

# "WATER OFF"

NEWSLETTER OF THE  
RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS'  
ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA  
(VICTORIAN BRANCH) INC.



Aug 2025 Vol 30 No 3  
Inc/No: A16839F

**Annual General Meeting**  
**\*NOTE\***  
**Burnley Complex**  
**Burnley**  
**Wed 20th Aug, 2025**  
**at 10:30am**

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All RFA and RMD Members are welcome to come along and view EVIE, the new FRV Electric Fire Appliance. EVIE will be at the Burnley Complex for all to see new equipment, compartments and those willing and able can climb into the driver's seat for an inside view of the cabin.

# **“ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING”**

**Burnley Complex, Burnley  
Wednesday 20th Aug, 2025 at 10:30am.**

**Volunteers Required**  
**The Fire Services Museum needs past  
fire service members to assist on an  
occasional basis at the Museum**  
**Please contact**  
**Bryan Robertson**  
**0418 129 252**

**All Correspondence to:**  
Phil Cleary  
RFAV Secretary  
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Numurkah 3636  
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or email at [rfavic1@gmail.com](mailto:rfavic1@gmail.com)

## **Non financial Members**

Members be advised if your newsletter has an expiry date of 2/1/2020 that means you have not paid your subs since 2019 therefore if no remuneration is received by the 2/1/22 your name will be automatically removed from the mailing list. If, for whatever reason any member is unable to meet this request please do not hesitate to call the secretary, (confidentiality is assured)

## **OFFICE BEARERS**

**President:** Alex Shepherd  
**Vice President:** Sam Capes  
**Sec./Treasurer:** Phil Cleary

### **General Committee:**

Col Harris  
Len Manning  
Mike McCumisky  
Ian Geddes  
Kevin Hede

**“Water Off”  
Editorial Staff**  
Colin Harris  
James Harris

## **Valē**

Fred Laverick  
Robert Weitering  
Robert Wyatt  
Ernest Osbourne  
Brian Richardson  
Alfons Karenbeak  
Francis Wilson  
Stanley “Bing” Lyons  
Leon Trembath  
John Danby  
Barry Wilson

We offer our condolences to the families of these members who have gone on to a higher duty.

## **Sick List \* In Care Facility**

**Stan Cameron,  
\*Gary Spicer,  
John Williams,  
Bob Chiron,  
John Danby,  
Laurie Hookey,  
Frank Souter.**

**Note:** If you know of any member who may be ill please notify a committee member.

## **Diary Dates**

**“ ANNUAL GENERAL  
MEETING”**  
**Burnley Complex, Burnley**  
**Wed 20th Aug 2025 at**  
**10:30am.**

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT



**H**ello all,

It's that time again where we have the Annual General Meeting, Firstly I would like to thank all members of the Committee who served us well during the year a special thanks goes to Phil Cleary, our Secretary/Treasurer who has done a mighty job since taking over the duties. This meeting Phil has chosen to step down because of health issues all the best Phil. Colin Harris our Editor and everything else has put his hand up to take over as Secretary only so we need to split the Treasurer's duties from the position. Anyone willing to be Treasurer ? Also, we have vacancies on the Committee for fresh ideas so come

along and put your hand up and have a go. All positions are open. Thanks to all who have supported the Retired Firefighters Association during the year?

We have been down in attendances at meetings lately, so how about coming along and giving support to your Committee and to your fellow members. We still have a great BBQ provided by the Training and Fire Safety Department who are very welcoming to the Retired Firefighters Association. I hope to see some familiar faces.

To all members, families and friends of the RFA, I hope you are well and getting around OK. It will be Christmas before we know it!

Alex Shepherd  
(President)

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## SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT



**H**i all,

Well it's time to say goodbye as Secretary/Treasurer. I have enjoyed this position since Alan Roberts passed away. It's now time for someone else to take over.

I took over from Allan 6 years ago and I have also run the RFA website for 12 years.

In that time I have enjoyed being Secretary/Treasurer, had some fun and a few differences of opinion, however, we always seem to agree in the end.

