

Our Voice



Mercy Health
Care first

THE GROUPWIDE NEWSLETTER OF MERCY HEALTH
AUTUMN 2014

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a woman
worth?

Championing
maternal and child
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Happy 20th
birthday Werribee
Mercy Hospital!

Celebrating two decades of
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An
inspiring
woman

Sister Helen Monkivitch RSM AO
joins the 2014 Victorian
Honour Roll of Women





Fanning a tiny spark into a steady flame

Baby John Metaxiotis has already lived through more than many adults ever will. Born at Mercy Hospital for Women at just 26 weeks and a tiny 395 grams, John has undergone countless medical procedures and defied staggering odds to not just survive, but thrive. He's a fighter, but he hasn't had to fight alone.

From the day John opened his eyes, he has been surrounded by devoted care from his parents and the team the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).

"There's a massive team of people involved in the delivery and care of such a young baby," explains Kelly Elliott, one of the unit's Associate Nurse Unit Managers. "There were more than fifteen people in the theatre, from across the perinatal, neonatal, obstetric and NICU teams."

While John's story is just one of many incredible journeys witnessed at Mercy Hospital for Women, he was remarkable on many levels. "John was one of the smallest babies we've ever had," remembers Kelly. "He's probably the smallest I've seen in eleven years in the unit. The main challenge initially is just to survive. Everything's underdeveloped so the first few days are critical."

John's mother Paula felt every minute of that time, but her own gruelling journey — and that of

the team who cared for her — began long before. "John was our 16th attempt at IVF, with three miscarriages along the way," reveals Paula. "Everything was going fine with this pregnancy until we discovered John wasn't growing, so his gestational age was two weeks behind due to the placenta not functioning properly."

Concerned, Paula's obstetrician rang Professor Sue Walker, Sheila Handbury Chair of Maternal Fetal Medicine at Mercy Hospital for Women. "Sue was amazing. She confirmed there was a problem, then looked at research into why it might be happening, including links to sleep apnoea which I was found to have. So I was put on a machine which helped a lot."

"We just did everything we could to keep things going."

Throughout the following months, the Mercy Hospital for Women's team gave Paula their undivided attention and support.

"Sue was very honest with us. On the first visit she said, 'You

need to realise you're going to have a small baby'. I said 'Oh okay' and she said 'No, I mean really tiny. I'm hoping for about the 500 gram mark'."

"In the week before John's birth, Cathy, my sonographer, did ultrasounds every day. The amazing thing was that John was very active! At night lying down he would just kick and kick — he was already fighting."

At Paula's 26 week scan, the moment Paula, husband Con and the team had been waiting for arrived.

"Even though I tried to keep the pregnancy going to 27 weeks, my body wouldn't let it. Sue came in, looked at the ultrasound and said 'Happy birthday'. My husband and I looked at each other and said 'It's not either of our birthdays'. Sue said 'No, it's your son's birthday — you're going in'."

"I'm really surprised at how calm I was, partly because the staff were so fantastic. There just aren't enough words to

say. Everything they had to give me, they gave."

Paula and Con were going to need all the support they could get.

"When I finally saw John, I knew what tiny meant. He weighed less than a tub of butter."

"It's very daunting, I won't lie to you — seeing him with wires and everything in the humidicrib. The first week was hell: he actually lost weight — he got down to 330 grams. Then we were told he has lung issues due to their underdevelopment. You just think it's never going to end."

Thanks to the skilled and compassionate care of the NICU staff, with whom the Metaxiotis family have spent every day of the past four long months, John has blossomed to 1.8 kilos and continues to progress well.

"Paula had help from the lactation team to get her breastfeeding going, which has helped John enormously," notes NICU Graduate Nurse Keryn Hutchison, one of the dedicated staff nursing John and Paula. "She was also offered help from the social work and pastoral care teams, particularly in the first few days when everything is so hour by hour."

