



Kilkivan & District Community Care Assn Inc.

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Advocating for & providing care services and facilities on behalf of aged & disabled people in Kilkivan & districts.

President's Report to KDCCAI AGM on 9.12.25

Thank you all for attending the 6th AGM of our organization, and welcome to Cr Warren McEwen who is representing GRC here today.

I am very proud and humbled to have been the President to deliver all 6 of these AGM reports. Considering that we are a small volunteer organization, I believe that we continue to punch well above our weight, and therefore every member should know they are acknowledged for their commitment to our important cause. Collectively we can all be proud that KDCCAI keeps marching forward as we implement the **Rise & Shine vision for ageing well in this beautiful place.**

Delivering the Rise & Shine vision, however, requires **money**. And in 2025, in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis, our organization has been blessed by unexpected generosity. When Jan Farrar from Ash Street, Kilkivan passed away in late January, she bequeathed her estate to KDCCAI. This very first bequest to our organization has allowed us to be in a strong financial position as you will hear from our Treasurer soon. Then we were surprised to learn that a friend of our Treasurer was donating her car to KDCC. She lives well outside our target area but wanted to show her support for the cause, so it became integral to the Kilkivan Care operation. Then local landowners Robert Thomson and Ping Wang donated a substantial sum to cover the cost of painting our future community hub building. For these donations in particular, we are so very grateful. We are also grateful for the recent \$5000 community grant from Gympie Regional Council to help improve seniors' connectivity efforts across Division 6.

The **4-pillared Rise & Shine vision**, outlined to a large public meeting in February 2020, has guided all of our 6-year efforts up until we made the difficult decision in October 2025 to withdraw our organization from direct involvement in the “better, more efficient in-home care” arrangements. KDCCAI therefore handed back to Trilogy Care the 40 Home Care Packages which our Kilkivan Care unit had been coordinating in what was regarded as a very successful collaboration.

The decision was necessary because **legal and accounting advice** informed us that a replacement coordinator would need to be our *employee* (not a self-employed contractor as the last coordinator Robyn Haack had been). KDCCAI reluctantly concluded that a paid employee was too onerous a burden for a small volunteer organization to assume. Since then, as President, I have stayed in touch regularly with a sample of clients and support workers, as well as with Trilogy to ensure that the excellent arrangements Robyn and her assistant Jess Johnston put in place continue to work as well as possible.

However, given the additional pressures being experienced by all under the **new Support at Home regime, which commenced on 1 November**, many local clients, especially those who applied for packages after the “grandfathered” date in September 2024, are concerned about the affordability of in-home support going forward.

“*Support At Home*” sounds so wonderful and comforting, doesn’t it? It aligns with what most people aspire to – ageing comfortably where they live. But it is rapidly becoming clear that **co-payments** are now required for many services needed by many clients and the high hourly rates able to be charged are already proving to be a deterrent to getting care across the nation, not just locally. The other diabolical element of the federal Government’s Aged Care Act of November 2024 is the continuing **rationing of** at-home care. It seems inhumane to make seniors wait months to get an initial assessment to see if they are eligible for in-home support, then require them to wait up to another year to receive the approved funded care, only to then find out that they may need to pay co-contributions which may make the long-awaited care unaffordable for them. And only 2 weeks ago did most people become aware that the HCPs released by the federal government since 1 July this year have been **interim packages** – funded at appx 60% only of the full rate. I personally believe it is time for **everyone to lobby their local politicians** to demand that they, as our representatives, protest this system and insist on improved access to care for this vulnerable cohort. I also want to **praise those support workers** who have continued to provide seamless care for their local clients even while their invoices have gone unpaid – there are several who have been recently in this position.

However, with every grey cloud there is potentially a silver lining, isn’t there? I can see a glimmer of silver because the rest of the Rise & Shine pillars are even stronger now than at this time last year.

The **community bus pillar – the KilkiVAN** - has lately seen a surge in demand and thanks to our excellent regular volunteer drivers and coordinators, local seniors have had options for trips to Gympie for shopping, to Eumundi & Yandina, to Sunshine Coast shopping centres and op shops, to several music events and more. Greg Segnit and Jo

Edwards, as the most regular driver & trip coordinator, should especially be congratulated for their efforts in making the bus more available with some rather enticing excursions.

