

# MEDIA RELEASE

## For immediate release

From: Kasey McCulloch, Media Officer, Mercy Health

Date: Monday 5 September, 2016

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## Hold the pupparazzi! Playful pooches help mark Dementia Awareness Month

Mercy Place East Melbourne has been overrun with man's best friends as part of Alzheimer's Australia's Dementia Awareness Month, which runs throughout September.

Research shows pets in aged care greatly increase quality of life for residents by reducing tension, fatigue and confusion, as well as increasing enthusiasm and interest. Pets are also an important feature of Mercy Health's Model of Residential Aged Care.

The theme for Dementia Awareness Month 2016 is *You are not alone*, so Mercy Place East Melbourne put its own spin on this by hosting a special 'doggy play date' on Friday 2 September for residents, families and staff to enjoy.

Celebrity vet Dr Katrina Warren was a special guest and helped wrangle the stars of the show, which included a french bulldog, cavoodle, beagle and pomeranian.

"I think everyone at every stage of life deserves the joy, companionship and love that pets inject where ever they go," said Dr Warren.

"Pets are one of the few interventions that can permanently lift the mood of an aged care home. Plus they're tactile and affectionate – what more could you want?"

Kevin Mercer, Chief Executive Aged & Community Care said every Mercy Health aged care home either has a live-in pet or receives regular animal visits as part of the organisation's Model of Residential Aged Care.

"One of our key objectives is to partner with residents, families and loved ones to nurture individual health and emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing," explained Mr Mercer.

"Pet visits provide an opportunity for people living with dementia to express their emotions and to reminisce about past pets, while providing an important sensory experience."

Dementia Awareness Month runs in September each year. Its purpose is to encourage Australians to become dementia-aware, have a better understanding of what it is like for a person to live with dementia, and ultimately be encouraged to create communities where people with dementia are supported to live a high quality of life with meaning, purpose and value.

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