

SAWEEKEND

PHOTOGRAPHY

COMING OF AGE

Amid a renewed national spotlight on the elderly, a photographic exhibition in Adelaide shines a light on how people change as they mature and the joy they can still find in life



“Really, you know, I should treat Seconda with more appreciation. I should respect my elders,” Maria Dal Santo, 88, talking to Seconda Ferretti, 90... Seconda pulls herself up to sit tall in her chair as she says with mock gravity: **“I will be 90 in January; Maria will turn 88 years old. She’s just a baby.”**



“Some days are so busy, I don’t finish my crossword. I have the newspaper delivered every day and after breakfast I read the paper quickly before I get down to the business of the crossword. If I feel up for the challenge I do the cryptic,” a very sprightly Winifred Mills, 106, resident at Bene Italian Village.

A photographic exhibition at SA Migration Museum celebrates the different ways our identities shift as we grow older, and the changing expectations of society.

The LivingProof exhibition, the work of writer Rosa Matto and photographer Italo Vardaro, features residents, family and staff of Bene Aged Care.

“If we ignore our storytellers we are lost,” Matto says. “This undertaking with Bene sought to give voice to residents, staff and volunteers; to ask them to tell their stories one more time, assuring them there was a sympathetic ear.

“It became more than that. We proposed not to relive the chronology of the past but to find the essence of joy in the present.”

Vardaro says the power and beauty of a still image is that it captures a split second of awareness that you can never reproduce.

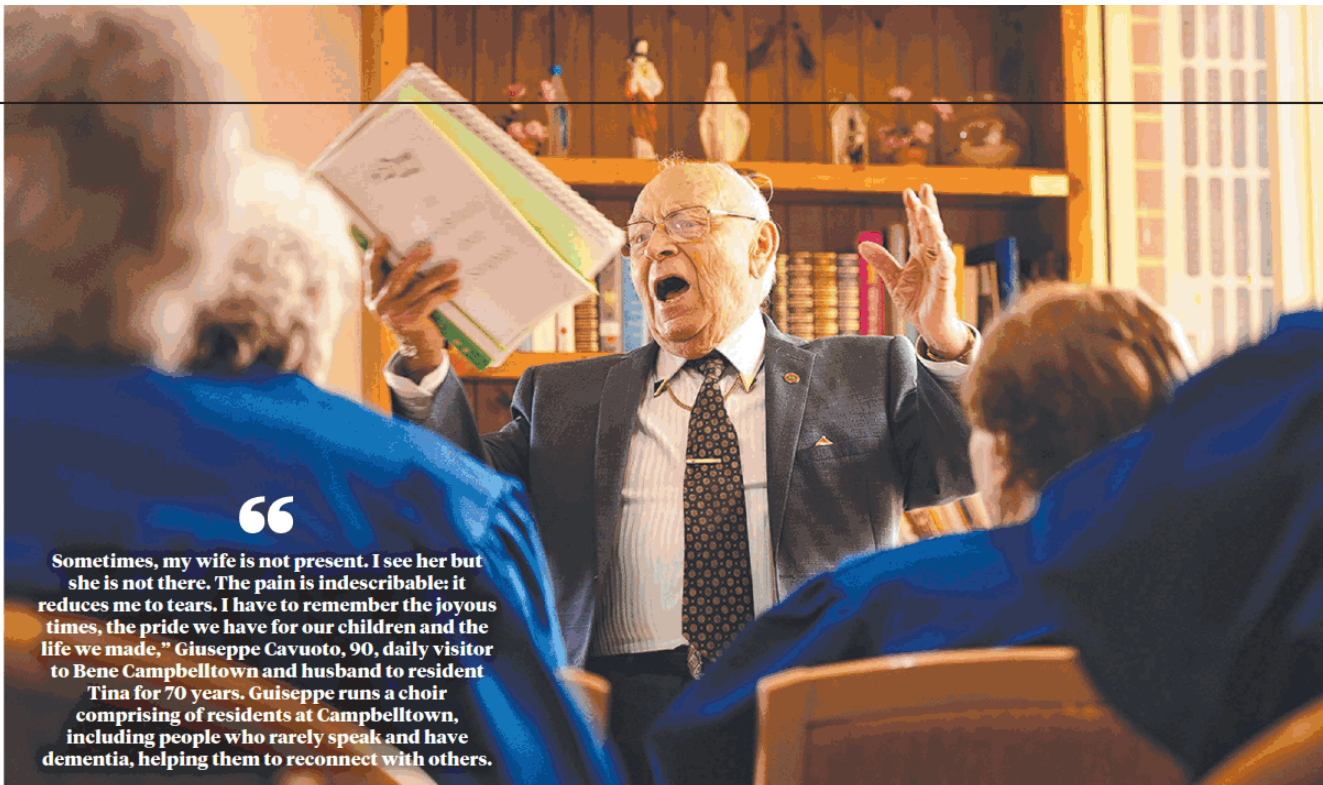
“The process can’t be rushed. And yet for this project I found myself working in a confined residential home where life was as busy as a beehive,” Vardaro says.

“It was a project that made me connect with strangers who were somehow familiar. I felt a connection, a kinship and an understanding.

“I came to understand why the staff always talked to me about how privileged they felt to care for the residents, the rewards they received by giving care and receiving love in return.”

LivingProof exhibition is at SA’s Migration Museum until June 30





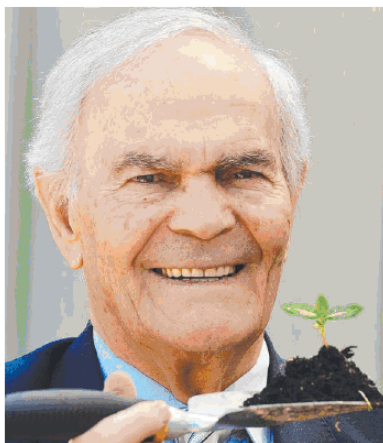
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Sometimes, my wife is not present. I see her but she is not there. The pain is indescribable; it reduces me to tears. I have to remember the joyous times, the pride we have for our children and the life we made,” Giuseppe Cavuoto, 90, daily visitor to Bene Campbelltown and husband to resident Tina for 70 years. Guiseppe runs a choir comprising of residents at Campbelltown, including people who rarely speak and have dementia, helping them to reconnect with others.



“

I play all sorts of things. The louder the better. I play loudly so the big man upstairs can hear me clearly. But you know, even at church - we played hymns of course - but the young people egged me on. I've spent a lifetime playing this thing,” Jean Fowler, 89, passionate organist, entertainer, resident at Bene St Clair.



“

When I moved, I brought a few cuttings with me: the tomatoes you see in the courtyard, the seeds for the parsley. We grew everything we needed in Leslie Street. We hardly needed to go to the shop. Why go to a market? I grew everything. For Angela, I planted flowers - she liked a vase of flowers inside every week - beautiful roses, carnations, lilies, chrysanthemums, whatever was in season,” Nello Raciti, aged 86, resident, husband and gardener at Bene St Clair.



“

Cooking for the elderly is a highly specialised skill. But as well as nourishment we must bring them some joy with every meal. They wait for it; it breaks up the day. There is dignity that comes with eating and sharing a meal together. We are not taught how to deal with this at trade school - that instinct comes from inside us,” chef Roberta El Sharkawi, 34, who grew up in Rome and moved to Adelaide at 18. Cooking for her is a vocation.