I will still be at the meetings and helping the new Secretary. We still need helpers to keep "Water Off" going and more stories coming in to fill the magazine. I would like to thank the committee for helping me. Without a good committee and members we wouldn't have survived over the last 40 years.

I wish you all good luck,

Phil Cleary  
(Secretary)

<p><b>Any enquiries call the Secretary:</b> <b>Mob. 0419 778 161 Email: rfavic1@gmail.com</b></p>
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## Generous with His Time, Teddy Bears & He has a Big Heart! – Retired S.O. John Howe Reg.1868

John was born and bred in Beechworth. You know the town! The Beechworth Bakery, Tom O'Toole who started this famous bakery. Tom came after John had left this lovely historic town, north east of Melbourne town. If you haven't been, get there before you die!

John's father was one of 16 children. They were good breeders were the Howe family. John was born in the old Beechworth Hospital back on the 9<sup>th</sup> of April 1940. He had a happy childhood living in the country and after leaving 8<sup>th</sup> grade at the local primary school and at the age of 14, went to work as a milkman (boy). John then did work as a builder's labourer and later, he later picked up a job at "Billson's" soft drink factory. At 17.5 years joined the Australian Army. After training in Kapooka (Wagga Wagga), he was sent to North Queensland (Canungra) and worked in stores and transport. John's time was up after 3 years. In 1962, he saw an advertisement in the paper, advertising for firefighters required to join the Metropolitan Fire Brigade. He was about to be employed into a great job and career and life-long friends.

Aged 22, this was a great career move for young John, as he sailed through recruit training at Eastern Hill after his very strict army training earlier on. John was allocated to "B" platoon and following on from No.1 Stn, he was stationed at various Eastern District stations those being, Box Hill, Surrey Hills and Camberwell. John remembers names like George White, Fred Kerr and Neville Van Every being stationed at 23 Stn – Camberwell Road, Camberwell.

John remembers the first large fire he turned out to. It was the "Brooks" building in Russell St, Melbourne. It was a ferocious fire and one civilian lost his life that day after being trapped inside. There was the "Foy" building in Smith Street, Fitzroy where the fire was going "S#ht hot" that day. The building was lost, however they saved the ground! The "Ruskin Street Primary School" was another big job, where the school fire was going end to end.

John spent 12 years as a firefighter, then decided to have a go at the station officer's course. After passing, he was assigned to "D" platoon for the next 2 years. John fondly remembers some old faces and personalities from those days. The likes of Ronny Millard, Bluey Johnson, Wacky Gallop, Billy Piper, Gordon Geddes, Archie McLaughlin and Fred Young. John remembers the time at one of the big jobs, where Chief Van Every spoke to all the crew that night and told them they were doing a great job in containing the factory fire.

\*By the way, John tells me he's a "loose Blues supporter!" Oh well, I thought? (Poor him!). Talking about football, Mr Howe mentioned that there had been many firefighters who had been and were still playing football during that era. Some of those champions were, Mickey Gordian, Dodger Ryan, Ron Cripps, George Hancock, Cyril Collard, Col Campbell, Duffy Plummer, Wapper Lane, Clarrie Cuewer, and Doc Steele. Some of this group played VFL and VFA football. Many also pulled on a jumper for the MFB Football team on Wednesdays.

