

WHITHER MIVA-MIVA? STAGE 2: BUSH NURSING CENTRE ABANDONS AGED-CARE HOSTEL PROJECT

Submitted by Linda Bruce and John Hilvert



Once the MIVA-MIVA Stage 1 of the Mallacoota Inlet (retirement) Village was complete as well as two flats, in April 1988, the Bush Nursing Centre Committee, “formally requested” the MIVA-MIVA Project Committee to commence Stage Two of the Project: a 12-bed Aged Care hostel .

It was planned for the two remaining blocks of land. Committee member and professional architect, Cedric Gilbert drew up the plans. The MIVA-MIVA Project Committee submitted the plans and grant application, to the Federal Department of Community Services and Health (DCSH) .

The original MIVA-MIVA Project plan for Stage 2, the Aged Care hostel, was to be built on the block adjoining the Miva hall, allocated by the Victorian Department of Conservation, Forests & Lands. This was about 100 metres from the Miva hall. Therefore the committee decided to build the hostel along the boundary of Matson St, and the two remaining flats along Genoa Road on one of the remaining blocks allocated for “hospital”. The hostel would be linked by a covered walk-way to the MIVA-MIVA Centre . It already contained a dining hall, laundry and Senior Citizens Club rooms built for this purpose.

Initially envisaged as a “joint venture” with the MIVA-MIVA project becoming a separate incorporated agency from the Mallacoota Bush Nurse, the DCSH proposed a clean separation, presumably for governance reasons. But it agreed eventually to having the Project continue under the auspices of the Bush Nursing Centre due to the

apparent harmonious arrangements between the Senior Citizens, MIVA-MIVA Project team and the Bush Nurse.

Start-up running costs of Stage 2 hostel would be partly met, by letting the MIVA-MIVA Stage 1 residential Units for the independent-aged. The expenses of management running the centre would be shared with the Bush Nursing Centre. The MIVA-MIVA Project was also framed as one Victoria’s first multi-purpose centres.

Over the period 1977-1988, the Senior Citizens and MIVA-MIVA Project committee had raised \$500,000, and the Victorian government agreed to match it. Some \$290,000 was left in trust for committing to Stage 2 .

Matters seemed on track with the Bush Nursing’s Committee of Management urging the MIVA-MIVA Project Committee to follow up progress. Although concerns about its economic viability were evident in their internal minutes as early as May 1989 , in mid-1990 , the Department (DCSH) investigated and granted the Bush Nursing Centre “approval in principle” for a 12-bed hostel to be constructed on the MIVA-MIVA site.

DCSH also guaranteed a subsidy in excess of \$505,000 and offered financial assistance to develop the hostel proposal .

In August 1991, the MIVA-MIVA Subcommittee was scheduled to present Aged Care Hostel plans to Bush Nursing Centre at the AGM on 11th September 1991.

Then came the rift. Reportedly a representative of the Bush Nurse met with the Department and without the

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knowledge of the MIVA-MIVA Project committee, told the Department, Mallacoota District Bush Nurse no longer wanted the hostel grant. When the Committee of Management of the Bush Nursing Centre withdrew from the Government's approval in principle, the promised grant was cancelled.

A day before the AGM, on the 10 September 1991 the Centre replaced Don Finley as Public Officer with Patricia O'Grady. People controlling the Bush Nursing Centre Committee no longer wished to support the Aged Care Hostel. At the time of the notice, its secretary Don Finley, was also the honorary secretary for the Mallacoota Bush Nursing Centre's Committee of management.

On 11 September 1991, at the Annual General Meeting, while the MIVA-MIVA Project committees two main advocates were absent, (the President of the MIVA-MIVA Project committee Len Stevens, was overseas, reportedly visiting a sick relative, and its Secretary Don Finley was having a hip replacement), the Bush Nursing Committee, disbanded the MIVA-MIVA Project committee, and moved control of the funds raised for the project, to themselves.

