

## Article One

### **Mallacoota History: Whither MIVA-MIVA? The vision of Aged Residential Care Services in Mallacoota. Linda Bruce and John Hilvert**

**[NB This is a history of the vision of Mallacoota Aged Residential care, not the excellent health, social, and community services, delivered by Mallacoota District Health and Support Service (MDHSS). Those are topics for future research.]**

Ever since Mallacoota was settled on the South side of the lake, around 1925<sup>1</sup>, people have strived to entice, create, and foster medical services in Mallacoota. In 1952<sup>2</sup> Dot Bruce, joined other residents, to form a group named the Mallacoota Medical Group<sup>3</sup> to improve medical services in the town. <Link: insert names of people on this group>

Priorities were first an ambulance, next a Bush Nursing Centre, and then residential aged care, which they envisaged as a Retirement Village with units for the Independent Aged, and an Aged Care Hostel for those who needed 24-hour care.

The population of Mallacoota in 1954 was 189 people, many related. Approximately one third of these were children. The original meeting of the Ambulance sub-Committee<sup>4</sup> was held in September 1954 and 22 people attended. 22 people from a district population of 150 people, was an impressive percentage.

<Link 2: <Insert Link 3: to ambulance presidents – see sheet and Ambulance Secretary Treasurers.>

In 1954, Mallacoota was granted permission to purchase a second-hand ambulance. It was first used to transport a patient in 1954. Follow this link to see a list of Ambulance drivers and officers from 1954-2017. <Insert Link 4>

At this time in the 1950s Mallacoota was isolated. Roads were poor though many people had a boat but not a car. It had no electricity, (people used candles, kerosene lamps and Tillie lamps), no shop that sold things such as milk and ice-cream that needed electricity to be kept cold, a land line phone, tank water instead of town water, no sewerage (we used cans we had to empty ourselves, and long-drop dunnies). Radio reception was very poor – one station from NSW that was full of static and usually only used on battery radios to hear the news, and sometimes the races. Music was made by people themselves; mainly piano, fiddle and accordian.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.mallacootaaccommodation.com/documents/LoveofMallacoota.pdf> at p.4

<sup>2</sup> From personal discussions with Dot Bruce

<sup>3</sup> Members of the Mallacoota Medical Group from 1952- 1987, included Dot Bruce, Anke De Gues (1967), Ethel McLeod (1966), John Maury (1976), Molly Hill (1976) Len Stevens (1986) (A Life Governor) Jo McGrath, Margaret Kenworthy, Vera Cayton, Rita Croft., Don Finley (1987) Don Finley (1987), and Peggy Rudge.

<sup>4</sup> The following people attended the first Ambulance meeting; Dot Bruce, John Bruce, Joe Bruce, Madge Bruce, Doug Matthews, Ray Magnusen, Joyce Magnusen, Con Harris, Peter Maling, Winifred Maling, George Brooks, Margaret Brooks, Albert Huck, Leticia Huck, John Howden, Marjorie Howden, Ethel McLeod, Norm Rankin, D. Maddison , Ray Iggledon and Eric Cole.

There was the Pub, owned by renowned musician Len Maurice, who one drunken night, named our main street after himself (Maurice Avenue), a newsagency, a post office, a shop, and the Ice works near the government wharf where people bought blocks of ice to put in their ice boxes to keep meat cold.

There was no doctor, no chemist, no church and no vet.

In 1962 electricity came to Mallacoota in the form of a loud private diesel generator run by Tom Davies. This was first run from the Davies block on the corner of Bastion Point Road and the Roundabout. Electricity was first supplied for a few hours each evening. Ten minutes before lights out, Tom would briefly switch the power off and on again as a signal the power was going to stop. If there was an emergency such as the ambulance attending a patient, he would keep the power on longer to enable them to see more easily.

The generator was then moved to Shire land overlooking Coull's inlet, down the hill from the Bush Nurse Centre in Bruce Street. Generated electricity changed the colour of Mallacoota lights from the warm orange of kerosene lights, to a harsher bright white. The power station ran from 1962 to 18<sup>th</sup> July 1972 and supplied many (though not all) houses in Mallacoota with electricity. In 1972 the State Electricity grid reached Mallacoota and bought Tom Davies's poles and wires. The thumping generator ceased, and more constant power blackouts began as trees and branches began to regularly break the electricity lines carrying coal generated power from the LaTrobe Valley.

The next task of the Mallacoota Medical Group was establishing a Bush Nursing Centre. A Bush Nurse then visited people at home offering diverse services including midwifery, simple treatments and referral to professional specialists.

