

Elders' stories told by Jan

By Byron Peszko

It's not everyday one can remember their life story from start to finish, but thanks to Jan Gadsden and her Rotary Club book series 'My Life Reflection', Cabanda Care residents have seen that dream become a reality.

Jan, who came up with the idea and works in collaboration with Cabanda Care Rosewood and the Rotary Club of Ipswich City, says the series is about giving residents a platform to celebrate their life. "The book is about the individual as they reflect on their family, special moments and achievements. It becomes their mini Australia story," she said.

Jan begins the process, meeting her elderly subjects and catching up over half a dozen or so sessions. "I record their reflections, I write the content and I get to capture the essence of their story," she says.

Jan works closely alongside residents to fine tune the story together. "It gives them control and confidence," says Jan.

The idea is close to Jan's heart, spurred by her own mother who spent her final months in aged care before she passed away. "I cherished every moment with mum, but also saw the emptiness in so many other faces. Mum used to say those twilight years were more about looking back and forward, and that's really where life reflection finds its purpose."

Last Tuesday, Jan presented her fifth installment in the series to resident Lal Smith. Growing up in Ireland, Lal moved to the UK to train as a nurse before she moved to Zimbabwe for 24 years. "She's been so over the moon about the album she plans to write a book about her life," Jan remarked.

When asked about her fondest memory in creating, producing and presenting her works to residents, Jan says the process is simply rewarding in itself. "I just think that reminiscing is so beneficial, particularly those in aged or palliative care," she said.



Jan Gadsden presenting Lal Smith with her album. (479130)



Reg Grieve being presented with his book. (479130)

The books are a way to make a difference in people's lives, while also enriching the local Rosewood community and local history.

"It's about working with them, meeting their families, having the privilege to be part of their journey, having a few laughs along the way, and most of all, being part of the incredible stories being told."



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