In a letter to the Mallacoota Mouth, in 1996, Finley insisted, he had "no indication" the Bush Nursing Centre Committee would withdraw its support as they did in late 1991.

Both the Bush Nurse committee itself and the Mallacoota community were divided on whether the hostel would be able to afford to run. One camp felt the risks were too high, the other disagreed. This conflict was aired at a public meeting held by the Bush Nursing Centre's manager, Russell Boyd on 13th November 1991.

On 29 November 1991 in the Mallacoota Mouth, the Bush Nursing Centre's Committee of Management confirmed that it had pulled the plug, issuing a notice it was withdrawing from the hostel project. The notice claimed that the Centre's cost analysis indicated a 12-bed hostel could not be self-funding, and there may be inadequate demand for the proposed hostel.

If members of the community wanted to continue with the project, the notice asserted, they should elect a "provisional committee" through the community consultation process, and all donations would be refunded or transferred to a "provisional hostel project committee, if one is formed, depending on the wishes of the donor".

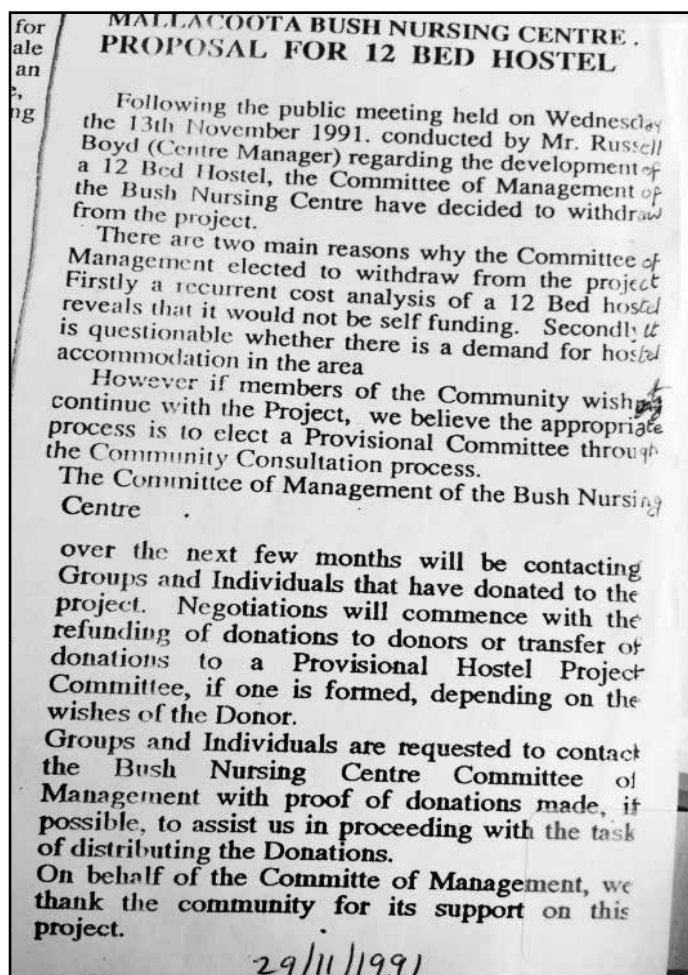
In response to being disbanded, the MIVA-MIVA Project sub-committee members kept their positions but changed the name of their group to MIVA-MIVA Aged Care Inc. (MIAC) They registered this name as an independent charity a year later on 1st December 1992.

The President of MIVA-MIVA sub-committee, Len Stevens, became the first President of MIVA-MIVA Aged Care Inc, its Deputy Secretary Don Finley and Treasurer Anke De Gues, also kept their positions.

They continued to raise money towards the Aged Care Hostel Project, and requested, as promised in the notice in the Mallacoota Mouth, that the funds raised for the hostel, be transferred to them. As we will see in the next article, this was not to be.

