

# Our Voice



Mercy Health  
Care first

THE GROUPWIDE NEWSLETTER OF MERCY HEALTH  
AUTUMN 2017

## A ray of hope for the tiniest babies

Our researchers offer hope of predicting premature birth

## Dawning of a new day

We celebrate the launch of our Reconciliation Action Plan

## Heavenly harps

Music brings joy and transcendence to aged care







# Team Kellow powers on

One catastrophic day changed the course of Ken Kellow's life. But nothing can dim his innate passion for family, V8s and living life to the full, with support from Barwon's Home & Community Care team.

Panel beating may not sound like a creative pursuit, but Ken Kellow has the hands of a master craftsman. In the shed at the back of his home in Geelong, Victoria, is the shell of a vintage Ford Capri, the latest in a series of cars Ken has lovingly restored to their former glory.

"I enjoy getting out and kicking around in the shed doing stuff, fixing things, making things; that's how I fill my days," Ken says. "My son's got a Fairlane so we're working on that together."

Once a hobby fitted in around a busy working week, one catastrophic day in 2015 has given Ken more time at home than he ever bargained for. Part way through his shift at Australia Post, Ken was clipped by a truck, sending him under its wheels. His injuries were so severe that doctors gave him a mere 1% chance of survival. While the three months that followed are a blur for Ken, his wife of forty years, Heather, has forgotten nothing.

"He was in the Alfred Hospital for 158 days," she recounts with quiet precision. "He had 37 operations. He spent six weeks in intensive care."

**“Anything you ask them to do, it's always 'Yeah, we can do that!'”**

"During his surgeries we discovered he had bowel cancer as well. He then had 10 months in the Grace McKellar Centre."

Odds like these would put a strain on any relationship, but Ken and Heather are a team. All they needed were some extra members to share the load. "We fought to bring him home to Geelong," Heather

says. "We knew we'd need a lot of support but we were determined."

"Our social worker at McKellar was able to match us up with Mercy Health Home & Community Care, and get a program set up under the NDIS."

Now reliant on a wheelchair to get around, Ken has no time to dwell on negatives and a lot of time for the newest additions to Team Kellow: nurses Super Sall (Sally Miller), Good Nurse Katie (Katie O'Toole) and his five regular carers, both male and female to create balance.

"I love the team coming in; they're like family to us now. Everyone has a nickname! When our grandkids are here they call the girls 'Poppy's Ladies.' The girls think that's hilarious."

"I've got a pretty warped sense of humour so I like that they'll have a laugh and a joke with us. We'll chat about different things; they'll ask me about my life and my career."



Team Kellow with Ken:  
L-R Carer Jess Giampaolo, Heather Kellow, Ken Kellow, Nurse Sally Miller.

"They come in seven days a week to get me in and out of bed and shower; they do all the dressings; get me dressed; get me into the wheelchair; then they come back at night to get me back into bed. They also give me exercises to do to stay strong."

"They work in with us too; if we've overlooked an appointment and need to be somewhere, they'll offer to come in earlier to help me get ready. If Heather's running a bit late getting home they'll often just stay and chat. They never say 'I've got to go now' if there's a reason to stay."

"Anything you ask them to do they'll do — it's always 'Yeah,

we can do that!' That's great in my book."

Heather says the support is life changing for her too.

"It's been fantastic. Ken originally said he didn't want me doing his care all the time, so having the girls here is good for both of us."

"They're very supportive and watchful. Because we've had the same team for a long time, if they notice even a small change, for example in Ken's skin, they get straight onto it."

While the physical support makes a huge difference, it's the less tangible benefits that keep Ken smiling.

"It's good to be at home. We've been here for 44 years; we have a son and daughter, and four grandchildren, who come around all the time; we have great neighbours. My son and I still try to get out to the see the supercars race. We try not to let anything stop us doing what we want to do."

"Sally and Katie are part of our lives. Even when they're leaving, they'll come into the lounge room — and we could have the whole family here — and say hooroo to everyone. It keeps a smile on my face."

"I don't let this get me down; I just keep on going. I'm one of the lucky ones: I'm still here!"





Artist Lyn-Al Young (centre) presents RAP cover painting Dawning of a New Day with her parents Richard and Judith.