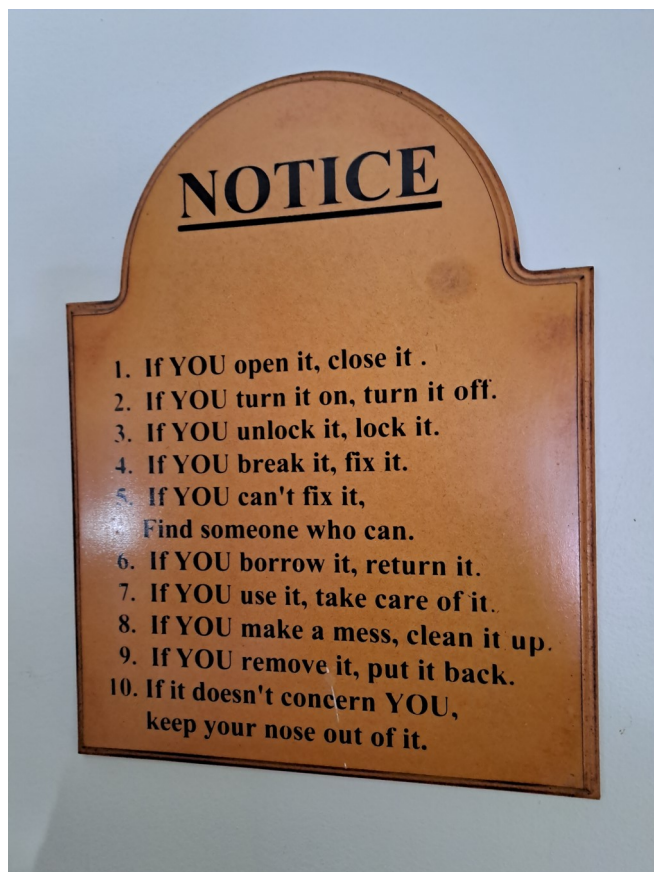
John has been a volunteer Peer Support colleague for 150 firefighting staff including many retired firefighters. Peer Support involves talking, listening, advising and positive interaction with people not going so well. John often takes a teddy bear along as a keep-sake for a person he's visiting. He gets his teddy bears from many places. The recipient smiles and loves this kind gesture. John is someone who keeps on giving to his fellow firefighting family and it's always with a smile or cheeky grin. After a lovely chat and cuppa, it was time to go. It was almost dinner time. I asked John what he was cooking tonight. He said "I'm an official food taster for the lady next door, so I don't have to cook!" Wow what a charmer!



The conversation was almost finished when John mentioned that he had been involved in the "World Police and Fire Games". John's first trip with the MFB team was to San Jose where he and his crew won a silver medal in the water bucket brigade. In 1987 they were off to San Diego and it was Vancouver in 1989. John remembers meeting a Canadian policewoman named Carol Cooke. Carol became a firm friend of John's. She stayed with John and his family for 6 months, met an Aussie and married him. Carol still lives in Australia and raises funds for many charities.

OK, it was now time for me to depart! We said our cheerios' and I thanked John for an informative interview/chat. I took a couple of photos.

John, it was an absolute pleasure today! Thanks for your fire brigade story of 30 years and the many other subjects we covered today. - Colin Harris, Ed.



## **F.R.V's New Electric Fire Appliance at R.F.A. August A.G.M**

FRV's Electric Vehicle for Incident and Emergency - named **EVIE** for short.

**EVIE** has been built to FRV specifications and combines the latest innovative firefighting equipment and technology in a high-performing zero emissions vehicle.

"We're extremely proud to introduce **EVIE** to Fire Rescue Victoria as part of the modernisation of our vehicle fleet," said Fire Rescue Commissioner Gavin Freeman AFSM.

"We'll be evaluating all aspects of the truck's performance to help inform future decisions about the integration of electric fire appliances into our service."

A first for FRV, and only the second fully electric fire truck in Australia, **EVIE** will be a valuable addition to the state's firefighting fleet and allow the trial of this new technology.

Commissioner Freeman said an expert FRV team, including representatives from the Victorian United Firefighters Union (UFU) and workshop personnel, has been involved in the design of the vehicle every step of the way to deliver the greatest benefit for firefighting crews and the Victorian community.

"We thank the project team and the UFU for their highly valued contribution," he said.

**EVIE** meets all requirements as a primary FRV pumper with powerful firefighting capabilities and innovative new features.

These include independent drive and pump systems for 'pump and roll' firefighting on the move, and improvements to ergonomics and stowage lockers to support firefighters' health.

Firefighters will be thoroughly trained and familiarised with **EVIE's** new technology, before the truck is gradually introduced to service, expected in late 2025.

**EVIE** will begin service by shadowing other fire appliances responding to incidents, to fully test the truck's capabilities. The vehicle will be thoroughly evaluated prior to any further electric fire truck additions to FRV's fleet.

**EVIE's** distinctive appearance features a new visual design that speaks to its sustainability and connection to Country. The door of the pumper features artwork from Samantha Richards, a descendant from the Wurundjeri and Dja Dja Wurrung tribes through the Terrick family, entitled 'Bunjil and Waa'.

