November 2026 Abbeyfield *Dunedin Newsletter*

Kia ora koutou

We're in the middle of our fire safety upgrades at Abbeyfield – more on that below.

The building work means that some of our usual routines will be disrupted for about eight weeks in total. Residents and housekeepers are prepared for this and are ready to prove their adaptability. Visitors will need to watch out for the builders and electricians working in different parts of the house.

We're looking forward to the works completion well before Christmas.

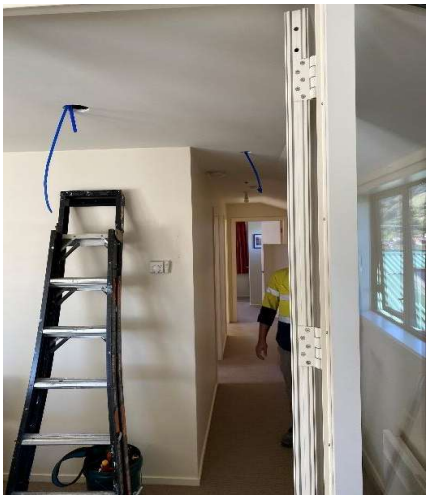
Best wishes to you all for a sunny spring and summer.

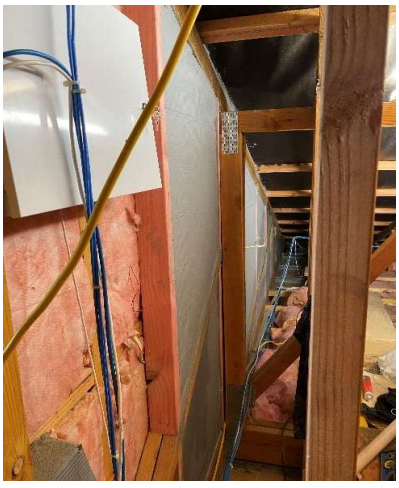
Alan Somerville

Chair, Abbeyfield Dunedin

Major project at Abbeyfield Dunedin

We are undergoing fire safety upgrades at Abbeyfield. This is to meet Dunedin City Council requirements and will make Abbeyfield a safer place to live and work.





Construction zone!!!

1st pic.
Metal flush boxes and fire pads are being installed to electrical outlets in ceilings and walls.

2nd pic
Installation of new fire rated insulation in the ceiling of Suite 9.

The upgrade is a large and expensive project, and we're very grateful to have the support of building owner, Abbeyfield Properties Ltd. They have overseen the project, working with a Christchurch project manager, managing the tender process and largely funding the work. Dunedin-based company, Stewart Construction, won the tender and began work in early October.

Remediation involves increasing fire separations, installing fire safety doors, replacing the alarm system, and other work. Chairperson, Alan, other committee members and our Housekeeper Ross met with residents over several months, informing them of the required work and involving them in how the disruption could best be managed.

Major work requires Suite 4 to be vacated for four weeks and the lower common area to be inaccessible for two weeks. Other parts of the building are affected too. A big thank you to Murray, our volunteer property manager, who has spent many hours on site and to Ross for his flexibility and support for residents. Likewise, a big thank you to residents for being so cheerful about the inconvenience of builders on site.

Work is expected to be finished on 11 December.

Have you been left wondering - 'What is Abbeyfield Properties Limited'?
Abbeyfield Properties Limited (APL) began in 2003 as Abbeyfield Partnerships Ltd. In 2014, it was restructured and renamed as APL. The not-for-profit company is part of the larger Abbeyfield NZ Inc.

APL directors have extensive experience in areas such as finance, project planning and managing, engineering, architecture, construction and social housing. Most of the directors are retired but volunteer their time and skills to support Abbeyfield's mission.

Almost all Abbeyfield houses are owned by APL. Its directors provide advice and guidance with the development of new and existing houses. They manage Abbeyfield mortgages across NZ. This has led to significant savings. For example, in 2025, APL reorganized mortgages under the Community Housing Funding Agency, resulting in a lower interest rate and significant savings.