In the mid 1900s, Bush Nursing became established in local communities that raised sufficient funds and resources to attract and employ a nurse. Community fundraising paid for the nurses and capital infrastructure. One of the first Bush Nurses was Nancy York (Peter York's grandmother). She lived at Karbeethong and visited people's homes.

They were managed by local committees elected by contributing members. Since its formation bush nursing has experienced the challenge of adapting to government policies and procedures to centralise the control of health services.

In 1983 bush nursing hospitals accounted for one third of the Victoria's acute hospitals. But in the 1990's bush nurse community Centres began their decline and were increasingly absorbed within hospitals and health networks. Governments were less interested in a community alternative to mainstream health care<sup>5</sup>.

The Bush Nursing movement<sup>6</sup> is now almost unique to Victoria. Attempts to develop a federal structure failed in the early years and equivalent organisations in other States have now largely been absorbed into the public sector.

In the late 1950s the Mallacoota Medical Group purchased a recreational hall from a clearing sale at Mallacoota aerodrome of World War 2 buildings. This building became the Bush Nursing Centre located in Bruce St, Mallacoota. The Mallacoota Bush Nursing Centre was a non-government, not-for-profit organization – as its later incarnation, Mallacoota District Health & Support Services (MDHSS) still is.

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.rrrtec.net.au/images/bilby\\_simulation/files/websites/bsCouncil/files/bushHospHist.htm](http://www.rrrtec.net.au/images/bilby_simulation/files/websites/bsCouncil/files/bushHospHist.htm)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/papers/govpub/VPARL1987-88No15A.pdf> (at p. 3).

Bush nurses worked at the Bruce St centre from 1965 to 1976. They then moved to a New Bush Nurse Centre on the corner of Genoa Road and Mattson Street, Mallacoota.

Once the Centre was established, the next goal of the Mallacoota Medical Group and Bush Nurse Committee was to make an Aged Care retirement village for Independent Aged, and an Aged Care hostel. Some 30 local organizations formally supported this proposal. In 1971 the Mallacoota population was 296 people.

A Government review of the Bush Nursing Services concluded there was a need to maintain adequate provision of extended care accommodation and home and community care services in small rural communities. It added "...this will allow elderly people to continue to reside in their own communities and not be forced to move later in their lives to remote institutions."<sup>7</sup>

< Insert Link 5 to Names of Bush Nurses in Mallacoota >

In 1979 the Senior Citizens group took on the responsibility for raising money for the Mallacoota Inlet retirement Village. They worked with the Bush Nurse committee to raise money for, and plan the Retirement Village.

<Insert LINK 6: list of original senior citizens>

In 1983 the Bush Nurse and the Senior Citizens launched the Mallacoota Inlet (retirement) Village Appeal (MIVA). It became known as the MIVA-MIVA committee, a sub-committee of the Bush Nursing Centre. Originally an appeal committee. Once there was the prospect of a government subsidy for the centre, the duties of the sub-committee were extended to include approaches to government departments, and the whole building program. The name was changed to the MIVA-MIVA *Project* committee to reflect its added responsibilities. (Source: Don Finley)

<Insert Link 7: to names of MIVA-MIVA committee members>:

Members of the original MIVA-MIVA committee included Doug Sewell (Secretary), Anke de Gues, (Treasurer), Dot Bruce, Len Stevens, and Don Finley, Jimmy Bridle, and others. Cedric Gilbert was the main architect for Stage 1 of the MIVA project. He drew the plans for both Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the MIVA-MIVA retirement village project. The Department of Environment (Now DSE) granted three adjoining blocks of land. One block for MIVA-MIVA Stage One, where the Bush Nurse currently was, and two blocks for MIVA-MIVA Stage 2 Nursing home and hospital. These they marked as reserved for "hospital".

A government subsidy from the "Home and Community Care" (HACC) program, which in those days funded the Bush Nurse both Aged Care hostels, in anticipation of future needs in this remote area with high growth rate, insisted on enlarging the Day Care main building area and store room for use by the Senior Citizens.

The Department of Health approved the design of the self-care units. They were specifically designed for people no longer able to look after themselves in their own home, but who were not yet in need of 24-hour hostel care. The design ensured minimal up-keep by residents. Dot Bruce reportedly argued the units would be too small, and needed to be disabled friendly, but was "over-ruled by the men".