"As well as offering support, we tried to keep Paula and Con involved in John's care. Not only is having a baby new to them, having to cope with everything else on top of that can be overwhelming."

Keryn clearly feels pride in John's progress. "He's been too small even to bathe, but now he's almost ready. Paula and Con are really excited, they've bought him his first outfit."

It's the personal connection between staff and patients that give comfort and reassurance to long-term NICU parents like Paula. "The staff become your family. When the nurses come past they'll ask if they can have a cuddle. This place has been our home away from home."

Ultimately, John's story is a tribute to the limitless love and faith of the Metaxiotis family.

"I'd tell John 'this is your goal for today' and then we'd work towards it. You have to think of all this as a job. Your mindset has to be positive so your baby can feed off you, feel safe and grow."

"Now, with the treatment he's had here, his heart is good, his brain is good. The lungs will catch up with age and growth."

"At the end of the day he's our perfect little boy."



We are family



Barry Elkins has one of those faces that just make you smile. His relentless positivity is what resonates with most people; that and his inclination to see the funny side of every situation. It's an admirable outlook for anyone to have, let alone someone who has faced considerable personal and emotional challenges.

In 1964, when Barry Elkins was 24 years old, a tough decision had to be made. Barry's parents had both passed away and while his three young sisters were caring for him as well as they could, they couldn't do it all. Barry has cerebral palsy among other serious medical conditions, and needs constant high-level care — care that his family and his small hometown were finding increasingly difficult to provide.

Above: Mercy Place Mt St Joseph's staff celebrate with Barry — back, from left to right, Gemma Nowlan and Brenda Reminton; front, Diane Riles, Marilyn Kahlefeldt, Julie Ashton and Margaret Brown (Norton). Photos by Christine Speelman, Fairfax Syndication.



Left: Barry was joined by current and former nurses Joy Cameron, Annette Hill, Sharron Smithers, Barbara Hislop, Mary Tout and Carolyn Marshall. Below: Barry Elkins's sister Fay Hill helps him cut the 50 year celebratory cake. Both photos by Christine Speelman, Fairfax Syndication..



“As a young bloke, coming to live here was very daunting. With the presence of the Sisters of Mercy, especially Sr Leo, Mount St Joseph's soon became my home.”

Known affectionately as “Frog”, Barry hails from Frogmore, New South Wales — a town of approximately 380 people set in classic Australian bushland. Though picturesque, the town is remote and lacks capacity for residential high-care support. 70 kilometres east lies the town of Young. Renowned for its beauty, its cherries and its welcoming country community, Young is also a town supported by the Sisters of Mercy.

The Sisters of Mercy have been active in Young since 1859, managing the town's hospital, Mercy Care Centre Young and residential aged care facility, now called Mercy Place Mount St Josephs. The Elkins family felt that Barry would be well cared for by the Sisters and on 18 February 1964, Barry moved in.

That was 50 years ago.

“For the past 50 years I have called Mt St Joseph's my home,” wrote Barry (via his sister Fay) in a letter to staff. “As a young

bloke, coming to live here was very daunting. With the presence of the Sisters of Mercy, especially Sr Leo, Mount St Joseph's soon became my home.

“I have met many people over the 50 years and while I have forgotten some of their names, I will never forget how they made me feel: so welcome and comfortable. In fact, I now keep company with some of the past staff who have become my fellow residents.”

While Barry's optimism and humour have played a crucial role in making his journey a positive one, Barry's sister Fay says that the compassionate care Barry receives on a daily basis at Mercy Place Mount St Joseph's has brought great comfort to Barry and his entire family.

“We've seen so many changes over the last 50 years, but nothing has altered the level of care that Barry receives here,” says Fay. “The staff and the Sisters of Mercy have

remained so faithful to their mission, continuing the work of Catherine McAuley. There really aren't enough words to say how thankful we are. The staff and the Sisters are just beautiful, and have cared for Barry like family.”