## **RFA Queensland/Victoria Csi Club Reunion - 2025**

At 10.00am Thursday July 31st 2025 we once again 'converged' upon the Csi Club in Southport, to meet and greet other retired firefighters who have travelled from far and wide to enjoy their day.

This year we were relocated within the club (this was my big stress factor) instead of the 'lane-way' that had been our area in the past for 5 years it was now in the process of being re-vamped. I was really hoping that we would get a great area within the club. Yes, it turned out so well I hope it will be 'our' area for the next 10 years.

Our new location was fantastic and they had set up the tables and chairs to suit our needs.

Gradually, people starting arriving and before long it was time to try to get these 'buggers' in line to sit down and allow our day to commence.

Russell Hawthorn with a 'commanding' voice was finally able to get through to all and got bums on seats.

**A minute later after everyone was seated I handed the microphone to Russell where he requested for all to rise again and requested "a minute's silence" after which he said the Fireman's Prayer.**

So, then I introduced our next speaker - Tony Branchflower from 'Peer Support'. Tony advised that the Peer Support Group is working hard for all those that may be find themselves in need.

Whether it is ill-health concerns for yourself, a family member or an old mate from the job just needing a 'health check', Peer Support will try to assist you in some way if possible. There is a lot happening within Peer Support so keep your eyes peeled for some very interesting reading concerning issues to us all.

Please don't hesitate to contact them even for a question outside the box. If they don't know they will find out for you.

I watched poor old Col Harris.....he had a notebook and pen which never stopped working and I know he wasn't getting phone numbers! So keep your eyes peeled for some new things to happen. Love ya Col!

Next Russell jumped up then and advised that 43 members had died since our last luncheon very sad news to all as many would have known or worked with them.

Then our raffle ticket seller got to work making money for the luncheon. Marcia Warren & Michelle McFarlane (the cashier) must be thanked as they raised \$390.00 which so far the largest taking ever!!!

The Csi club presented 2 x \$25.00 gift vouchers for the raffle we also had 2 parcels with nibbles, bottle of wine in each with a \$75.00 Coles gift voucher attached. Michelle McFarlane donated a beautiful antique doll which many eyes locked onto as they were thinking of their grand-daughters.

I think I will have to buy chocolates for the girls for a 'thank you' as you all do a wonderful job for me. Next year girls please!!!!

When I looked around and thought about Peter & June Coulson in approximately 1989 when these lunches commenced he would have been so proud that it has continued and grown.

Considering the RFA commenced in 1985 it obviously is something that all enjoy. Mind you it is a good excuse to get away from the Southern states to warm up isn't it? I can't believe that Ian & I have been doing this for 11 years after Peter retired in 2014 – so you know we are onto a good and enjoyable thing!

All should be so proud of your commitment for attending.

Word is finally getting out also among the Queensland crew as we had quite a few attending. I think it is fantastic. Same job, very different stations. We had Chief Super Brad Commens attend (poor man) dobbed in by the Chief and he was great to talk to.

Neil Fanning (who was also once a MFB water fairy) who then found out about be able to transfer and went onto being in the QFS.

I am still trying to 'borrow permanently', 'steal' or 'buy' a QLD flag. One day it will stand proud next to our 'old' MFB flag. Please send any suggestions to me regarding something different to do at the luncheon...and no I am not paying for a stripper male/female out of the raffle money. All suggestions are appreciated as I don't want the day to be boring! Come on girls!!!

So that's about it folks for another year! Lots of photos are available on Facebook under 'groups', QLD Retired Firies, Russell and others have posted photos as well. Gail & Ian Fagernes

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# The London Beer Flood of 1814

On Monday 17th October 1814, a terrible disaster claimed the lives of at least 8 people. A bizarre industrial accident resulted in the release of a beer tsunami onto the streets of London...

On Monday 17th October 1814, a terrible disaster claimed the lives of at least 8 people in St Giles, London. A bizarre industrial accident resulted in the release of a beer tsunami onto the streets around Tottenham Court Road.

