



Volunteer Stories 2021

National Volunteer Week – 17-23 May. The theme this year is RECOGNISE, RECONNECT, IMAGINE. This week, we are celebrating the return of our volunteers as well as the invaluable work they do by holding Volunteer Week events at each of our homes.

We're also going to be sharing inspiring volunteer stories, beginning with our founder – Norm Rowland. We caught up with him earlier this month and are completely inspired and knew right away that we wanted to share it with all of you:

Norm is a father of two and worked as a Superintendent at Tallawarra Power Station as well as being President of the Lions Club.

Looking around Norm's home, it was clear that Norm is a man of many talents. His vast array of timber work is displayed throughout his home, from led light wall units, coffee tables, footstalls to little Dachshunds which he gives away. His daughter says "Anything timber in the house Dad's made."

Norm recalls Dr Peter Wilson saying there were no aged care homes between Wollongong and the Victorian border. There was a little farm house on the hill at Mt Warrigal which the Council took over. Norm, on behalf of the Lions Club, approached Council and asked if they could look the property, which was granted. This begins the story of #Warrigal.

During the first three years, the Lions Club worked on weekends to rebuild the farm house to a 12 bed nursing home. "The service clubs physically did the rebuilding, while all the women raised money by holding fetes and BBQs." recalls Robyn (Norm's daughter). "I remember Mum making batches of sponge cakes the old fashioned way and selling them at the fetes".

In the beginning it was just 12 beds. Norm recalls a woman giving two ducks to the home as her contribution. She was so grateful that her husband was able to go into the home and be cared for after she had been struggling at home as a sole carer for over 12 years.

Norm got involved in all the political work and negotiations with Council and was always grateful to Bob Harrison from Council who gave the Lions Club the freedom to do what they wanted with the land and only pay \$1.00 a year for rent!

Robyn said "It was just the life back then. Every weekend was filled with socialising with members of the Lions Club and building for the community. I

remember just hanging out on the weekends and watching the building going up.”

Robyn’s grandmother was cared for by Warrigal and today Norm uses Warrigal’s Home Care services.

Over the years, Norm remained in contact with many of the original nurses and volunteers who started the Warrigal home: Enid Baker, Fay Smith, Joan Pearce, Fay Cummins just to name a few.

Norm went on to become Chairman of the Board at Warrigal for many years and saw Warrigal continue to grow and expand.

Back then if you built and managed a 10-bed nursing home, the Government would give you money to make it a 12-bed nursing home. The Government were really good at supporting people who came together to do things for their communities.

“The best thing about Warrigal is we are non-for-profit and still remain non-for-profit. That is what sets us apart from the rest”.

Norm has officially retired from volunteering, but his legacy and passion has been carried through to his daughter Robyn who is now a Warrigal Company Member.

At 101 years young, Norm relaxes in his recliner and loves to chat about the early days, enjoys playing Scrabble with his carers and is still very quick witted, always with a cheeky twinkle in his eyes.