"Our RAP represents our commitment to work towards closing the gap and improving the health outcomes and experience for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. It really makes me proud to look around today and see there's so much support and recognition of how important a day this is for all of us."  
Mercy Hospital for Women Manager of Aboriginal Programs Marika Jackomos, Yorta Yorta woman

"This is a most significant event in the history of Mercy Health. In almost any comparator used to measure health and wellbeing, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples remain severely disadvantaged. It is my hope that together, we can use this Plan to make a real difference."  
Mercy Health Group Chief Executive Officer Stephen Cornelissen

"I'm honoured to have been asked to provide the art for the RAP. There's a real Mercy connection in my family – my two nieces were born here.

"I wanted to paint a sunrise, to represent a new day dawning for our People. It marks a new era for Mercy Health as it contributes to closing the opportunity gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

"I paint a lot of cockatoos; one reason is the story my nan tells me of my great grandfather who would climb to the top of the gum trees, pick the baby cockatoos and teach them to speak English so he could sell them back in the town to provide for his family... the cockatoos represent that they're at one with their environment; they're at peace. My hope is that these painted birds will fly around the Mercy hospitals in spirit and bring peace."  
Lyn-Al Young, artist, Gunnai and Wiradjuri woman

"As you reflect on Lyn-Al's painting, reflect on how, in the great young leaders like Lyn-Al and Marika, and in organisations such as yours continuing to create culturally safe places, there's nothing but hope and opportunity for our People."  
Richard Young, Lyn-Al's father, Gunnai man

"We come from families where our People were scared to walk into places like this. That's why our Elders saw a need to have places that we could walk into and doctors who have a continuing knowledge of their responsibilities to our families and our People."  
Musician Kutcha Edwards, Mutti Mutti man

"I wanted to paint a sunrise, to represent a new day dawning for our People."

"It means so much to be able to stand here today at this watershed moment in our history. Our RAP has been led by our Aboriginal staff working in partnership with our non-Aboriginal staff across campus and state boundaries. It is about explicitly and deliberately ensuring our health services work in partnership with Community. Ultimately, reconciliation itself is about a deep interconnectedness: a belief that solutions are possible and the benefits are mutual."  
Mercy Health Chief Executive-Health Services Linda Mellors



Musician Kutcha Edwards performs at the launch.



Community and staff celebrate a milestone.



Aboriginal Programs team members Marika Jackomos, Donna Duncanson, Jo Pappas and Kyra Booth.

# Dawning of a New Day

First light illuminates a majestic gum tree, symbol of renewal and connection to roots, on the cover of Mercy Health's first Health Services Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). Launched in February, the plan sets out practical and measurable steps towards improving health outcomes and cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Community members, including RAP cover artist Lyn-Al Young and her parents Richard and Judith, and Mercy Health staff came together at Werribee Mercy Hospital to celebrate this milestone in our organisation's long commitment to culturally safe care.

"It feels like it's been a long journey to get to this point, and there is still a lot of work ahead," Mercy Hospital for Women Manager of Aboriginal Programs Marika Jackomos said. "I really want to acknowledge my wonderful team, and the RAP Committee who worked together to achieve this step forward."

The mood of hope and unity was strong at the event, with speakers echoing each other's vision of a brighter future for all Australians. A moving performance from renowned musician Kutcha Edwards closed this celebration of resilience, creativity and connection.

Read the full story behind Lyn-Al's painting and see how our RAP will unfold over the coming year: visit the Aboriginal Programs page at [mercyhealth.com.au](http://mercyhealth.com.au)





# A sensory sanctuary for Shepparton



Mercy Place  
Shepparton resident  
Joan Hardner

Twilight in the garden is a magical time for Mercy Place Shepparton resident Joan Hardner.

“I love that time when the sun is going down in the west and everything turns a different colour,” Joan says. “I love to sit in the garden and just enjoy it.”

Now, Joan and her fellow residents can bask in the twilight in a special new sanctuary: Mercy Place Shepparton’s new Ursula Frayne Sensory Garden designed especially for residents with dementia.

The garden, officially opened on 22 February, was made possible by a \$5000 donation from the Shepparton Club, a \$6000 donation from the Shepparton Lions Club and a \$17,000 donation from Mercy Health Foundation. The home is also awaiting approval of a \$6000 grant from Lions Clubs Australia.

The unique outdoor experience strives to stimulate all five senses — sight, sound, smell, taste and touch — and features outdoor musical instruments,



textured garden furniture, bright colours and scents from an array of plants and flowers.

Joan, a keen gardener, was thrilled to help choose plants for the garden. She also loves the quirky additions to the garden including an old-fashioned red phone booth which could double as a Tardis.

“The garden is full of surprises, when I saw it I couldn’t believe it — especially the Dr Who box!” Joan reflects.