The Horse Shoe Brewery stood at the corner of Great Russell Street and Tottenham Court Road. In 1810 the brewery, Meux and Company, had had a 22 foot high wooden fermentation tank installed on the premises. Held together with massive iron rings, this huge vat held the equivalent of over 3,500 barrels of brown porter ale, a beer not unlike stout.

On the afternoon of October 17th 1814 one of the iron rings around the tank snapped. About an hour later the whole tank ruptured, releasing the hot fermenting ale with such force that the back wall of the brewery collapsed. The force also blasted open several more vats, adding their contents to the flood which now burst forth onto the street. More than 320,000 gallons of beer were released into the area. This was St Giles Rookery, a densely populated London slum of cheap housing and tenements inhabited by the poor, the destitute, prostitutes and criminals.

The flood reached George Street and New Street within minutes, swamping them with a tide of alcohol. The 15 foot high wave of beer and debris inundated the basements of two houses, causing them to collapse. In one of the houses, Mary Banfield and her daughter Hannah were taking tea when the flood hit; both were killed.

In the basement of the other house, an Irish wake was being held for a 2 year old boy who had died the previous day. The four mourners were all killed. The wave also took out the wall of the Tavistock Arms pub, trapping the teenage barmaid Eleanor Cooper in the rubble. In all, eight people were killed. Three brewery workers were rescued from the waist-high flood and another was pulled alive from the rubble.

19th century engraving of the event

All this 'free' beer led to hundreds of people scooping up the liquid in whatever containers they could. Some resorted to just drinking it, leading to reports of the death of a ninth victim some days later from alcoholic poisoning.

*'The bursting of the brew-house walls, and the fall of heavy timber, materially contributed to aggravate the mischief, by forcing the roofs and walls of the adjoining houses.'* The Times, 19th October 1814.

Some relatives exhibited the corpses of the victims for money. In one house, the macabre exhibition resulted in the collapse of the floor under the weight of all the visitors, plunging everyone waist-high into a beer-flooded cellar.

The stench of beer in the area persisted for months afterwards.

The brewery was taken to court over the accident but the disaster was ruled to be an Act of God, leaving no one responsible. The flood cost the brewery \$2.5 million (Aust)

Article by Ben Johnson.



## Senior Moments Senior Moments Senior Moments Senior Moments

**Senior Romance:** A well-dressed gentleman in his mid-nineties, walks into a smart cocktail lounge and spies an elegant lady in her mid-eighties at the bar. The gentleman walks over, sits alongside the old lady, orders a drink, takes a sip, turns to her and says, "So tell me, do I come here often?"

**Mad Scientist:** Sir Isaac Newton's forgetfulness was legendary. He would forget appointments, forget to comb his hair and forgot to eat. Indeed, so obsessed was Newton with scientific study that he would even sometimes forget where he was. Frequently he would rise in the morning and sit on the edge of his bed for hours, musing over a problem for so long, that he forgot to get dressed.

**Memory Lapse:** Two old men are chatting. One man says, "My friend, you must try this memory pill I'm taking. I remember absolutely everything, it's amazing." The other man says, it sounds wonderful. What's the name of the pill?" The first man replies, "the name of the pill? Well, let's see. What's the name of the little white flower with a yellow centre? It begins with 'D'" The other man says, "a daisy?" The first man says, "yes, that's right!" Then calling for his wife, he says, Daisy, what is the name of that little white pill I'm taking?

**Standing to Attention:** A very elderly and frail gentleman turned to his equally old friend Ernest, and asked if he could remember the name of the stuff the army used to put in their cups of tea during WW1, to stop the soldiers getting randy in the trenches. His companion remembered the ingredient, but was unable to recall its name. He asked, however, why his friend wanted to know. The answer was, "well, you know, Ernie, I think it's finally started to work."

**A Lot of Balls:** A cricketing senior moment was experienced by the writer and journalist Christopher Martin-Jenkins, who, during the 1979 Cricket World Cup, was heard to say of the appalling weather conditions: "It is extremely cold here. The England fielders are keeping their hands in their pockets between balls."

**Popping the Question:** An elderly man asked his wife of fifty years. "If you had to do it over again, would you marry me?" "You've asked me that before" she answered. "What did you reply?" She said, "I don't remember."

