



24 APR, 2024

Sewing remains number one

Border Watch, Mt Gambier

Page 1 of 2

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ADAMANT on continuing her lifelong love of sewing, Carmel Holla converted part of her room at Resthaven Mount Gambier into a state-of-the-art sewing corner.

Complete with a sewing machine, overlocker, drawers of buttons and bobs and colourful fabrics ready to go, Ms Holla said she had been a sewer since about 10 years old.

"I used to watch my mum, a qualified tailor-ess," Ms Holla said.

"My sister and my daughter are qualified tailors too, so even though I'm not qualified myself, I think

I have enough experience."

Born in Coffs Harbour, New South Wales, Ms Holla said her mother was Indian and her father Norwegian and was also in the Merchant Navy.

Despite the family history of tailoring, Ms Holla decided to become a nurse and began her training at 16-years-old in 1965.

"There were some interruptions to my career though, and I got my veil and stripes in 1980," she said.

Ms Holla married for the first time at 18-years-old and had five children with her first husband Harris.

These children included three boys and two girls with all three boys dying soon after birth.

While she was pregnant with their fifth child, her husband developed a brain tumor and at age 26, after the birth of her fifth child - a son who lived for a week - Ms Holla developed septicaemia and required a hysterectomy.

Whilst she was in the hospital recovering from surgery, Harris was also in hospital undergoing chemotherapy and died not long after.

Ms Holla raised her children as best she could before meeting her second husband Ron, who also died of a heart attack.

In 1988, Ms Holla broke her back whilst making a bed at work, causing paraplegia and leaving her in a wheelchair for 36 years.

It was not until 2011 that Ms Holla moved

into a local retirement village in Mount Gambier/Berrin to be close to her daughter and grandchildren.

After losing three sons and two husbands Ms Holla said she believed she would never marry again until she met John.

"We were both widowers and he was so good to me," she said.

The two moved into Resthaven Mount Gambier in June 2023 due to John being sick and Ms Holla not being able to live on her own.

"As soon as we moved in, John settled down really well," Ms Holla said.

"Our love was amazing."

Earlier this year, John passed away, with Ms Holla now finding comfort in her sewing nook where a large photo of John hangs on the wall beside her cottons and yarns.

"We would have been married four years this year and he went and died but I am sure he is watching."

Maintaining a positive attitude, Ms Holla said she enjoyed making girls dresses, dolls clothes, bible bags, knitting bags and all sorts and while she would give most away some people also bought the items.

"People ask me to make things for them when they're having a baby, or need a gift," she said.

"I just love sewing."

As well as sewing Ms Holla said she also enjoys social life with a large group from her former retirement village moving into Resthaven around the same time.

"I moved in and brought all my friends in with me," she said.

"I'm so happy here and I've never been treated like this.

"I've always been the one doing the hard work, and now I'm being looked after for the first time in

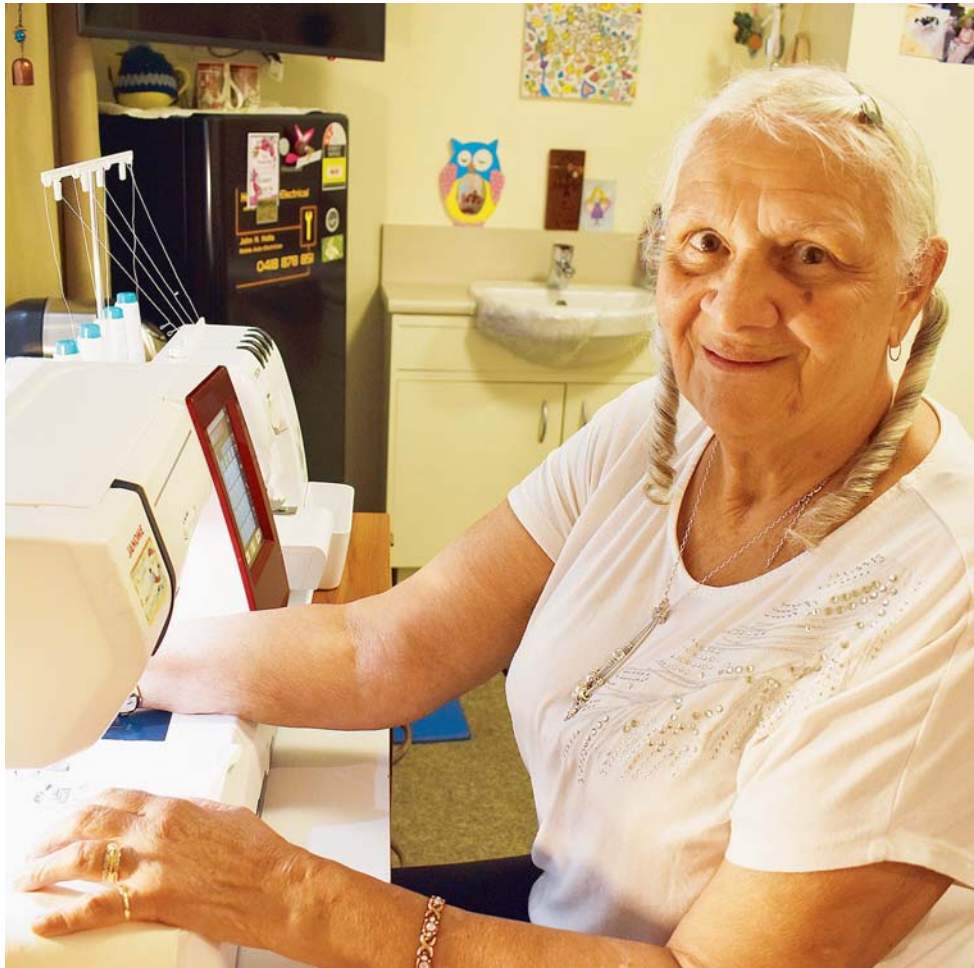
my life; I don't have any stress or strain and no one understands how much I appreciate what they do."



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SEWING: Resthaven Mount Gambier resident Carmel Holla remains adamant on sewing despite being in her 70s.

Picture: SUPPLIED