

# Resident of the Month

## TOM DILLON

Resident Tom Dillon has been settled at Illawarra Diggers for almost seven years, after what he describes as 'living a colourful life'. In this time, he has been a productive "volunteer member of the lifestyle team", an indispensable helper for our Maintenance Manager Paul Organ and a constant helper to care staff wherever he can. He is the friendly face you see as you come into the facility every morning (before 9am that is) with a coffee in hand, watching to see who's late. Tom is the expert when it comes to loading the bus trailer for outings and having the trolley available to move all the heavy stuff.

He busies his day with taking out garbage, wiping down the notice boards and helping lifestyle with setting up activities and main events. Tom's most honoured role and one he takes pride in, is that of raising and lowering the flag each day. Tom takes a holiday every year with Care-away Holidays and he has visited many different destinations around Australia. This year he is planning to take the Indian Pacific to Broken Hill. Tom collects cans and bottles from around the facility and from supportive staff and families and he puts this money towards his yearly holiday.



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## MEET OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS



# CEO's Message

## Autumnal Greetings

The summer of 2019-20 will be remembered for many years to come as we endured the latter end of a devastating drought season, horrendous fires right across our country and then breaking the drought in many areas with major flooding.

While these natural events and disasters did not affect our home here directly, a number of our fellow aged care homes in the region did suffer directly with both IRT and Warrigal having threats to a number of homes. The fires did however affect many of our residents' families as well as our staff and their families.

We were very fortunate that most came through relatively unscathed.

With water tanks and dams quite full and green shoots tentatively emerging again, it should be a great time to celebrate. Unfortunately we now have a new threat in the coronavirus Covid-19 to contend with. We hope that we are equally fortunate that this virus will not greatly affect any of our Illawarra Diggers "family". I have recently written to all staff, residents and families to reassure all that Illawarra Diggers is keeping well informed of all Health Department updates and precautionary advice in relation to this virus.

We have good, tested infection control procedures in place and have, unfortunately, needed to implement these quite regularly in the flu season. Within the home, the reaction to the coronavirus is very much like our response to any infectious outbreak. We have maintained a good stock of necessary equipment but we are also beholden to our suppliers to provide for our ongoing needs. We have taken the opportunity to purchase additional supplies although there is no indication of any medical supply shortages at this stage. We are following Department of Health advice in these matters.

I take this opportunity to ask families, friends and other visitors to observe much greater caution when visiting Illawarra Diggers. If you suspect that you may have any flu-like symptoms, please do not visit. If you have travelled overseas in the last 14 days or been with someone who has, please be additionally conservative and do not visit. We have additional hand sanitising stands throughout the home. Please use them.

Also please, now and always, sign in and sign out of the home when you visit. While it is always a requirement and essential for the safe management of our home, it is also very important from an infection control point of view so that we can track and infection paths that may occur. Please do not be offended if you are challenged by staff as to whether you have signed in or not. You may be asked to return to the front door to do so.

Well that is all pretty heavy isn't it? The safety, health and wellbeing of our residents is paramount to us so we need to ensure we put protocols in place to provide the best protection for them and our staff. Your cooperation and understanding is most appreciated.

Inside Illawarra Diggers, life goes on at what we hope is just the right pace for each resident. Our lifestyle team are working to make our theme days more creative, starting with an Irish Pub theme for St Patrick's Day. We always welcome suggestions from residents but families and friends are also encouraged to contact Vikki and her team in Lifestyle with any suggestions for either their particular resident or for everyone.