“Family” is also how staff and fellow residents describe Barry, Fay, and everyone who has been involved in Barry's life. A 50th anniversary celebration was recently held for Barry at the home, and according to all who attended, it felt like a family reunion.

“Many of our staff have known Barry since he was a young man,” says Marie Ricketts, Service Manager. “We understand him, though his ability to communicate is limited. Of course Barry has emotional and personal struggles from time to time, but staff are quick to reassure him and make sure he enjoys each and every day. This is Barry's home and we really do feel that he is family — we are one big, extended family.”

What is a woman worth?

Championing maternal and child health in Timor Leste

“One of the Timorese staff said ‘Right, I’m going to give some blood’ and off he went, brought back a unit of blood and put it straight into the patient, who miraculously recovered.”

Dr Alexis Shub has one especially prized photo from her time teaching obstetrics in Timor Leste. It shows a stack of innocuous, brightly coloured plastic chairs standing in a gloomy room in Dili’s Hospital Nacional Guido Valdares.

“Those plastic chairs, which cost \$60 in total, were one of the truly lifesaving gifts I was able to contribute to the hospital,” says Dr Shub, obstetrician at Mercy Hospital for Women. “They gave the patients somewhere to sit while waiting to be examined and their families somewhere comfortable to wait for them to give birth. It made them think ‘Well, they’ll be nice to me and my family here — I might stay’. That small reassurance could literally save women’s and babies’ lives”.

There can be few symbols more powerful of the catastrophic gulf

between women’s reproductive health in the developing and developed worlds. Women fear poor treatment in Timor Leste’s under-resourced facilities, including that their values, beliefs and inherent worth won’t be respected. “That can make them reluctant to come into hospital, or to stay if they do come,” Dr Shub explains.

Speaking at the joint Mercy Hospital for Women and Austin Health International Women’s Day celebration on 7 March, Dr Shub made a compelling case for the responsibility — and potential — Australia has for driving change that improves the lives of women and babies in one of our closest neighbouring countries.

“Timor Leste is just an hour from Australia and there’s more reason to help out in our region”, said Dr Shub. “I’d always wanted to go out and do some good

Dr Alexis Shub and the medical team at Hospital Nacional Guido Valdares



“Those plastic chairs, ... were one of the truly lifesaving gifts I was able to contribute to the hospital”



These plastic chairs may be saving Timorese women’s lives right now.

somewhere in the world, and you spend more time in customs than on a plane to get there.”

The contrast between the outlook for mothers and babies in Timor Leste and Australia could not be more stark or more heartbreaking. Timor Leste has the highest maternal and neonatal mortality in our region and among the highest in the world.

“The maternal mortality rate in Timor Leste is around 557 per 100,000 women compared with 10 in 100,000 in Australia,” confirms Dr Shub “and the rate of stillbirth is a very high 3%”.

It was this crushing inequity that spurred Dr Shub to relocate — with her young family in tow and the full support of Mercy Hospital for Women — to the Timorese capital’s hospital to run a postgraduate diploma of obstetrics.

Like many other Mercy Health clinicians and nurses who offer their time and expertise internationally, Dr Shub was on a steep learning curve from day one. Conditions in the hospital mirrored the nation’s struggle to rebuild a healthy society after decades of conflict.

“On my first day I was just astonished. There was a woman dying in a room with no one attending to her. One of the Timorese staff said ‘Right, I’m going to give some blood’ and off he went, brought back a unit of blood and put it straight into the patient, who miraculously recovered. It was just so different.”

“We routinely ran out of basic supplies like antibiotics, ultrasound gel, blood, sterilising equipment. And while the hospital staff were great, many didn’t speak any language common to another staff

member so there were significant communication issues.

“Then there were cultural issues: women with severe preeclampsia were taken home for ‘spiritual business’ and never seen again.”

Many people would feel paralysed in the face of such daunting obstacles, but Dr Shub’s commitment to reversing them was not just unshaken, but strengthened, by her encounters with Timor’s resilient women.