Meet our residents – Colin Attfield

Colin is one of the older residents in Abbeyfield Dunedin, yet the first to appear each morning. By 7.30am he sets off for a brisk walk. On return, he collects the ODT and delivers it to fellow residents. Several times a week, Colin drives to Mosgiel to visit June, his wife of almost 70 years. Sadly, June has dementia and requires a higher level of care than Abbeyfield can offer.



Colin was born in 1933 and grew up in Lawrence. In 1950, aged 16, he shifted to Oamaru to work at the Bank of New South Wales. Colin described himself as, *"A wet behind the ears, country kid from Lawrence who thought he was a man of the world. But the other young men at the boarding house educated and looked after me."* When the landlady forbade playing cards for money, the lads used matchsticks. Late at night these were exchanged for pennies. Colin proved an ace. *"I was a canny poker player and on one occasion was lucky enough to win 7 shillings and 6 pence, which enabled me to buy a new shirt."* With a starting wage of £6.68 and more than £4 pounds going on board, a win was a bonus.

In 1952, Colin was conscripted to compulsory military training at Burnham for three months. There, he learned how to use rifles, guns, mortars and throw hand grenades. *"I'm happy to say none of that training was used in the bank,"* reports Colin with a twinkle. A year later he was transferred to the BNSW in Wellington.

A trip back to Dunedin for a family wedding in 1956 proved life changing. In Colin's words, *"I was sitting on my suitcase at the rear of the Second-Class section when the Guard came through and said I'll see if I can find you a seat. Later he told me to follow him, and we went all the way up to First Class where he sat me down beside June. She was moving to Wellington to see what the big wide world offered. By the time we disembarked in Wellington we had become friends, and that led to a courtship which saw us married on 1/6/57."* They were then transferred to Levin where they bought their first house for £3000, with the bank's help of a 3% interest rate.

In 1970, Colin and family were transferred to Brisbane. His new role as Regional Manager for 20+ city branches involved working with Branch Managers and overseeing Lending and Performance Planning. Colin recalls this as a happy period, "*We were always made welcome and were sorry when we were moved to Sydney in 1973."* At the Head Office in Sydney, Colin became State Manager – Staff. In this role, he and sometimes June, visited branches across N.S.W. Then in 1981, the BNSW and Commercial Bank merged to become WESPAC and in 1983, Colin became General Manager Human Resources, a position he held until retirement in 1989.

Colin recalls the formality and social expectations of work in the 1970/80s and June's support. *"She was comfortable and discreet and always performed with poise and ease. She was not only the love of my life from day one, but the light of life for me and our kids as well!"*

Colin and June raised two children, Kay and Peter. Work took Peter and family overseas, but Kay settled nearby in New South Wales. Later in retirement, Colin and June moved to live closer to her. Sadly, Kay died shortly after. When June was diagnosed with early dementia, they decided to return to NZ and settle in Dunedin, close to siblings.

At Abbeyfield Colin is respected for his quiet, thoughtful disposition and wise perspectives. This in part reflects his philosophy of always aiming to be fair, willing to learn through trial and error, valuing others, and dealing with problems as they arise – not wasting energy worrying about what might or might not happen.

Farewell to Bernadette Milburn - a much-valued staff member

On Saturday 3rd of October, Abbeyfield residents and committee gathered to farewell Bernadette Milburn. Bernadette has worked at Abbeyfield Dunedin for seven years, as weekend and relief cook. Reflecting on her time at Abbeyfield, Bernadette says she has enjoyed the residents' company. From her perspective, they make the place special.



From left: Pat, Alan, Shirley, Joy, Judy, Elspeth, Colin, Margaret, Bernadette and Doris (seated).

Bernadette is looking forward to more time for family and other interests. This includes a long-awaited project to sort through family photographs and tackle some overdue jobs around the house. Retirement especially means more time with family here and grandchildren overseas.

Ngā mihi – warm greetings to all Abbeyfield friends
Wishing you all a healthy and happy spring

Abbeyfield Dunedin Committee