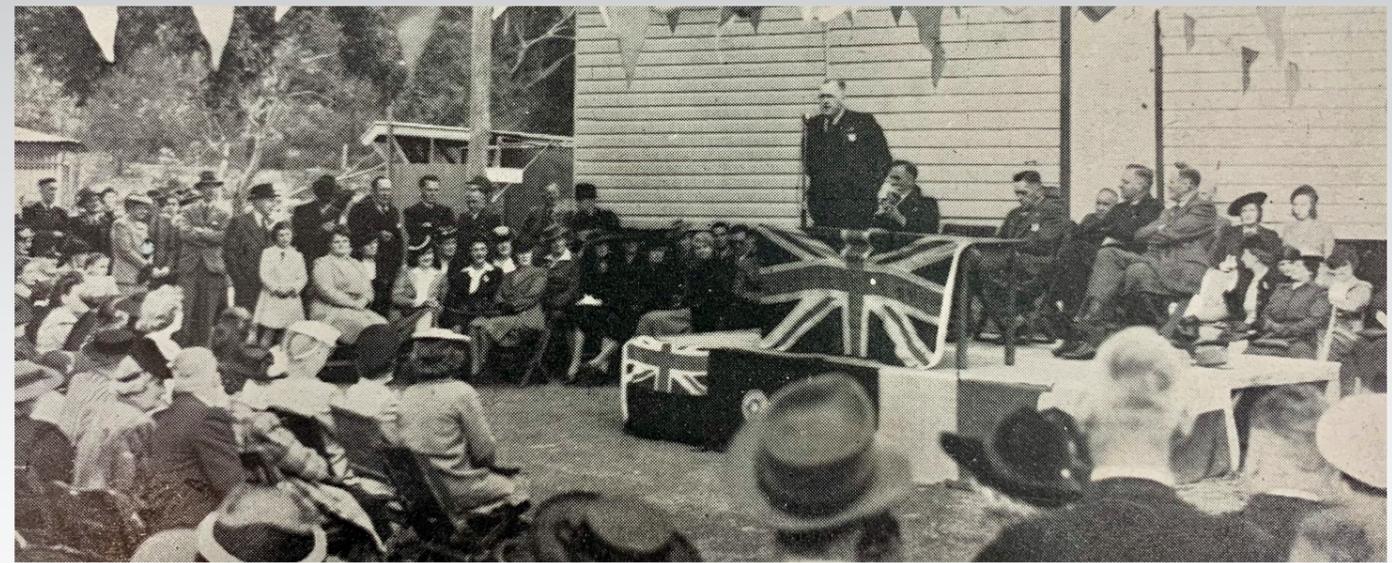
Many of you will be aware that we hold a monthly resident meeting but you may not be aware that is it actually a resident and representative meeting. Family and friends are more than welcome to attend these meetings on the first Monday of each month (see the program) and participate in the planning for the next month or to ask any questions of me or the staff. Starting at the March meeting, our Chairman Michael Grew has been attending the meetings to engage directly and allow the residents to give any feedback directly to our board of directors. In this edition we have also profiled our directors. They are all volunteers who give their time to the governance of Illawarra Diggers to ensure that the very best care and support is provided to our residents. They are greatly appreciated.

I hope you all stay healthy and well and continue to enjoy our home. It is our pleasure to ensure you do.

Kind Regards

Peter Whittall, CEO

**Due to the rapid spread of COVID-19 in our broader community, Illawarra Diggers is making every effort to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our residents and staff. From 19 March, the home has been locked to all visitors. Some exceptions will be made in the case of end of life care provided the visitors meet the health criteria. We are keeping all residents and families informed of these rapidly evolving circumstances and responses.**



Illawarra Diggers, then called the Diggers Rest, was officially opened in Mt Keira by Cecil Hopkins in September 1946 before moving to Corrimal in 1979. Among the official guests on the dais was Former Mayor Charles McLean Dawson, who played a significant role in founding Diggers Rest. His grandson, Stephen Dawson, is currently an Illawarra Diggers' director featured in this edition.

## A Message from the Lifestyle Manager

Let me share four lines from a very well known poem;

"I love a sunburnt country,  
A land of sweeping plains,  
Of ragged mountain ranges,  
Of droughts and flooding rains."