Mercy Health Group Chief Executive Officer Stephen Cornelissen says the garden is a fantastic community achievement and will significantly benefit current and future residents at the home.

“Mercy Health is committed to providing the best and most innovative practices that improve the health and wellbeing outcomes for our residents,” Stephen says.

“We have sensory gardens in 10 of our aged care homes across Australia and they have all been embraced by staff, residents and their friends and families.”



Mercy Place Shepparton Lifestyle Coordinator Nicole Raditsas says the response from residents has been overwhelming.

“The sensory garden is a fantastic initiative and we’ve had many residents take an active role in planting flowers and being part of the garden’s development,” Nicole says.

“We’ve already seen the garden have a positive effect on residents — it promotes calmness and independence, helps with memory recall and can be very beneficial for their physical and emotional wellbeing.”



“We have already seen the garden have a positive effect on the residents.”





# Heavenly harps

## Vale Betty Amsden AO

Mercy Health is sad to farewell a wonderful and giving woman who leaves behind a legacy of heavenly music in our residential aged care homes.

**B**eloved Melbourne philanthropist Betty Amsden AO passed away in February. Her generous donation to Mercy Health Foundation enabled the purchase of 18 reverie harps for Mercy Health aged care homes.

In spring, Betty joined a roomful of Mercy Health residential aged care pastoral care associates to hear from Peter Roberts, music thanatologist and creator of the reverie harp.

A hushed calm came over the room as Peter began to strum. An enchanting, ethereal sound emerged, unscripted and free-flowing.

"Music is a necessity in aged care," Betty said, after Peter's performance.

"It is just so wonderful that something like this can help someone at a time when they need it most."

Four Mercy Health aged care homes already had reverie harps; the additional 18 were delivered in January and are already being used to support emotional and spiritual care for residents, families and staff.

Peter came up with the idea for a reverie harp at the bedside of a man with motor neurone disease

**“**Music is a necessity in aged care.**”**

who was in a psychiatric hospital. He had an awkward homemade instrument that was terribly out of tune.

"I wanted to give him something beautiful," Peter says.

Peter designed the reverie harps to be smooth, delightful, and easy to hold and caress.

He lovingly crafts each mahogany harp at his home workshop with help from his wife, Jeanette, and a cabinet maker.

"What's special about the harp is you don't need lessons; anyone can play," Peter says.

"The sound it produces is very calming. You can hold and play it even in bed."

The use of reverie harps draws on the field of music thanatology: the practice of playing music at the bedside of critically ill and dying patients to address their physical, spiritual and emotional needs.

*Her smile is radiant and unforgettable and when she shares it, the world is a better place. Sometimes the smile is buried beneath frustration and confusion, but when it breaks through it is simply beautiful. Her hands are busy — folding, pleating, smoothing and fiddling with the rug that lies upon her lap. Hands that for 90 plus years have gripped, held, wiped, bathed, brushed, baked, cleaned, sewn, folded, cared, prayed, nourished and cradled. A lifetime of doing — hard to stop.*

*As I approach on this particular day the hands are busy as usual, and her face a picture of concentration. I play a few notes on the reverie harp and I immediately have her attention, as she looks up with intrigue to the source of the captivating music. I strum again and the smile starts to break through, so I position the harp on her lap and gently place her hands across the strings. The hands are still — relaxed. So I start to pluck and strum and the room is immediately illuminated by that unforgettable smile. And then I hear her word — the same word over and over and over again:*

*"Beautiful! Beautiful! Beautiful!"*

*It truly was a beautiful moment in time.*

*Felicity Barker,  
Pastoral Care Associate,  
Mercy Place Warrnambool*



From left to right: Manager Pastoral Services Michael Taylor, Executive Director Mercy Health Foundation Simon White, Betty Amsden AO, Chief Executive Aged & Community Care Kevin Mercer and music thanatologist Peter Roberts.





Main: Zali Maas in the Mercy Hospital for Women Special Care Nursery.

Below: Zali with parents Danielle and James Maas.

# A ray of hope for the tiniest babies

First-time parents Danielle and James Maas hesitated in front of a rack of baby clothes before reaching for the smallest size they could find: 000000.

But when they showed a nurse at Mercy Hospital for Women Special Care Nursery, she just smiled gently. “She won’t fit into that for a little while yet,” the nurse said.

Baby Zali, born at 31 weeks and three days, weighing just 1.72kg, is among the one in 10 Australian babies that are born premature.

Prematurity is a leading cause of death in newborns, and can lead to long-term health challenges including chronic

lung disease, impaired mental development, cerebral palsy, deafness and blindness.