“Although there were many frustrations, I was endlessly inspired by the women themselves. They face pain and suffering with bravery and dignity, and even when outcomes are poor, they are always polite and grateful for the help they have received. In Timor, I regularly felt that I had made a real difference to women and their families.”

Unearthing new heroes, every day

Heroes are made,
not born — and they
can appear in the
unlikeliest of places.

From Mercy Health's earliest days, volunteer fundraisers have worked tirelessly — and often anonymously — to help us carry out our mission of compassionate care. From building hospitals to paying for vital equipment to caring for grieving families, community funds have supported our mission.

For many former patients and their families, fundraising is a tangible 'thank you' for care received — and a way to 'pay it forward' to those in need, now and into the future.

"It's basically a way for people, most of whom have a personal connection to the area they're raising money for, to give back to the organisation", says Shannon Gilmore, Fundraising Manager for Mercy Health. "They may not be able to make a donation but they're keen to make a contribution."

Finding ever easier avenues for those who want to give back to Mercy Health inspired Shannon to explore new fundraising options. The result is Mercy Health's venture into the Everyday Hero community fundraising portal.

Since 2007, Everyday Hero has been forging direct links between charities and the communities they support, empowering people

to raise funds — and spread the word — for causes close to their hearts. Simply by setting up a supporter page, anyone can start contributing to the success of their chosen charity.

Shannon recognised Everyday Hero's potential to streamline fundraising. "We haven't done a lot of community fundraising in the past, so this is a new frontier for us," she says. "We chose to set up an Everyday Hero page because it's really easy for people to participate, while lightening the workload on our staff to run events and coordinate funds.

"We've been testing the waters with the fundraisers we already have on board and we'll eventually roll it out to all the Mercy Health facilities. In time it will become an ongoing source of funding for them."

"Our fundraisers currently have to spend significant time and energy creating and advertising their events, then hope they're well attended," explains Shannon. "Everyday Hero will give them a choice to raise funds directly or run and promote events more widely to maximise attendance."

Reciprocity between community and carers makes the partnership between Everyday Hero and Mercy Health a natural one. Their mission to help create "better outcomes, better communities" mirrors Mercy Health's vision to build an enduring capacity to serve those in need.

How you can become a Mercy Health Everyday Hero

Passionate about a Mercy Health cause?

Everyday Hero gives you an easy way to make your fabulous fundraising idea a reality — and make a real difference to the Mercy Health community.

1. **Visit** www.everydayhero.com
2. **Sign up** using email or your Facebook account
3. **Create** a new supporter page by choosing Mercy Health under the Choose a charity tab
4. **Personalise** your page with 'your story' (including the event or project you're inviting people to attend, take part in or just donate to)
5. **Congratulations:** you're now a Mercy Health Everyday Hero! Your page is live and ready to accept donations.

Honouring Lexi's Legacy

Crystal Summerhayes may not regard herself as heroic. Yet her Lexi's Legacy Car, Bike and Truck event in February has raised more than \$10,000 for the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at Mercy Hospital for Women.

While Crystal was able to pull her event together through sheer hard work, online communication was key to her event's success. "We used a lot of social media to promote the event," said Crystal. "That was a big factor in getting people to attend."

Held in honour of Crystal and Peter's precious daughter, Lexi, the event attracted support from a diverse range of suppliers and attendees — from vintage car enthusiasts to Peter's tattoo parlour — as well as Mercy Health's own staff and volunteer community.

Lexi Jade Anderson was born 1 May 2013 at 29 weeks and transferred to the NICU. Like so many other very premature babies, the odds were stacked against her.



Fundraisers (and Lexi's parents) Crystal Summerhayes and Peter Anderson present Mercy Hospital for Women neonatologist Dr Philip Henschke with a cheque for just over \$11,000 they have raised to fund equipment and training in the NICU.

