

Media Release

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Centenarian celebrates on special day

Australia Day is more significant than most for Attilio Bisognin. On January 26 this year, the VMCH aged care resident celebrated his 100th birthday!

Attilio's move to Australia from Italy in 1949 marked a turning point in his life, so it's poignant that his centenarian celebration fell on January 26.

The grandfather of five and great-grandfather of nine, has lived at VMCH's [John R Hannah Aged Care Residence](#) in Mulgrave for two years, with his beloved wife, Mary.

On Sunday 26 January, staff and loved ones ensured Attilio's special day was celebrated in style, with his favourite continental cake, a selection of delicious treats from chef Kimi, speeches, gifts and a rendition of 'Happy Birthday' in Italian.

JRH Leisure and Lifestyle Assistant Ailsa Gaia says fellow residents enjoyed learning about Attilio's colourful and full life, which began in the Province of Vicenza, Italy, in 1925.

The eldest of six children, Attilio's family worked a small plot of land and after school, Attilio would help the local chemist and midwife with odd jobs in exchange for medical services for the family, as money was scarce.

In 1942, teenaged Attilio joined the Fire Brigade. During the war, planes dropped some bombs causing his fire truck to crash. Several men were killed but Attilio survived after spending 12 months in hospital.

He then joined the army, later being awarded the Italian War Merit Cross for 'Acts of Courage'. When the war ended, Attilio joined the Polizia Celere, a quick response state police unit formed after the war to restore public order and maintain security.

In 1949, Attilio followed the path of many relatives who emigrated to Australia in search of opportunity.

He settled in Wonthaggi and worked at the local coal mine, and then a nearby butter factory.

Later, while working at a local farm, he met his future wife, Mary. The pair married in 1952 and raised their children Glen and Julie. Decades of family time and farm work followed, with Glen taking over the farm in Bass in 2014, transforming it into the now the award-winning Bass River Dairies and Bassine Specialty Cheese.

In recent years, Attilio and Mary lived quietly in their home at Wheelers Hill. Attilio spending a lot of time in his vegetable garden, keeping family and neighbours well supplied!

In 2023, due to Mary's failing health, the pair decided to move to JRH, where they live comfortably and are popular among staff and residents alike.

"Attilio always shares the decision to come to Australia was his best move, and he's thankful for the many opportunities offered by our wonderful nation," Ailsa says. "He has no regrets and would do it again!"

Happy birthday, Attilio.

Media enquiries

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About VMCH

Here at VMCH, our services are as diverse as the people we support.

Our values underpin the work we do. As a Catholic, for-purpose organisation, love, joy, hospitality and courage aren't just words to us, they guide us in everything we do.

While we've been around for over a century, we're always moving forward. Always staying true to who we are by supporting people and families to live their best lives; providing a place to call home and spaces to learn and grow.

Our professional and compassionate teams are with you on your life journey; helping you with a wide range of support from early learning and therapy, specialist education, disability services, affordable homes, residential aged care, retirement living and at-home aged care.