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It's the butterfly effect

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SENIOR LIFE

It's the butterfly effect



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THE most heartening stories for me concern ordinary people doing extraordinary things and the story of Brian Measday is a pearler.

Brian, 85, lives at Resthaven Mitcham in South Australia and is many things: an inventor, a retired chartered accountant, a butterfly breeder, a life member of TREENET, and one of the most published Letters to the Editor writers in SA.

Each of these interests (except accounting) has its roots in the environment. It's an area that Brian is passionate about and is keen to share with others.

"I've always been an environmentalist," Brian said. "For me, being involved in the environment is a consuming interest."

About the time Brian was retiring as a chartered accountant at age 60, a client of his co-founded TREENET, Australia's urban forest and related educational network, and asked Brian to be involved.

But it's the butterfly effect which grabbed my attention.

Moving into Resthaven Mitcham in September 2023, Brian brought delight to other residents this year when he released monarch butterflies into the home's communal gardens.

"Monarch butterflies are in quite serious trouble," Brian said. "Their habitat is being removed and human-induced climate change has not been kind to them. They are often killed by cars, affected by pesticides, and European wasps are a major predator.

Unless the trend changes, there won't be many butterflies left in the world."

Brian, and his grand-daughter Ruby, 15, assist the butterflies with their lifecycle by protecting the eggs before they hatch, feeding the caterpillars as they grow, and then releasing the butterflies when they emerge

from the chrysalis.

"I took up butterfly breeding as a hobby around eight years ago," Brian said. "Butterflies are lovely to look at, as well as being important for the pollination of trees to help us maintain our biodiversity."

Each year, he and Ruby release around 200-300 monarch butterflies. They each live for around 12 months, going into hibernation during the cooler months before emerging in around September/October when they begin to lay their eggs until about May.

"I encourage anyone who wants to help the butterflies to plant milkweed plants in their garden."

■ Therese Murray is features editor of The Senior, Australia's leading newspaper for over-55s. Read it online: thesenior.com.au



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Brian Measday breeds monarch butterflies. Pictures supplied