



HELP AT HAND FOR WESTERN SENIORS



Margaret Lay was a woman used to doing things for others. The Gordon resident had found her calling in caring for children with disabilities and various volunteering roles until a severe back injury in 2000 turned her world upside down. Suddenly, Margaret became the one who needed care.

“That was the end of everything, my whole life. I had to give up everything and I was a very active person,” the 70-year-old said. “Then two years later another (back) disk went, three years later, another one went, and now another one is on the go. The first few years I went through a terrible depression and I was in massive pain.”

Thankfully, Margaret found support in local not-for-profit organisation Villa Maria Catholic Homes (VMCH). She is one of around one hundred and seventy seniors in Victoria’s Western region who receive a Home Care Package (HCP); a government-funded package of care services designed to help seniors live at home for longer.

Cleaning, laundry and companionship support have kept Margaret as independent as possible. “I’d hate to think what I’d do without the HCP. I’d be in a black hole and feel so alone. It’s the company, as well as the practical support, that’s so important. The carers bring the world to me and encourage me to go out into the world. My carer who takes me out to go shopping and have a coffee is just fabulous. We go out and have a ball – we paint the shopping centre red!”



Kate Charleson, VMCH Team Leader Western Region, said HCPs were the perfect answer for seniors like Margaret who needed a little extra help to remain living independently at home. “Most older people want to avoid a move into aged care,” Kate said. “We do find many seniors, particularly those living in regional areas, just aren’t aware of what support is out there.”

Despite her setbacks, including an escape from a violent marriage and the death of her beloved second husband, Margaret is embracing life. “I decided about ten years ago I wasn’t going to let it beat me. I’ve taken up all these new hobbies; I make jewellery, I’ve started painting, I write poetry and I’m writing an auto-biography.”

She urged other seniors to seek support if they felt they were losing their independence. “Reaching out is so important, don’t hide yourself away. It’s not an easy thing to do because you feel like a burden, but there is help out there.”

For more information on VMCH HCPs, contact our Ballarat office on 5330 3899.