Despite the unwavering devotion and care of her parents and the NICU team, after 13 days of fighting an uphill battle, little Lexi passed away. From within the darkness of Crystal's grief, she saw a way to help other families facing this most devastating of losses.

"There are more than 50 babies in the unit at any given time," said Crystal. "That means many families are directly affected by the same ongoing struggles we had to face.

"When our daughter was in the intensive care unit, we only got to hold her a couple of times. We were able to do so on a special chair that was only available through donations. So we asked for a list of the equipment the unit needed. The cost of the items on the list came to about \$20,000. So we set out to raise

that money to buy what the unit needed to help other babies.

"I wanted to use our experience to help people who may be at a loss and have no one to turn to."

Money raised from the Lexi's Legacy event has been placed into a fund to pay for life changing equipment in the NICU, which Crystal knows will make a real difference to the families of gravely ill babies.

Mercy Health's new Everyday Hero online fundraiser portal will give fundraisers like Crystal another tool to turn their experience — often of pain and loss — into a source of healing. By making it easier to create, manage and promote events and other fundraising activities, the portal gives everyone a chance to add their efforts to Crystal's heroic support of the NICU and other Mercy Health causes.

MERCY HEALTH
FOUNDATION
BALL
SUPPORTING FAMILIES
IN NEED

SATURDAY 14 JUNE 2014

Plaza Ballroom
191 Collins Street, Melbourne

SAVE
THE
DATE



For more information contact:
Meagan Nixon, Marketing & Events Manager, Mercy Health
Ph: 03 8416 7714 or Email: rsvp@mercyball.com.au



An inspiring woman

If you or someone you know has benefited from a women's health service in Victoria, New South Wales or the ACT, chances are you have Sister Helen Monkivitch to thank for it.

Reading her litany of achievements, it seems implausible one person could contribute so much to Australian women's health.

But the evidence is all around us, not only in the state-of-the-art facilities that house, heal and nurture thousands of Australian women every year, but in the compassion, purpose and respect that inform the care Mercy Health staff deliver.

So the only surprise in Sr Helen's induction into the 2014 Victorian Honour Roll of Women, held to coincide with International Women's Day in March, is that it has taken fifty years of remarkable service to the community to find its way to her.

This year's International Women's Day theme, Inspiring Change, perfectly encapsulates Sr Helen's towering achievements in helping reshape the landscape of women's health services.

Mercy Health Chief Executive Officer Stephen Cornelissen is delighted with

Sr Helen's recognition. "The Honour Roll recognises and celebrates the contributions, leadership and excellence of inspirational women and their work in the Victorian community. In her fifty years of all-encompassing commitment to the health and care of Victorians, I cannot think of a more worthy recipient than Sr Helen.

"From her roles as a nurse, midwife, Chief Executive and Director, Helen has been a trailblazer for Catholic health care services across Australia. She has been instrumental in shaping Mercy Health through her compassionate and thoughtful leadership, delivered with grace and spirit of which our foundress Catherine McAuley herself would be proud. We are so fortunate and I am personally grateful to have such an inspiring woman still giving her time and wisdom so generously to us today."

Typically, Sr Helen attributes her powerhouse career and latest award to the generosity and support of others: most notably to the Sisters of Mercy.

"In many ways the freedom I've had to pursue my dreams has been because I'm a Sister of Mercy. Through them I've been given so many opportunities, and I've seized them and run with them. I think the Sisters gave me a freedom that perhaps others don't have.

"If you go back to my early days with the Sisters, I was very well educated. I became a triple certificate nurse, I was supported to do an arts degree after I'd finished nursing, then was encouraged to do my Master's degree, when I didn't want to! All those things were essentially given to me."

Armed with her education and encouragement from the Sisters of Mercy, Sr Helen quickly proved herself a natural leader in each area she entered.

But perhaps the achievement of which she is most proud is the formation of Mercy Health in 1997.