**Toilet Training:** Seventy-year-old John went for his annual physical. All of his tests came back with normal results. Dr. Adams said, "John, everything looks good physically. How are you doing mentally and spiritually? Are you at peace with yourself, and do you have a good relationship with God?" John replied, "God and I are close. He knows I have poor eyesight, so he has arranged that when I get up in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom, the light goes on and when I'm finished, the light goes off." "Wow!" exclaimed the doctor. "That's incredible!" A little later in the day, Dr. Adams called John's wife. "Sarah" he said, "John is doing fine. Physically, he's great. But, I had to call, because I'm amazed by his relationship with God. Is it true that he gets up in the middle of the night and the light goes on in the bathroom and then when he's finished, the light goes off?" Sarah exclaimed, Oh my God! He's been peeing in the refrigerator again!

### **Peer support is available to Retired Firefighters and Associated Members**

#### **FRV**

**Employee Assistance Coordinator**

**Irina Tchernitskaia – PH: 0407 665 174**

**Email:- [irina.tchernitskaia@frv.vic.gov.au](mailto:irina.tchernitskaia@frv.vic.gov.au)**

**Peer Coordinators**

**Chloe Henderson PH: 0417 538 289**

**Scott Darcy PH: 0429 771 849**

**Email:- [sdarcy@frv.vic.gov.au](mailto:sdarcy@frv.vic.gov.au)**

**Retirees**

**John Howe PH: 9729 0984—MO: 0417 112 993**

**Tony Branchflower Retired SSO MO: 0400 695 622**

**Peer Coordinator Trent Egan**

**PH: 0448 071 299**

**Email:- [Careerpeercoordinator@frv.vic.gov.au](mailto:Careerpeercoordinator@frv.vic.gov.au)**

## **NOTICE**

**For all future RFA membership payments, electronic transfers, internet banking etc RFA new banking details are as follows:**

**GOULBURN MURRAY**

**Credit Union**

**BSB 803 078 - Account No 37460**

**Any queries, contact:  
Phil Cleary - Secretary**

# East Branch, NY, Fire Chief Dies after Being Electrocuted at Crash Scene

July 21, 2025

Assistant Chief Jason McGlone responded with an East Branch Fire Department pumper to a crash when he was electrocuted.

**By** Muri Assunção  
**Source** New York Daily News

An Upstate New York fire chief was fatally electrocuted while responding to a DWI crash in Delaware County this week, officials confirmed on Friday.

“It is with heavy hearts and great sadness that the East Branch Fire Department announces the Line of Duty Death of 3rd Assistant Chief Jason McGlone who died of injuries sustained while operating at the scene of an emergency on Thursday,” the department said in a statement.

The 51-year-old was responding to a report of a pickup that hit a utility pole on State Highway 30 in the town of Hancock, on the border of northeast Pennsylvania, around 9:30 p.m., according to a New York State Police spokesperson.

McGlone, a 25-year volunteer with the department, was driving a rescue pumper to the crash when a low-hanging electrical wire struck the top of the firetruck, per a preliminary investigation.

When McGlone exited the truck and touched the metal door while standing on the ground, he was electrocuted, officials said.

Despite immediate life-saving efforts, McGlone was pronounced dead at the scene. “His death leaves a void,” Fire Chief Rod Keesler told the Binghamton Press & Sun-Bulletin, remembering his friend as “a well-respected and all-around great guy.” Gov. Kathy Hochul also paid tribute to the volunteer firefighter, who “tragically lost his life” in the line of duty.

“Chief McGlone’s 25 years of service within East Branch, including 15 years as an assistant chief, embodied the courage, commitment and selflessness that define New York’s volunteer firefighters,” Hochul said Friday. “He represented the very best of what New Yorkers give to their communities in the name of public safety.”

