

30 June 2018

Chapter 5

What happened to the Money? MIVA-MIVA Aged Care Hostel history.

Later discussions with Joy Burch in November 1996 confirmed the name changeⁱ of the Mallacoota District Bush Nursing Centre to MDHSS with its new emphasis on home services. MDHSS planned to reduce its aged care services at the Centre to two afternoons a week. She added there was “no intention” of touching the MIVA-MIVA money and MIAC could submit ideas on the use of the money raised, thought to be about \$290,000ⁱⁱ.

Some MIAC Committee members urged legal action to recover the funds. But they decided this might alienate their relations with Ellis. So no action was takenⁱⁱⁱ.

By Dec 1996, some MIAC members conceded privately that the aged care hostel seemed a “lost cause”. They wondered whether they should canvass membership on their views. There was a growing fear that MDHSS might spend their funds on a swimming pool or additional cycle paths which had been supported at a public meeting.

The following August 1997, MIAC committee minutes note that they considered the proposal from MDHSS that some of the \$290,000 could be used to build a two bedroom disabled unit to add to the four existing units^{iv}. At the same time, MIAC membership numbers had plummeted almost 50% to just 36 in 1997 as against 71 for 1996^v.

This gloom provoked a call in June 1998 for a special general meeting to consider the case for MIAC closing down.

Despite the frustration, most members wanted the MIVA-MIVA Aged Residential project to proceed. This was carried unanimously with only one dissent. A revival of enthusiasm stirred among the MIAC committee about the economic merits of their cause. MIAC Secretary Don Finley noted that the HACC program had far less effect on hostel developments than first thought. Many hostels still had waiting lists whereas there are often vacancies in units^{vi}.

Finley pointed out that from the viewpoint of the MIVA-MIVA funds, the capital cost per person housed in a single bedroom unit was about \$55K in a twin bedroom unit about \$40K. But in a hostel, if the Department of Veterans Affairs helped, the cost per resident could drop to \$10K - \$12K.

In 1999, given a forced choice between spending the remaining MIVA-MIVA Project Stage 2 money on a swimming pool or on building another unit at MDHSS, MIAC agreed with MDHSS’s proposal to use some of the disputed funds to construct a two-bedroom Disabled Unit. This unit was to be used by an aged couple who needed ramps and bars, or an aged person with their carer. MIAC rationalised this went part-way towards the purpose funds were originally raised. The unit was built at MDHSS in 1999. After the Unit was constructed, the balance of the \$290,000 was still reportedly held in an MDHSS Trust Fund.

However, the MIAC Committee regretted the concession. Its report to membership on 1997/98 stated that their support for the twin bed-roomed flat approach may be “a very poor decision”. Our Committee will do its very best to overcome any difficulty and get the “Approval-in-Principle” for an Aged Care hostel, re-established as soon as possible.^{vii}

MIAC then hit another obstacle when it lost its leading advocate for the hostel initiative, Secretary Don Finley. In 1992, despite claims by the former Mallacoota District Bush Nursing Centre it had registered the name MIVA-MIVA, Finley discovered they never had and the name still belonged to MIAC. The only group that had registered the name was in fact the MIVA-MIVA Aged Care group

(MIAC), who were pressured by the Bush Nursing Centre to give up the name in 1992, and decided to oblige, “for a little while and change back”.

Finley argued 1998 was a good time to change back and reclaim its MIVA-MIVA Aged Care name, which they registered in 1991, as well as registering the trademark MIVA-MIVA. This was vital for their next round of fund-raising, he argued.

However, the MIAC committee in 1998 thought reclaiming the name may irritate the MDHSS administrator Mick Ellis and offend the MDHSS Manager Joy Burch who they still hoped to persuade to support the Aged Care Hostel. Finley was very disappointed at the committee’s verdict, commenting, “There would come a time when they would deeply regret the decision.”^{viii}

Disgusted, on 3 March 1999, Finley resigned from his position as MIAC Secretary. The issue was one of principle, he insisted. Although he would remain a MIAC Committee member, after eight years of struggle, he would no longer act as MIAC’s public advocate under the name “Mallacoota Inlet Aged Care”, when they were entitled morally and legally to use the name MIVA-MIVA ^{ix}.