"I think that was the biggest thing I did in terms of ensuring we have a future," says Sr Helen. "It has meant that instead of a whole lot of disparate pieces of Mercy work going on, there was a much more strategic and unified direction for us."

Offering a culture that rewards women for driving change, Mercy Health has never lost sight of its origins as a vehicle for compassionate visionaries like Catherine McAuley to succeed on their own terms.

"Through Mercy Health, I've been able to exercise my leadership very freely," says Sr Helen. "It's enabled me to realise my absolute passion for and love of serving those in need, enriching my life immeasurably."

Always focused on the next challenge, Sr Helen hopes her work continues to inspire change in key areas of women's health.

"I think there's still a lot of work to be done in multicultural services, women's health, mental health, and Aboriginal health in acute care," she says. "Our ageing population will also bring challenges, predominantly for older women. If you go to an aged care facility it's pretty much 90% women. It's something we have to think creatively about."

If there's one clear message Sr Helen would like women — especially those just starting out in life — to draw from her own inspiring example, it's to seize the day without fear.

"I think that's the key, that women feel free to have a go," says Sr Helen.

"We've got to let them fly."



Sister Helen Monkivitch: timeline of achievements

1964: begins training in midwifery at Mercy Private Hospital.

1968: after taking vows, rejoins Mercy Private Hospital.

1971: joins Mercy Maternity Hospital as charge nurse in postnatal ward before running the delivery suites.

1975: becomes Deputy Director of Nursing Services.

1983: completes Masters of Health Administration and gains experience in general and finance administration.

1984: returns to Mercy Maternity Hospital as Sister Administrator.

1986: Is appointed as CEO of Mercy Hospital for Women, joins the leadership group for the Sisters of Mercy and becomes Director of Catholic Health Australia.

1994: Leads in the development of Werribee Mercy Hospital.

1995: Co-founds Caroline Chisholm Centre for Health Ethics.

1997: In conjunction with the leadership group, steers the formation of Mercy Health and Aged Care as Director, Mercy Health Services.

2000: Becomes Mercy Health Executive Director, Leadership and Mission.

2005: Co-founds Gabrielle Jennings Centre in Werribee.

2014: is inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women.

Happy 20th birthday Werribee Mercy Hospital

You know you're at a great party when six people in surgical scrubs, cowboy hats and giant glasses cram into a photo booth before your eyes.

This was the unusual scene that greeted patients, staff, volunteers and visitors at Werribee Mercy Hospital's 20th birthday celebrations in February.

Our fancily dressed staff members can be forgiven their obvious excitement. This year marks two decades of Werribee Mercy Hospital as the hub of healthcare in Melbourne's southwest — and it was a happy event for the many passionate, talented people who have brought the hospital into being.

"Staff, volunteers and fundraisers are the backbone of this hospital," said Dr Linda Mellors, Mercy Health Executive Director Health Services. "Without their unwavering support and enthusiasm we simply wouldn't have the fantastic services we can offer today."

All three groups were celebrated — and had a chance to celebrate themselves — at an afternoon tea held outside the hospital's brand new Catherine McAuley Centre.

Replete with cupcakes, balloons and even face painting (for children and adults alike!), the event gave Werribee Mercy Hospital's tireless supporters a few hours to reminisce, laugh and congratulate each other on the teamwork and friendship in which the hospital community is grounded.

Celebrating community

Among the most enthusiastic revellers were representatives from Werribee Mercy Hospital's 61-strong team of volunteers, led by Volunteer Coordinator Jan Whyte.

"Some of the original volunteers from when the hospital was first set up are still working here, so it's an exciting day for them," said Jan. "That continuity means the same values and caring component the volunteers bring have continued to be part of the hospital and the area. Werribee is all about community."

Another special guest was 19-year-old Laura Vranic, born on the day WMH opened the doors of its maternity unit.

"I think it's pretty crazy to be one of the first babies born here," said Laura. "My parents are proud of the fact, as Werribee locals. It means a lot to me too since I've grown up here. I definitely feel more of a connection to the area because of it."