TIMELINE: 1988 – 1991

- 1988: Bush Nursing Committee requests MIVA-MIVA sub-committee to commence panning for 12-bed Aged Care Hostel
- Mid 1990: "Approval in Principle" granted by Vic State Government (DCSH)
- 20 Aug 1991: MIVA-MIVA Subcommittee scheduled to present Aged Care Hostel plans to Bush Nursing Centre at AGM (11 Sep 1991)
- 10 Sep 1991: Don Finlay, MIVA-MIVA public officer replaced as "Public Officer" for Bush Nursing Centre
- 11 Sep 1991: AGM Bush Nursing Centre Committee of Management distances itself from the Aged Care Hostel proposal.
- 13 Nov 1991: Bush Nursing Centre airs its concerns about the running costs of the Aged Care Hostel at Public Meeting



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- 29 Nov 1991: Mallacoota Mouth announcement that Bush Nursing Centre abandoned the project.
- 1 Dec 1992: MIVA-MIVA sub-committee members establish a separate independent charity under the name of MIVA-MIVA Aged Care Inc.

The next article will discuss reasons for the Mallacoota District Bush Nurses withdrawal of support for an Aged Care Hostel, and the changing fortunes of the Bush Nursing and MIVA-MIVA Aged Care Inc. (MIAC) in the mid to late 1990s.

Note: The Mallacoota Bush Nursing Organisation in this history was a private charity funded by grants from the Victorian Government. This was a quite different organisation from the later MDHSS which is also a private charity. MDHSS offered different services, including home care packages and was funded mainly by grants from both the Victorian and the Commonwealth governments.

Disclosure: Thank you to Celia Wallace (MDHSS) for her expert input and Sue Brown for her forensic proofing. Linda Bruce & John Hilvert are compiling this history as a work in progress in homage to the late Dot Bruce. We have joined MIAC (the former MIVA-MIVA project sub-committee), CHIRF and applied for membership to MDHSS (the former District Bush Nursing Committee). This history will be published with more references on the Historical Society, and MIAC Web Sites. It is free for anyone to use without authorisation and link their web page to, as long as due acknowledgement is provided. Please email any suggestions to improve it, add to it, and clarify it, including photos of events, to Linda Bruce: ask@helpcentre.com.au

References:

1. Don Finley, Letter to the Editor, "The Mallacoota hostel 'horse' is alive and well", Snowy River Mail, 13 March 1996
2. Since September 2013 it was known as the Department of Health. The Federal department underwent several name changes in the meantime: June 1991-March 1993: Department of Health, Housing & Community Services. March 1993 - March 1994: Department of Health, Housing, Local Government & Community Services. March 1994 - March 1996: Department of Human Services & Health. March 1996 - October 1998: Department of Health & Family Services. October 1998 - November 2001: Department of Health & Aged Care. November 2001 - September 2013: Department of Health & Ageing.
3. MIVA-MIVA Subcommittee minute 680 "Location of Future Hostel", 20 December 1989.
4. Now called the "Miva Building"
5. "Recognition for work at Mallacoota", Snowy River

Mail, 22 November 1995.

6. ibid
7. MIAC Annual Report 1997/98, 10 Aug 1998
8. Bush Nursing Centre Committee Minute 638, "Hostel" 3 May 1989.
9. MIAC Annual Report 1992/1993
10. Don Finley, op cit (1)
11. Eileen Buckland, 2017, and Anke De Geus 2017
12. Patricia O'Grady served until 10th September 1992. <Source: Consumer Affairs Victoria>
13. Letter, Don Finley to Neil A. Freestone (solicitor), "Funds Raising for the Proposed Hostel", 10 March 1995.
14. "Mallacoota Bush Nursing Centre Proposal for 12 Bed Hostel", Mallacoota Mouth, 29 Nov 1991.
15. Notice the Bush Nursing committee placed in the Mallacoota Mouth on 29th Nov 1991, announcing their intention to withdraw from the Hostel project, and permission for another body to continue this project.
16. Certificate of Incorporation dated 1/12/92, Reg. No. A00265 37X



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