Originally the Department of Human Services, Victoria insisted on separate incorporation of the MIVA-MIVA centre. Further a condition of funding was that the MIVA-MIVA centre be jointly administered by delegates from the Senior Citizen's Inc and the Bush Nursing Committee. <Source Jean Nickels 2008>. But the State government made a special exemption so that the Bush Nursing Committee had sole power of administration. According to Jean Nickels (2008), the Bush Nursing

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid (at p. viii)

Committee then simply told the Senior Citizens, “out of the blue”, <insert reference> they were no longer on the Administration committee. Don Finley’s article in the Mallacoota Mouth (1996) states there was still an understanding that the MIVA-MIVA Centre would be run by the Bush Nurse, with advice from the Senior Citizens.

According to Don Finley, for some years this arrangement worked harmoniously. The Bush Nursing Committee was kept fully informed, but all detailed work and fund raising was left to the MIVA-MIVA Project Committee.

The Senior Citizens paid \$10,000 towards furnishing the Miva building and the Bush Nurse committee of management honoured people that made donations to the project with plaques.<sup>8</sup> The Plaques remained at MDHSS until, in June 2016, MDHSS donated them (Donation Receipt No. 412), to the Historical Society to house at the Mallacoota bunker museum.

The MIVA-MIVA Project attracted strong community backing. Stage 1 included a main building that housed the Day Care centre, dining room and Senior Citizens club rooms, and four self-care flats, a garage, and a laundry for the future Aged Care Hostel. The value of the Architectural work was around \$45,000. This money was raised by the Senior Citizens.

Stage 2, the Aged Care hostel to originally designed to be built on the two blocks adjoining the main MIVA Centre building, that the government (DSE) had allocated for this purpose. This site was then moved to the Matson Street side of the same block the main hall was on. The hostel would be linked by a covered walk-way to the main MIVA MIVA Centre built for this purpose. The start-up costs of Stage 2 hostel would be eased by money from letting the Stage One residential units for the independent-aged, and expenses of management running the centre would be shared with the District Bush Nurse committee.

In 1985, the Helen MacPherson Smith Trust granted \$15,000 towards costs of MIVA-MIVA project<sup>9</sup>. In 1986, the Mallacoota population had grown to 826 people. On 7<sup>th</sup> Dec 1986, the Mallacoota District Bush Nursing Centre became registered as a not-for-profit, non-government, public benevolent association to provide health, social support, and community based services to the Mallacoota and surrounding district communities<sup>10</sup>

On 7th April 1989 in one of the most significant events in Mallacoota history, the Minister for Aged care Carolyn Hogg, backed by the East Gippsland Shire Councillors including John Rudge and Johnny Armstrong, officially open the MIVA-MIVA Village on Block One.

At this time, the buildings included the main Miva hall and Senior Citizens club rooms, and two independent living units. As part of Stage One, two more units were planned for the block next door to the main dining hall. In the early 1990s, these were built on the same block as the main Miva Building.

The first four residents were Barry Maloney, Betty Warren, Ella Dorran, (ex Post Mistress) and Walter Mills. In recognition of a \$12,000 donation, Flat 2, where Barry Maloney lived, was named after him. <Link to source – MIAC minutes>. In exchange for selling their houses if they had one, some of the residents reported in 1992, that they were granted a special rental deal. By 1989 in total,

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<sup>8</sup> <http://hmstrust.org.au/approved-grants/towards-costs-of-MIVA-MIVA-project/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://hmstrust.org.au/approved-grants/towards-costs-of-MIVA-MIVA-project/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/clubs-and-fundraising/incorporated-associations/search-for-an-incorporated-association?id=795a9301-7129-412f-bf72-fc682b04ad35> It changed its name to MDHSS on 13 May 1997.

the MIVA-MIVA Project committee and Senior Citizens had raised over \$500,000 and some \$250,000 had been spent on the project, thus far.

The next step was Stage 2, the Aged Care hostel, which, in 1989, was in the advance planning stage.

[Photos to choose from:

1. MIVA-MIVA units in 1986,
2. Housing Minister Carolyn Hogg opening MIVA-MIVA
3. Len Stevens standing beside the MIVA-MIVA bus
4. Dot Bruce talking to Shire Councillors Rudge and Armstrong
5. Tables set up for the gala dinner

Source: Photos shot by May and Len Stevens 1986, courtesy of Marion Bruce]

Disclosure: Linda Bruce & John Hilvert are compiling this history as a work in progress in homage to the late Dot Bruce. This will be published with source data on the Historical Society, and MIAC Web Sites. It will be free for anyone to use without authorisation and link their web page as long as due acknowledgement is provided. Thank you for input from MIAC, Senior Citizens and Celia Wallace at MDHSS. Please email any suggestions to improve it, add to it, and clarify it, including photos of events, to Linda Bruce: [ask@helpcentre.com.au](mailto:ask@helpcentre.com.au)