It seems much of Australia is living up to the words of this famous poem by Dorothea Mackellar, as we witness the devastation occurring from fires, rain, droughts and floods across this vast country. January 2020 saw so much devastation from fires burning along the eastern coast line of NSW and into Victoria. This fire goes down in history as the longest burning bushfire complex in Australia, which has burnt out more than 4 million hectares (9,900,000 acres).

The skies opened up for February 2020 with some of the heaviest rain falls over the Illawarra in quite a while, resulting in creeks, rivers, dams and waterfalls flowing across the region. This also bought some much needed reprieve from those fires still burning.

As we roll into a new year here at Illawarra Diggers, we are looking forward to some great events; St Patricks Day with a pop up pub theme and Diggers Royal Easter Show. We have put the St George River Cruise on hold for the moment, with dates being discussed for later in the year.

NSW Seniors week, 12th February to 23rd February, is all about looking after our senior citizens, getting out of the house, getting active and enjoying our time. So to embrace the theme we have organised a bus trip to our local ten pin bowling alley. To keep everyone active and mobile the Lifestyle and physio teams continue with our monthly beach walk. For those who want a bit extra after their walk, Sophie provides a session of ball games in the park area.

To celebrate Valentines Day we had a beautiful performance on Saturday 15th February (unavailable for the 14th) by the 'Misty Escarpment Jazz Group'. The three piece band was fantastic and enjoyed by around 40 residents on the morning.

A new project is to commence supported by the Greenacres Connect Group. The removal of the old aviary and a new chicken coup will be built replacing the old structure. The Keira garden project is nearing completion. We need a layer of bark or wood chips to finish the garden beds.

Expressions for donations have been sent out, so fingers crossed. If any families wish to contribute to this or any other project for our residents, please see Vikki in Lifestyle.

Our resident in focus this quarter is Tom Dillon, hope you enjoy his story.

Best wishes  
Vikki Wilesmith  
and lifestyle team Deb, Hannah, Sophie and Kayleigh.



## Illawarra Diggers Board of Directors

In this edition of our magazine we are highlighting the work of our Board of Directors. Illawarra Diggers has a volunteer board of 9 members. The role of the board is to provide governance, guidance, oversight and strategic direction to Illawarra Diggers and was historically mostly focussed on financial and business regulatory compliance. Changes to legislation and changes to community expectations have been accelerated with the introduction of the new Aged Care Quality Standards in July 2019 as well as the ongoing Royal Commission into Aged Care. The role of the board has evolved and also been changed by regulatory expectation to have accountability of all aspects of the operations of Illawarra Diggers, including clinical care. These changes have driven the need for changes in the board. The board members constantly self evaluate to ensure they are able to bring skills to the board which will guide and support our home to deliver excellent care and comply with and exceed all regulatory requirements. Our current board bring a great diversity of skills and experiences with law, finance, engineering, senior management, pharmacy, information technology and strategic business development. Their generosity of time and guidance to Illawarra Diggers is greatly appreciated.



**MICHAEL GREW**  
CHAIRMAN

Illawarra Diggers' Chairman,  
Michael Grew, a Chartered

Accountant and principle in an accounting and business advisory firm in Wollongong. Michael is from Thirroul and has been on the board for eight years.

"One of the highlights during my time on the board has been supporting Illawarra Diggers in maintaining the high level of care and good standing within our local community," he said.

"I believe I have a good understanding of the system of care at Illawarra Diggers as both my late parents were residents here."

Michael's vision for the future of Illawarra Diggers includes increasing the already high level of care for residents; achieving further integration into the local community; and ensuring that all Illawarra Diggers staff feel happy and proud to be working within the facility.

"I am also keen that we develop other streams of care, including independent and assisted living and home care," he added.

In his working life, Michael is extremely proud of growing his

accountancy practice from a start-up business of two people to the current staff level of 60, while maintaining and strengthening friendships and relationships with staff and clients alike.

Michael, who is married to Kay and has five children, enjoys family time, travel and has a particular passion for professional English football team the Queens Park Rangers.