**\*A REMINDER TO OUR BRAVE - F.R.V. FIREFIGHTERS OUT THERE!**



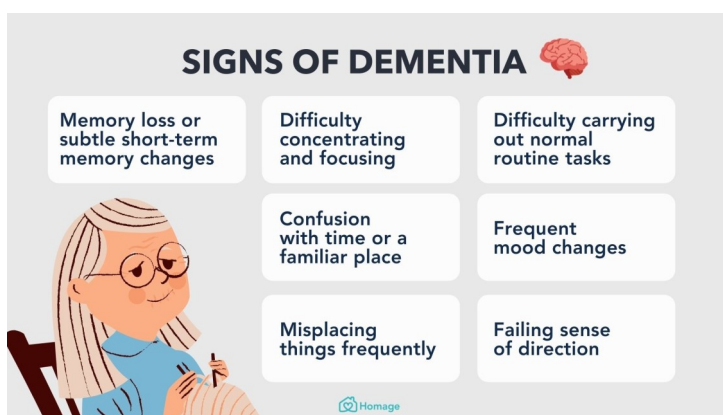
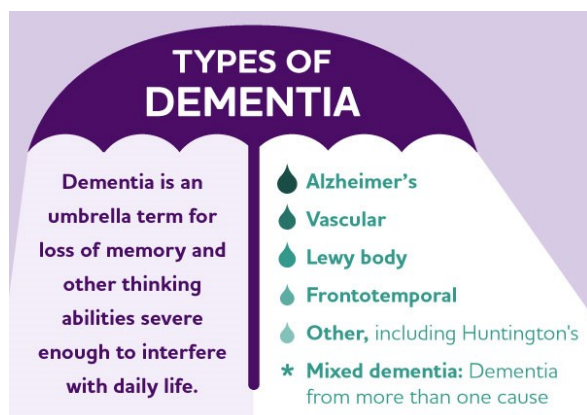
## “If I Get Dementia”

If I get dementia, I'd like my family to hang this wish list up on the wall where I live.  
I want them to remember these things.

- 1a. Every time you enter the room announce yourself. “Hi Mum- it’s Margaret.”  
 NEVER ask- Do you know who I am??? That causes anxiety.
1. If I get dementia, I want my friends and family to embrace my reality.
  2. If I think my spouse is still alive, or if I think we’re visiting my parents for dinner, let me believe those things. I’ll be much happier for it.
  3. If I get dementia, don’t argue with me about what is true for me versus what is true for you.
  4. If I get dementia, and I am not sure who you are, do not take it personally. My timeline is confusing to me.
  5. If I get dementia, and can no longer use utensils, do not start feeding me. Instead, switch me to a finger-food diet, and see if I can still feed myself.
  6. If I get dementia, and I am sad or anxious, hold my hand and listen. Do not tell me that my feelings are unfounded.
  7. If I get dementia, I don’t want to be treated like a child. Talk to me like the adult that I am.
  8. If I get dementia, I still want to enjoy the things that I’ve always enjoyed. Help me find a way to exercise, read, and visit with friends.
  9. If I get dementia, ask me to tell you a story from my past.
  10. If I get dementia, and I become agitated, take the time to figure out what is bothering me.
  11. If I get dementia, treat me the way that you would want to be treated.
  12. If I get dementia, make sure that there are plenty of snacks for me in the house. Even now if I don’t eat I get angry, and if I have dementia, I may have trouble explaining what I need.
  13. If I get dementia, don’t talk about me as if I’m not in the room.
  14. If I get dementia, don’t feel guilty if you cannot care for me 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It’s not your fault, and you’ve done your best. Find someone who can help you, or choose a great new place for me to live.
  15. If I get dementia, and I live in a dementia care community, please visit me often.
  16. If I get dementia, don’t act frustrated if I mix up names, events, or places. Take a deep breath. It’s not my fault.
  17. If I get dementia be sure I always have my favourite music playing within earshot.
  18. If I get dementia, and I like to pick up items and carry them around, help me return those items to their original place.
  19. If I get dementia, don’t exclude me from parties and family gatherings.
  20. If I get dementia, know that I still like receiving hugs or handshakes.
  21. If I get dementia, remember that I am still the person you know and love.”

In Honour of someone you know or knew who has dementia. In Honour of all those I know and love and lost who are fighting Dementia/Alzheimer’s.

June was Alzheimer’s Awareness Month...you’re never more aware than when this disease hits your family!



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