The **community hub pillar**, for which our **former Catholic Church** is intended from 2026, is **now owned by KDCCAI outright** – we paid out the loan recently. (The financial statements you'll soon hear reported by the Treasurer indicate a loan of \$80,000 remains; however, that was because it was paid out after the end of our financial year on 30 September.) In 2025, thanks to the really generous donation to KDCCAI by those local landowners I referred to earlier, the exterior and roof of the church was painted by Richard Allman & team from Gympie. Local electrician Brad Hurford has done a significant amount of pro bono work to get the connection to the electricity grid up to standard and installed a new meter box. He will soon attend to a new safety switch and check the wiring ahead of our commencing use in the new year. In order to provide **compliant disabled access to the building**, a grant was applied for from the Gambling Community Benefit Fund – the outcome should be known very soon; applications closed on 18 July 2025 so it's been a long wait. The great news is that the property, purchased for \$220,000 in May 2024, has almost certainly appreciated in value since its purchase.

While the **remaining Rise & Shine pillar, accessible rental accommodation** on the vacant GRC-owned blocks in Church Street, is as yet still on a wish list, I have engaged with several potential partners throughout the last 12 months as we try to make this a reality. We know there is a **gap in the accommodation market here** (i.e. *one or two-bedroom rental homes*) which prevents seniors down-sizing from large homes to an option which allows them to remain in their familiar community and maintain their social connections. All of the foundations necessary to make that pillar work are present:

- i) *perfectly-located Council-owned vacant land beside the community hub;*
- ii) *recent community consultation sessions conducted by GRC ascertained the strength of sentiment in the seniors' cohort for especially the share home element of the proposal;*
- iii) *a thriving primary health outreach centre which in 2026 will see two male GPs providing services to local patients, many of whom are over 65 & rely heavily on the continuity of care;*
- iv) *established, long-term partnerships with various universities, most recently UniSC which is currently implementing a co-designed series of 10 workshops for local dementia carers & others.*

In the opinion of the 2025 management team, this accommodation element is a critical part of the vision of **ageing in place**, and the **benefits** of constructing rental accommodation are many: increased local **work** opportunities, the **freeing up of larger existing homes** for new owners or tenants in a very tight market which will only tighten closer to the 2032 Olympics; a cost-effective way of addressing the vexed challenges of hospital bed blocking (Gympie Hospital was mentioned in the media yesterday in relation to this problem), and few available places in aged care facilities, especially for those who may have dementia. It is also perhaps an opportunity for government to test and demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of the integrated Rise & Shine Proposal and therefore for it to be **replicated in other rural/regional areas**. We have been in discussions with bureaucrats within the Departments of Housing and of Communities, and have lobbied various Ministers and other members of Parliament, and met here last week again with Llew O'Brien MP. We remain hopeful of a breakthrough, given the headlines that have heightened awareness that health, aged care and housing are in an often-diabolical, intertwined state. The best solutions are usually local, aren't they? But perhaps we may need to look more closely at a **cooperative model** if this pillar is to become a reality?

Several people need to be formally thanked for their contributions during the last 12 months. Firstly, KDCCAI is hugely grateful for the excellent job done by former Kilkivan Care coordinator **Robyn Haack**. Rob gave her all to the role and was unfailingly professional in her endless interactions with clients & their families, support workers and the provider Trilogy Care. I know we all miss her. Luckily her terrific deputy **Jess Johnston** is still involved in KDCCAI activities: she is currently the Liaison Officer for the Carer Support program being conducted by UniSC and is stepping up in 2026 to assist with Seniors' Social Hub.

John Panetta, family & staff from Kilkivan Hotel have again raised and donated considerable funds raised at the hotel throughout 2025 to help keep the KilkiVAN on the road. Thank you, Kilkivan Hotel.

Marg Denton has contributed a lot of regular hard work again to ensuring that the monthly Seniors' Social Hub attendees (sometimes up to 40 of them!) are always treated to a colourful feast! Marg also baked her heart out throughout October and November to bolster our fund-raising at the last community markets of the year recently – the plum puddings sold like hot cakes while the marvelous, iced Xmas cake, part of the raffle, will be enjoyed this festive season by winner Pauline Power and her family. However, Marg probably now needs to reduce her commitment and take a well-earned breather.