Incredibly, one in every two cases of preterm birth will have no warning signs at all.

But Mercy Hospital for Women researchers are on the brink of developing the world’s first simple test to accurately predict preterm labour.

The test would mean the world to mums like Danielle,

who held her newborn for just 20 seconds before St John of God Hospital’s staff took her to their Special Care Nursery.

“It was sad to have her whisked away so quickly,” Danielle recalls. “We had no time for skin-to-skin contact and it was three days before we could hold her again.”

Just hours old, Zali was transferred to Mercy Hospital for Women for specialist care.



“Mercy Hospital for Women researchers are on the brink of developing the world’s first simple test to accurately predict preterm labour.”

Even the ambulance ride to Heidelberg was traumatic, with the vehicle forced to pull over at the bottom of the Westgate Bridge when Zali’s oxygen levels plummeted.

“My heart was racing,” says James.

While Zali has continued to grow under the loving gaze of her proud parents, they are all too aware that their experience is one of the better ones.

Obstetrician Dr Megan Di Quinzio and scientist Dr Harry Georgiou have been studying preterm labour biomarkers in cervicovaginal fluid for over a decade, accruing a biobank of over 3500 samples.

From hundreds of biomarker combinations, they have homed in on a handful of proteins currently being evaluated.

“Thousands of women who have had premature babies have volunteered for this study because they realise while it may not benefit them personally, it could really help families in the future,” Megan says.

The test will most likely involve a vaginal swab, administered by a doctor or nurse. A sample of fluid taken from under the cervix would be tested for specific biomarkers.

“Preterm birth doesn’t discriminate,” Megan says. “The greatest burden is in the developing world, where access to antenatal care is limited, but it can happen to anyone.”

The research team has just begun recruiting 2500 more women from both Mercy Hospital for Women and the Royal Women’s Hospital to get closer to unlocking the puzzle. If the trial is successful, it will mark a new era in care for mothers and babies globally: one in which fewer size 000000s will be needed.

Researchers from the University of Melbourne’s Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Mercy Hospital for Women and the Royal Women’s Hospital hope the new test would mean fewer parents will have to experience early labour.

The researchers have teamed up with Carmentix, a Singapore-based company that will help develop the predictive test. The painless and reliable test could be taken as early as 24 weeks’ gestation, giving doctors a clear indication of risk of preterm birth within days, or even weeks.





# Going green for global health

Planetary and human health are intimately and profoundly linked. Mercy Health clinician and Project Lead Laudato Si Dr Lisa Rasmussen wants all health services to not only make this link, but act on it — and tap into a global reimagining of health.

As a Mercy Hospital for Women doctor with a Masters in Environmental Science, Lisa was a natural choice to work with our Leadership & Mission team in responding to Pope Francis' 2015 Encyclical Laudato Si, On the Care for Our Common Home. The Encyclical challenges Catholic organisations to help improve human health and welfare by tackling contributors to climate change.

"Our goal is to help guide and coordinate a Mercy approach to protecting the earth and the health of its inhabitants, especially those facing disadvantage" Lisa says.

"In this country we've reached peak health — many of our problems are about over-consumption. The things we need to do to protect humans and the planet are now completely aligned.

"As a health service we need to appreciate the detrimental effect of climate change on people as well as the planet: war, lack of water and food, massive loss of species, mass displacement of people. 20% of the people on the planet have caused 80% of the damage; we have a moral as well as a health imperative to act."

That conviction has taken Lisa to two Conferences of the Parties (COP) to the U.N. Convention on Climate Change: COP 21 in Paris in 2015 and COP 22 in Morocco in 2016.



Delegates and climate activists at COP22 in Morocco

"COP 21 was a milestone in the world's efforts to launch a global response to climate change," Lisa says. "It set out a framework and goals for international action, taking a bottom up rather than top-down approach. 196 countries committed to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels. The concept of climate justice became a central framework.

"COP22 brought together 20,000 delegates from almost 200 countries to continue developing the work of the Paris Agreement. Catholic delegates were especially strident in calling on the international Catholic community to make major structural changes, including divesting their assets from fossil fuels, which are major culprits in global warming."

Lisa returned to Mercy Health with a renewed conviction that "If we're going to attempt to keep things close to 1.5 degrees, every one of us needs to understand and act.



Lisa Rasmussen at COP 22

"At a local level, during 2017 the Laudato Si Project is developing a range of programs to tackle waste and develop environmental action programs throughout the organisation. In fact, some locations have already taken up the challenge, which is fantastic to see."