"I may even end up having my own babies at Werribee Mercy Hospital — not for a little while though!"

Laura's mother Nev has fond memories of the care she received on that special day. "The staff were fantastic. They were just as excited as we were to be there for the first births at the new hospital."

"I still have the little singlet the first five bubs were given to commemorate their arrival. It makes me feel quite special to have been one of the first mums delivering at Werribee."

The celebrations gave Mercy Health Chief Executive Officer Stephen Cornelissen an opportunity to pay warm tribute to the incredible teamwork that delivered, and continues to nurture, the hospital. "What really makes Werribee Mercy special is community. We're a hospital born from community and we're a hospital that serves the community."

"As we continue to grow, we need to ensure that community stays at the centre of all we do," Mr Cornelissen said.

"Mercy Health is grateful to the community for their invaluable support and for placing their trust in us to care for them."

"That support enables us to continue the legacy of the Sisters of Mercy and their mission to care for those in need."

The blessing of the new Catherine McAuley Centre

The celebrations continued with the blessing of Werribee Mercy Hospital's new Catherine McAuley Centre. The new centre extends the hospital's range of services in response to the changing needs of the Wyndham community.

Conducting the service, Reverend Monsignor Anthony J Ireland, Episcopal Vicar for Health and Aged Care, reflected on the true meaning of mercy as expressed in the daily actions of hospital staff and volunteers. "In the Bible, 'mercy' means more than letting someone off for something they have done wrong," Monsignor Ireland noted. "Mercy means loving steadfastness, standing beside, loyalty, dependability; it also means generosity and hospitality."

"How appropriate that we gather to bless and open the Catherine McAuley Centre, which will be used for services that all are restorative, neighbourly: all about standing beside the wounded and sick. The works of this building are works of mercy in which everyone is blessed by encounters with people of mercy."

Representatives from across the hospital community's

spectrum, including Aunty Diane Kerr, staff members Carmel Delaney, Patricia Jones and Sister Trudy Keur, and Mercy Health Chief Executive Officer Stephen Cornelissen and Chair Julien O'Connell, were joined by David Davis MP, Minister for Health and Ageing to formally open the new centre.

Offering rehabilitation, outpatient and home-based chronic disease management programs, the centre also boasts specialist consulting rooms, a mobility garden, barbecues, comfortable outdoor areas and a fully equipped kitchen.

Dr Linda Mellors, Mercy Health Executive Director Health Services, praised the broad scope of the centre's services, which also include geriatric evaluation and management, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, social work, speech pathology, dietetics and diabetes assessment and care.

"This is a fantastic opportunity for people to have a wide range of rehabilitation services close to their homes and a wonderful addition to the services we provide at the hospital," Dr Mellors said.

Staff and volunteers like Barbara Bakker, made the most of the photo booth.



Laura Vranic, one of the first five babies born in the WMH maternity unit, 19 years on.





Crafty passion keeps newborns warm

Eating, sleeping, family and sewing are Ellen Mason's basic human needs. The grandmother of three has spent the past nine years creating hundreds of vibrant patchwork quilts for babies at Mercy Hospital for Women.

Ellen, who has been a member of the Australian Quilters Association for almost 30 years, donates up to 15 quilts to the hospital each month. They are then sold to parents with the proceeds used to improve services and equipment at the hospital.

After retiring in 2000, Ellen refocused her attention to her passion, spending any spare time in a sewing room she has set up at her Cheltenham home. When she heard about a fire at the former East Melbourne Mercy Hospital for Women site in December 2004, she decided to use her skills to help others.

"I didn't know much about the hospital but I felt like I needed to do something, so I contacted them and asked if I could send in some quilts," Ellen says.

What started as a hobby has now become a way of life. When not spending time with her

family, Ellen is at one of her two sewing machines preparing the next batch of quilts.

