



01 FEB, 2024

## A whole new world at Resthaven

Fleurieu Sun, Victor Harbor

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Mrs Brenda Brown's fear of heights had always stopped her from pursuing her dream of climbing the Eiffel Tower.

However, on Monday, January 29, she finally did — virtually at least — and it's all thanks to the virtual reality (VR) experience held at Resthaven Newland House respite cottage in Victor Harbor.

Brenda says, "I'm scared of heights, so I never actually got to the top of the Eiffel Tower when I travelled to Paris. With VR, I had a second chance — and I wasn't scared! It was a great experience".

Brenda was just one of several clients participating in the 'Staying at Home in Regional South Australia' program day retreat, overseen by Resthaven Project Officer, and Dementia Education Specialist, Gillian Schulze.

Gillian says, "This type of technology improves the lives of older people by introducing them to meaningful and shared experiences in virtual reality — stimulating memories, driving social engagement and bringing joy".

"The VR kit was supplied by SilVR Adventures, an Australian technology company that creates virtual reality devices specifically for older people. After putting on our headsets, we "travelled" to South-East Asia, France, India, Egypt and the Balkans!

"It was wonderful for clients to not only re-visit places that they had been to before in real life, but also to travel to new locations and learn something new."

Mrs Evelyn Smart says, "The detail is incredible! It's the best of both worlds to take a look around these amazing places, from the comfort of an armchair".

Gillian adds, "This experience is particularly beneficial for people living with dementia, as VR is a highly effective way of delivering immersive, enjoyable and comfortable reminiscence therapy.

"People are engaged in a way that feels more vibrant and real, allowing them to be part of the moment, rather than an observer.

"The virtual reality sessions have been a popular activity at all of Resthaven's community respite cottages recently."

The Staying at Home in Regional South Australia program focuses on enabling people living with dementia to remain living at home for as long as possible, allowing them and their carer to experience quality respite care, well-being and engagement opportunities with targeted support.

In 2024, more retreats will be held in the Limestone Coast, Riverland and other areas.

For more information and eligibility criteria, head to: <https://www.resthaven.asn.au/staying-at-home-program/>

Established in 1935, Resthaven is a South Australian not-for-profit aged care community service associated with the Uniting Church in Australia.

Every day, Resthaven shares the lives and wisdom of older people and their carers, opening doors to the full range of aged care service options available.

Services are provided throughout metropolitan Adelaide, the Adelaide Hills, Murraylands, Riverland, Fleurieu Peninsula, lower Barossa region and the Limestone Coast of South Australia.



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LEFT: Jill and Malcom wearing VR headsets while Gillian Schulze supervises.



BELOW: Clients enjoying a game of quoits out the front of Resthaven Newland House.