**HARRY BASSETT**  
DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

Deputy Chairman, Harry Bassett, a retired metallurgist from Mt Ousley, has been on the board for four years.

Harry joined the board through his involvement as Treasurer of Corrimal RSL and his desire to help his fellow Diggers. He believed his management skills would be an asset to the board.

"It is important the board looks to the future and keeps up with new trends, so Illawarra Diggers continues to be one of the best aged care complexes in the region," he said.

A highlight of his time on the board has been the opening of the long awaited \$18 million extensions in 2018 and his association with the CEO Peter Whittall, for whom he has great admiration.

"I am extremely proud of the friendly and professional staff for their exceptional attitude," he said.

Born in Bathurst in 1950 after his parents emigrated from Europe, Harry has fond memories of growing up in Wollongong, including riding his bike up to the original Diggers' Rest Home.

Harry, worked as a metallurgist at AIS until he was conscripted into the Army, and later went on to become Managing Director of EJ Pty Ltd.

Harry and his wife Joy, who still plays hockey, have two children and two grandchildren.



**STEPHEN DAWSON**  
DIRECTOR

Talk about history – Board member Stephen Dawson's grandfather, Charles McLean Dawson, was not only Mayor of Wollongong in 1946 he also formed and founded the first Illawarra Diggers Rest Home in Mt Keira.

The Wollongong-based solicitor, who has been on the board for 10 years, proudly continues this tradition of giving back to the community by assisting not for profit organisations.

"I'm also a board member of the Greenacres Disability Services and while it is a different organisation to Illawarra Diggers, they both assist vulnerable people who are in need of care in a respectful and dignified manner," he said.

"It has been exciting being part of the initial ambitious plans to expand the facility firstly working with

former CEO Rex Leighton, and then with current CEO Peter Whittall.

"It's been a challenging journey, but the results are well worth the effort," he said.

"My vision for the future of Illawarra Diggers is for it to continue to be an excellent provider of services and amenities for our aged care population of the Illawarra."

Stephen, who has lived all his life in Wollongong, and his wife Karen, have two children and six grandchildren.

His hobbies include sailing (he competes in the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race each year), watching rugby and continues to be involved with the Wollongong City Surf Life Saving Club.



**JOE DAVIDSON**  
DIRECTOR

As an active member of the City of Wollongong RSL Sub-Branch Joe Davidson joined the board of Illawarra Diggers six years ago as he felt it was his duty to assist ex-service people and elderly members.

"Working with other board members in planning the extensions, refurbishment and renovations of the facility has been the highlight of my time on the board," he said.

"My vision for the future of Diggers is to continue its current policies and philosophies and to expand within a manageable program structure."

The highlight of Joe's working life was rising through the ranks at the NRMA starting as "parcel boy" in 1964 and retiring as NSW/ACT Operations Manager NRMA Branch Network overseeing daily operations of all branches 37 years later.

Joe and his wife Lorraine have two children and six grandchildren.

He is a rugby league sports trainer, a volunteer First Aid Officer for Catholic and State schools' sports carnivals, schools' liaison for the RSL, and assists his wife with Illawarra Cancer Carers' volunteer activities. He enjoys ancient/modern military history and travel.



**JOHN IRELAND AM**  
DIRECTOR

While John joined the Board of Diggers in 2017, he was by no means a newcomer to the Corrimal complex.

He and his wife and family have been visiting Illawarra Diggers for 17 years supporting their friend, Les, who is the father of their two foster children.

John has more than four decades of experience and active involvement in aged care leadership roles, ranging from chairman of the United Protestant Association Board

for 10 years to CEO Southern Cross Care NSW/ACT for 23 years.

John served on the International Association of Housing and Services for the Ageing for six years and was a member of numerous Government Committees and Advisory Councils. In 1999 John was awarded Membership of the Order of Australia for services to Aged Care, Youth and the Church.

John has a passion for quality accommodation care and support for those in our society who are vulnerable, marginalised and disadvantaged.