Meanwhile the newly formed MDHSS flourished under its revised remit of moving away from Aged independent residential care, to providing numerous non-residential services to the aged, including home care packages, and organising visiting specialists, a service first started to back up Mallacoota’s only GP, Dr. Gavin Le Sueur. In 1999 MDHSS absorbed the Mallacoota District Community House (MDCH), which included the Neighbourhood house, Occasional Child Care and Telecentre.

MIAC continued its fund raising for a 24-hr Aged Care Residential Nursing Home, and over the next ten years, regularly asked MDHSS to transfer the remaining Aged Care Hostel money they had raised, now estimated to be \$240,000, back to them (MIAC) as the Mallacoota Bush Nursing Centre committee has stated they would in their notice in the Mallacoota Mouth on 29th Nov 1991.

“If members of the community wish to continue with the (MIVA-MIVA) project, we believe the appropriate process is to elect a Provisional committee through the Community consultation process. The Committee of Management of the Bush Nursing Centre over the next few months will be contacting Groups and individuals that have donated to the project. Negotiations will commence with the refunding of donations to donors or transfer of donations to a Provisional Hostel Project Committee, if one is formed.” ^x

In 2000, MIAC minutes report that “Mick Ellis (CEO of MDHSS) had previously stated that he would consider the use of the remaining funds for the hostel if we (MIAC) prepared a submission on the case for this proposal.”^{xi}

On 1st Aug 2001 (MIAC Minutes of Committee Meeting 105) record a meeting with MICK Ellis CEO of Bairnsdale Regional Hospital where MIAC asked for the funds that they had raised for an Aged Care Hostel, that were currently being held by MDHSS. This was an estimated \$240,000 (that being \$290,000 minus the cost of building the two bedroom disabled unit in 1999.) Mick Ellis stated that MIAC would “never get it, or any part of it, not even the supposedly amount that was for a hostel.” ^{xii}

Reportedly MDHSS refused to transfer the money until MIAC proved they could run a hostel without government funds. This proviso was unusual because MDHSS itself was run almost entirely on Government Grant money. However Mick Ellis’s assertion appeared to flag he had no intention of honouring MDHSS’s 1991 promise.

At the time of writing (30 June 2018) the disputed funds are reportedly still held by MDHSS.

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- ⁱ The name change to MDHSS occurred officially on 13 May 1997, Refer to <https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/clubs-and-fundraising/incorporated-associations/search-for-an-incorporated-association?q=A0012127E&pn=0&sz=20>
- ⁱⁱ MIAC Minutes, (4 November 1996), Minutes 502
- ⁱⁱⁱ *Op cit* MIAC Minute 504
- ^{iv} MIAC Report of the Committee for 1996/1997, Fifth AGM, 13 Aug 1997
- ^v MIAC Minutes 1 October 1997, Number # 629.
- ^{vi} MIAC MINUTES SGM Meeting 10 June 1998
- ^{vii} Report of MIAC AGM 1997/98 – 10 August 1998
- ^{viii} MIAC Committee Minutes c Nov 1998
- ^{ix} MIAC Minute 884 – 3 March 1999.
- ^{ix} MIAC Minutes, (4 November 1996), Minutes 502
- ^{ix} *Op cit* MIAC Minute 504
- ^{ix} MIAC Report of the Committee for 1996/1997, Fifth AGM, 13 Aug 1997
- ^{ix} MIAC Minutes 1 October 1997, Number # 629.
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- ^{ix} Report of MIAC AGM 1997/98 – 10 August 1998
- ^{ix} MIAC Committee Minutes c Nov 1998
- ^{ix} MIAC Minute 884 – 3 March 1999.
- ^x Mallacoota Mouth Notice 29 Nov 1991 (See Chap 2)
- ^{xi} MIAC Minute 883
- ^{xii} MIAC Minute 883