"If I'm not out, I'm in the sewing room, pretty much every day," Ellen says. "I do it for the parents, to give them a reminder of this wonderful part of their lives. It makes me feel good as well and there's no way I'm stopping any time soon. It keeps me sane, it's a form of therapy!"

Mercy Hospital for Women Special Care Nursery Nurse Unit Manager Helen Boston said everyone at the hospital was extremely grateful for Ellen's hard work. The quilts, which cost between \$15 and \$20, helped fund a range of items in the nursery, including nursing chairs and cot cards. Designs include a special version celebrating the "100 days" milestone in premature babies' development.

Ellen covers the cost of all her materials.

"It is a wonderful thing she does out of the kindness of her heart," Helen says. "The quilts are loved by both the patients and staff."



Ellen Mason with Charmaine Viggiano and baby Scarlett, snuggled under one of the Ellen's special "100 days" quilts.

Saltwater runs deep through the community

On Wednesday 29 January 2014, Mercy Mental Health Saltwater Clinic officially opened its new building with a multicultural ceremony and blessing highlighting the diversity in Melbourne's west. Members from various community groups came together at the new Nicholson Street Mall site to celebrate the service's continued culture-blind promise to help people living with a mental illness.

The opening interfaith event and blessing incorporated rituals and elements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait, Hindu, Muslim and Catholic cultures. Almost 100 people attended the morning celebration.

Saltwater Clinic relocated from its previous site at the Footscray Mall in November last year. The clinic's new multi-storey building offers a range of psychiatric services and includes separate staff and client zones with safe, light and spacious work areas.

Mental Health Services Program Director Mario Blandin de Chalain said the new building had been specially refitted to meet Saltwater Clinic's specific needs. The site now gives people with a mental illness easier access to treatment and follow-up services in a bright, modern setting.

"At our clinic, people have access to community-based treatment, which can assist them with their recovery while living in the community," Mr Blandin de Chalain said. "The new clinic provides a fantastic area and a comforting space for both staff and clients. We look forward to working in our new location for years to come."

Mercy Mental Health Saltwater Clinic has provided mental health support services to people in the western suburbs for the past 18 years. The clinic, named after the original European title for what is now the Maribyrnong River, cares for more than 250 patients and employs about 50 staff members.



IMAGE ABOVE: The ceremony featured elements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait, Hindu, Muslim and Catholic cultures. Back Row: Mercy Health CEO Adjunct Professor Stephen Cornelissen, Chairman Julien O'Connell AM, Sheikh Mohamadu Nawas Saleem, Dr Ashish Mordia, Dr Anindya Banerjee, Dr Ashok Singh. Front Row: Clinical Services Director Mental Health Services Associate Professor Dean Stevenson, Executive Director Health Services Dr Linda Mellors, Werribee Mercy Hospital Pastoral Care Coordinator Sr Trudy Keur RSM, Wurundjeri Elder Aunty Di Kerr, Program Director Mental Health Services Mario Blandin de Chalain

Ways to give

Many of the stories you read in *Our Voice* have been made possible through the support of the Mercy Health Foundation and the generosity of our donors.

Your support makes a difference in the advancement and innovation of care for women, newborn babies, the elderly, sick and dying.

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Your feedback...

We hope you've enjoyed the summer edition of *Our Voice*, Mercy Health's groupwide newsletter. Mercy Health is proud to care for people from the beginning to the end of life. Through *Our Voice* we share the stories of our people and those we care for from across the organisation including aged care, health services, palliative care, mental health and home care.

Please send your feedback and stories to *Our Voice* via the details below:

Mercy Health: Our Voice

Level 2, 12 Shelley Street
Richmond VIC 3121

Phone: 03 8416 7753

Email: ourvoice@mercy.com.au



Our Voice will be back in June with our winter edition.

In the meantime you can keep up to date with current Mercy Health news at mercyhealth.com.au.

You can also visit us on Facebook and Twitter to get a little more Mercy in your day!

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