Jan Thomas, the nominal shadow President, regular KilkiVAN trip coordinator and loyal *cleaner upper* after Hub gatherings, should be honoured for her quiet work ethic and her welcome cheeky laugh.

Steve Horseman is another quiet but vital cog in the Rise & Shine wheel. His interest-free loan to KDCC of \$160,000 back in May 2024 is the only reason we were able to purchase the church property, so huge thanks for your generosity, Steve. He also does the monthly run to Gympie to connect with the Top Nosh frozen meal service and delivers them back to the shed where the meals are then collected by local clients. He is also an occasional KilkiVAN driver.

All members of the **fund-raising team**, perhaps in particular **Robyn Ditton, Woolooga's Suzanne Lanham, Jan Thomas, Heather Theiss, Trish Coggins, Chrissy Croydon, Esther & Tony Ringrose, Ray & Helen Chapman**... have fronted up in 2025 to raise precious funds – at markets, at cattle sales (including when an earthquake rocked our world while some of us were at Woolooga!)! Some drove lonely roads, plodded the pavements and braved freezing starts to sell zero-turn mower raffle tickets which helped us make over \$8000 profit on that initiative, which was only possible thanks to the generosity of **Pat and Kym Walsh** of Advance Motors Dalby who supplied a cost-price prize.

May I also acknowledge the largely behind-the-scenes role that the awesome **Andrea Ferris** has performed since she vacated the secretarial role this time last year. Our website has been skillfully updated without fuss by Andrea, while I have also tapped into her vast experience in local government roles to help with our advocacy efforts. She always provides astute advice. And she collaborated expertly with Dr Gordana Dermody from UniSC to prepare the rPPP funding application which was re-lodged in May this year. We await the outcome. Still.

Lynda Sempf's daughter **Rachel D'Arcy** has also helped us during the year, by providing bookkeeping support and also contributing mightily to our (unsuccessful) grant application to the Mable Foundation.

There are many un-named others who have contributed from time-to-time to bolster our efforts – I salute you all.

So overall it's been a **very successful 12 months** due to a **great team effort**. But there have been a few very difficult times. Most notably was when we learned in late July that Kilkivan's oldest resident and much-loved lifelong community member **Gordon McGill** had passed away. Throughout our organization's 6 years, Gordon was a regular donor to our cause, even though he didn't directly benefit from our activities. He was also one of the 5 nonagenarian "calendar cover people" from 2023. Having made it to 97, he was a great role model for ageing-in-place and we miss him lots.

We have also had **tech issues** in the latter part of 2025 – our Facebook page just disappeared mysteriously and so we have had to establish a new page and start again in the social media space. Additionally, we have had a problem very recently with our website, which is currently being addressed. This has highlighted a weakness in our overall operation which needs to be addressed by the in-coming management team. While many of our target audience do not connect with the internet on a regular basis, it is vital for our public-facing reputation.

So that brings me to the last part of this annual report – **the outgoing leadership team of the President, Secretary and Treasurer**. Every year has seen the complexity and scale of our operation increase, and it's very difficult to navigate the daily and longer-term demands on the management team, all of whom are volunteers with very busy lives apart from KDCC. But I think KDCC is going to be even more relevant to ageing well here going forward, so the organization must try to endure.

I have been very privileged to work **with Lynda Sempf as Treasurer again (for the 4th time) this year**, and also with **Secretary Jenny Lewis** for the first time. I think we have had a very productive and even enjoyable time together – we are like-minded usually when it comes to decision making and have collaborated very well. This organization has survived the last few challenging months only because they both rose magnificently to help overcome the hurdles.

I was especially delighted that Jenny became Secretary last December: she is not only terrific in the role but also hails from **Goomeri** – it's vital that we keep urging seniors from Woolooga, Widgee and Goomeri to join us both socially and in advocating for better services in rural settings such as this. To make ageing-well-in-place a reality for all, we need to unite to lobby with one voice: “Rise & Shine!”

Thank you for listening.

Rosie Fitzgerald

Pres., KDCCAI

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