz)

Web:  
[www.tasmanrh.co.nz](http://www.tasmanrh.co.nz)

*In this issue:*

- A new year for Tasman
- Free Online Course on Dementia
- Concerns and Complaints: your gift to us
- The Symptoms of Dementia
- Influenza – keeping your loved one safe
- A message from Alison Hume

# Family Newsletter

## A new year for Tasman

Warm greetings to everyone from the Tasman team. We hope you had a wonderful holiday season. It feels like it hasn't been long since our last newsletter, and now summer is nearly over. How time flies!

Soon we have to store our jandals and togs and get our winter coats, jackets, and boots out. We have been very fortunate with the beautiful sunny weather that we have been experiencing this summer. Residents are able to enjoy outdoor walks and outings in the sun during the day and cosy evenings indoors.

The past 6 months has been a very busy and exciting time at Tasman. The residents especially enjoyed helping decorate the homes for Christmas and singing Christmas carols with the staff. We were also delighted to have the opportunity to share with residents and families during the Christmas family gathering, enjoying the festive spread and lovely music.

A number of new caregivers have recently joined our team and have fast become integral members of the Tasman Rest Home community; some are registered nurses from overseas who bring with them a wealth of knowledge and experience. Please join us in welcoming Antonette, Jezza, Mary, Jay, Marian and Fatima to the Tasman team. We are glad to have Claire back from maternity leave and we congratulate Mottu on the birth of a lovely baby girl.

Thank you very much for those who returned the EPOA family survey that



was sent out last year. These have now been collated and quality improvements have been raised as a result. Our Diversional Therapists ("DT" - wearing the turquoise uniform) are very open to any suggestions about activities that would interest your loved one. There is a DT available from 10am everyday. There is one DT in each home in the afternoon.

We will be holding Orientation for Family sessions at Tasman for families of new residents in April (date to be confirmed). Previous feedback has been that these sessions are not only relevant, but fun as well and are a great way of getting to know one another.

Another series of sessions for families called "Sharing the Journey" is an interactive course for family members and is scheduled for the month of April. We encourage everyone interested to attend both series and make them as enjoyable as our last.

We are looking forward to sharing more happy and exciting memories with you all!

## Free online course on dementia

Have you ever wanted to go on a tour through the brain? See how everything works? Learn the difference between Alzheimer's and dementia? The University of Tasmania offers a free on-line course on Understanding Dementia. The course content is easy to understand and is open to anybody and everybody from family members to care staff, registered nurses and managers.

The 9 week course is broken down into 3 sections with no exams or assignments.

- The Brain – how it works and what causes dementia (including an interactive tour of the brain)
- The Diseases – exploring the differences between normal

aging and dementia, issues surrounding diagnosis, and medical management

- The Person – addresses living with dementia, progression and stages, palliation, changes in behaviour and alternative therapies.

If you are interested in finding out more about this fascinating course, please visit

<https://mooc.utas.edu.au/courses/understanding-dementia> and register your expression of interest. A

Facebook page is also available at

<https://www.facebook.com/UnderstandingDementia>



Residents enjoyed making these 'funny faces' cookies

## Concerns and complaints: your gift to us

As we strive each day to provide the very best possible care to our residents, it can sometimes be hard to identify where changes are required to improve upon the service that we provide.

We would like to say a special thank you to each and every one of you for providing us with feedback, either positive or negative. We really appreciate your honesty and the time it takes to let us know when things have not gone quite the way you would wish. Your concerns and complaints provide the opportunity for us to pass on this feedback to all our staff and take corrective action when needed, as part of our ongoing quality improvement programme.

Please remember that our door is always open. You are welcome to pop in for a cup of tea and a chat.

Suggestions to improve our service should be made on a Quality Improvement Form. If you wish to make a complaint about something you are unhappy with, a Complaint Form should be used. The completed form can be given to any staff member, or put in our suggestions box.

Please ensure that any verbal complaint is made directly to either Arah or AI. If they are not available then the complaint should be made in writing on a complaint form to ensure that it goes through the correct investigation and resolution process.

Advocacy Services (0800 555 050) is available to assist you if required.

We always welcome your ideas and concerns, and your loved one will never be disadvantaged by anything you may share with us.



A quilt made by our talented knitting club

## The symptoms of dementia

Dementia is a condition that affects the way we think. It can affect our memory, our language and our perception of the world around us. These changes can affect the way we behave as we try to make sense of our experiences. Imagine waking up in a strange room every day. Our brain will try to understand what is happening, and will use our life experiences to do so. It is not uncommon for the people we care for to think that they are in a hotel, a restaurant, a doctor's waiting room or a bus station. We know this because they may ask us how to pay for the meal they are served.