John and his wife Jean have six children, 16 grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

John continues to be actively involved in aged care by mentoring leaders in the sector and regularly visiting residents in three aged care facilities.



**SHARON DOOLAN**  
DIRECTOR

Qualified pharmacist Sharon Doolan was appointed to the Board of Illawarra Diggers in January 2019.

"Being on the board gives me the opportunity to share clinical and

medication knowledge to benefit the home, staff and residents," she said. Sharon provides Home Medication Review services to the Illawarra, Shoalhaven and Southern Highland areas and Residential Medication Reviews in the Illawarra.

Originally from country Victoria, Sharon spent her childhood on a dairy farm and enjoyed the outdoors with her love of horses, riding and competing.

"I then moved to Melbourne to study pharmacy and on completion of my degree had the opportunity to work in several Melbourne public and private hospital pharmacies before moving to NSW where I started my consulting business," she said.

The move to a rural coastal area allowed Sharon to once again enjoy her love of horses and riding, but living near the coast and beautiful beaches Sharon found a new hobby in stand-up paddle boarding.

The other enjoyment in her life is time spent with her husband Steve and daughters, taking delight in their myriad of activities and sport.



**AMY HARPER**  
DIRECTOR

Amy joined the board six months ago in September 2019.

As a commercial lawyer and Partner at Kells Lawyers in Wollongong, Amy regularly advises and works with various not for profit organisations, including those in aged care.

"While this experience has provided me with the knowledge of the common legal issues arising in not-for-profit organisations such as Illawarra Diggers, I am very keen to develop a much deeper knowledge, she said.

"I want to ensure our grandparents, parents or siblings have a good quality of life and are safe and cared for, whether they are living in their own home or in residential care."

Amy is excited to be able to contribute as a board member at a time when the aged care industry is undergoing significant change.

While still relatively new, Amy has enjoyed getting to know the other directors, who bring diverse skill sets and perspectives, and the talented Illawarra Diggers' team.

"Regardless of any future projects, new buildings or other expansions, my vision is to make sure that the quality of care of the residents of Illawarra Diggers continues to be front and centre of what the board does, she said.

"We want to ensure they are always comfortable, enjoy friendships and feel safe and cared about, and hopefully there is some room for fun in there too!"

Amy, who lives in Woonona, and her husband Brett have two boys aged three and five years old.



**ALISON EARL**  
DIRECTOR

Our newest board director Alison has an amazing career as an international speaker, trainer, strategist and positive psychology practitioner that takes her around the world working with top global companies.

"Now, it's time to give back and I'd been on the lookout for the right opportunity to do just that when I heard about the board position at Illawarra Diggers," she said.

"Being an Illawarra girl, born and bred and now relocating back to the region after several years abroad, Illawarra Diggers was ideal as it is connected to the local community".

Alison is passionate about making a meaningful difference and being part of an organisation that is committed to delivering excellent outcomes and constantly improving. Her vision for Illawarra Diggers is for it to continue to build on the solid foundation that already exists today.

"I want us to be known in the industry for achieving outstanding results - to the point where we are invited to share our case studies at

industry conferences and become the gold standard that others model their approach," she said.

Highlights of her working life include building a new business from the ground up in Sydney, London and New York (where she trained to become a positive psychology practitioner) and having an ongoing collaboration with Harvard School of Public Health as a guest lecturer in behavioural economics.

Alison, who lives with her "little legend dog Ralph" at Shell Cove, is also an accomplished author and loves to play tennis, go on hikes, swim at the beach, snorkel, scuba dive and travel.



**MARTYN RYAN-MCCORMACK**  
DIRECTOR

Martyn, an ICT Services Manager at Ericom, has been a member of the board since 2017.

He has been described by colleagues as a dedicated, skilled and knowledgeable network engineer who also has a great understanding of business and the bigger picture.

Martyn completed his Master of Management at Charles Sturt University.