*The greening of Mercy Health has begun with a waste reduction program that encourages staff to 'reduce, reuse, recycle': a direction brought to life by initiatives including the worm farm that now disposes of food scraps at the Richmond office.*





Photo courtesy of the Community Newspaper Group

# Frying up a feast for Pancake Day

Light and fluffy pancakes were piled high when residents at Mercy Place Mandurah celebrated Shrove Tuesday, popularly named Pancake Day, with a fry up on 28 February.

IMAGE: Chef Melanie Anderson and resident Peta Warren getting ready to cook up a storm.

Residents kicked off preparations with a group pancake mixture making extravaganza, before hitting the pans to test their frying and flipping skills.

Shrove Tuesday is the day preceding Ash Wednesday in the Christian calendar, and marks the beginning of Lent. Traditionally Lent asks the faithful to give up a favourite food for the following six weeks until Easter Sunday, so feasting on pancakes is a final indulgence before the season begins.

Mercy Place Mandurah Service Manager, Christina Venables, says the residents loved cooking up a storm.

"Our Pancake Day celebrations are part of our focus on involving residents in meaningful activities within our home," Ms Venables says.

"While making pancakes might seem like a simple activity, for our residents it's a chance to show off their culinary skills and reengage with cooking for both themselves and others; and of course we know they relish eating the end products!

"It's also a day steeped in tradition for many of our residents, who have grown up celebrating Pancake Day with their families and neighbours. So it brings back many happy memories for them, as well as creating many new ones."

## Spotlight on: Booma Abdi VOCCAL

When Werribee Mercy Hospital launched its long-awaited consumer advisory group for mental health, Booma Abdi was among the first to apply. A former client of Mercy Mental Health, Booma has the experience and insight needed to help consumer voices shape mental healthcare.

**You are a founding member of the aptly named Voices of Consumer and Carer Advisory Link (VOCCAL). What motivated you to join the group?**

A strong belief that consumer voices should be heard and acted upon, formed during my own journey. I feel in mental healthcare especially, the success and/or failure of any service is based upon how much input its consumers have into its day-to-day running.

I had my first manic episode at a work function. It forced me to reassess where I was in life: started to feel I should follow a more humanitarian path.

I began volunteering at Orygen, the National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health, as a peer support worker. Orygen embeds consumers within its service, and involves them in activities from hiring clinicians to co-facilitating groups and training. I saw that it's critical for services to use consumers past and present in as many aspects of the service as they can to ensure the highest possible standard of care.

Eventually I decided to pursue a career in mental health, which led me to VOCCAL.

**Tell us about the structure and role of VOCCAL**

VOCCAL was formed to ensure consumers and carers can participate meaningfully in decisions about mental health policy, care and treatment, and the wellbeing of themselves and the community. It's made up of equal numbers of Mercy Mental Health Consumer and Carer Consultants, and consumers and carers with lived experience of our services. We have six members, and bringing their perspectives together will serve to benefit not only the service but the community as a whole.

**VOCCAL has been going for almost a year. What impact do you feel the group is having on our care and how can you see that evolving over time?**

One of the earliest initiatives that came out of our meetings was offering mental health first aid training to assist a person who is developing or experiencing a mental health problem.



“When I had my interview for this role there was a consumer on the panel, which is great”

Three VOCCAL members and three Post Discharge Support Workers were present at the training. Their family, friends, even total strangers, could all benefit from those six people having learnt these skills.

Consumer input still has a lot of potential to be tapped into at Mercy Health. There shouldn't be any limits for consumers to help shape their services.



# MERCY HEALTH FOUNDATION AUTUMN BALL

SATURDAY 20 MAY 2017  
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## Have your say...

### Mercy Health is recruiting for our COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUPS.

Do you want to **be more involved** in our care?  
Do you **want to help represent the needs of patients and their families**?  
Do you have **ideas to help** improve our services?

**Applications are now open for 2017.**  
**Contact Bec Jolly on [getinvolved@mercy.com.au](mailto:getinvolved@mercy.com.au)**  
**or 03 8416 7872.**



## Your feedback...

We hope you've enjoyed the autumn edition of *Our Voice*, Mercy Health's groupwide newsletter.

Please send your feedback and stories via the details below:

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Mercy Health acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the first Australians. We acknowledge the diversity of Indigenous Australia. We respectfully recognise Elders both past and present. This report was produced on Wurundjeri Country.



*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](http://mercyhealth.com.au)

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