Changes in behaviour are symptoms of the dementia they are experiencing, just as a fever, runny nose and cough are symptoms of a bad cold. The changes to the way we see the world can make us anxious, frightened and frustrated. This in turn can make us restless, agitated, repetitive and sometimes aggressive. We teach our staff to think of these changes in behaviour as symptoms of a disease, rather than part of the person themselves. This helps our staff to care for people with dementia with empathy and respect.

Our staff offer reassurance and calm to those they are caring for. Alleviating fear and frustration will often prevent

changes in behaviour occurring.

We also work closely with our staff teams to try and understand the meaning and reason for changes in behaviour, as sometimes changes in the environment or the way we relate to the person with dementia can be helpful. These will often help the person to relax and feel more at home.

We have a diversional therapy team to help us provide meaningful activities for those we care for. Our activity programme provides opportunity for social interaction, occupies and stimulates the mind, and helps people to feel useful through engaging in familiar homely activities which provide a sense of familiarity and belonging.

Living with dementia is not always a distressing, negative experience, although the changed perception of reality can be disorienting. Dementia may appear more distressing to the observer than it is to the person directly affected. Caring for someone with dementia is frequently a joyful and rewarding experience, and sharing those moments is a privilege for each of us.

If you have any concerns regarding any event or interaction you may see while at our facility, please speak directly with our Clinical Manager.



Simple things, such as folding towels, make everyone feel at home

## Influenza – keeping your loved one safe

We urge you and your loved one to get immunised against influenza this winter to give everyone the best chance of being protected. The more vulnerable elderly do not gain as much immunity from influenza vaccination as healthy people do. Family that visit may unknowingly become the spreader of infection.

Few people are aware that if you become infected with the influenza virus you can spread the virus 24hrs before symptoms appear.

Symptoms of influenza come on suddenly and can include fever, chills, muscle aches, runny nose, cough and stomach upsets. The flu is worse than a cold, with the influenza virus infecting the nose, throat and lungs.

Older people, young children, pregnant women, and people with certain medical conditions are at a higher risk of developing serious complications from influenza, such as pneumonia.

If you are unwell, we ask you to stay at home and postpone visits to your loved ones. We also encourage our staff to be immunised to protect our residents.

Please ask the RN about our influenza consent form on your next visit to the facility. If you have received the consent form already, please sign and return it to the facility as soon as possible. If you are in doubt about the flu vaccination and the benefit of this to your loved one, please do not hesitate to see the Clinical Manager for further information.



Pampering – one of life's little luxuries

## Spending time with loved ones

**Alison Hume**



I have personally experienced taking care of a number of family members in rest homes and continuing care hospitals in the last few years. This has not always been easy. Every now and again, the time spent with my loved one has been a time of closeness, love and tenderness. Other times, I have found the time together quite difficult. A number of situations have occurred. Sometimes my family member would cry for the whole visit (and many times I would cry along too). Other times we felt awkward because we couldn't find anything to talk about. I have experienced my special family member wanting to go home and struggling to settle and I have felt guilty that this is not possible. At times, leaving and ending the visit has been heart breaking. There have been instances when I have not been at all sure that the wonderful people who have loved and cared for me in the past actually recognise me. Sitting with a family member, knowing that the end is getting near is a particularly poignant experience.

I have found that a little thought and preparation before a visit increases my chances of a meaningful time with my loved family member. Many times I have resorted to the ideas of Virginia Bell and David Troxel in their book "Best Friends Approach to Care" and to ideas that our team have suggested. I would like to share some of their ideas with you. It is my wish that you will have wonderful touching moments with your loved ones.

- Share hand cream and admire the perfume
- Read a book aloud
- Brush hair

- Watch birds outside the window
- Polish nails
- Walk in the garden
- Provide an update on a favourite sports team
- Listen to music
- Visit with pets
- Watch the sky at sunset
- Tidy drawers
- Visit with a baby
- Look at family photographs
- Sing together
- Arrange flowers
- Go out for a drive – to feed the ducks or see the sea
- Smell the roses
- Play the piano
- Have an ice cream together
- Weed some garden
- Enjoy the silence
- Have a beer together
- Whistle a tune
- Make a cup of tea
- Share something to eat
- Look at a picture book
- Bring fish and chips to eat together
- Talk about grandchildren

It is important to be flexible. What has worked in the past may not be so effective today. Not easily done, but I have noticed that when I am accepting of the reality of where my loved one is at the time, then the visit goes a whole lot better. Remember to tell stories of the past. Reminiscing can be a winner. Stay in the moment with your loved one. Focus on what your loved one can still do. Smile, hold hands. Just be together.

Your time together is short. I hope this time together is precious, tender and full of love.

We promise we will give your loved one the very best of care.  
 We promise we will appreciate, respect and love your special person.  
 We will be honest, open and trustworthy.  
 This is the work we have chosen to do.

– Alison Hume and Jim Haines, Directors