

Our Voice



Mercy Health

Care first

THE GROUPWIDE NEWSLETTER OF MERCY HEALTH
WINTER 2015

Supporting children's grief

Bereavement groups
help young lives heal

A model of happiness

Changing the face
of aged care

Mercy Hospital turns 100

And its first family
celebrates with us



Playing by heart

They may not have the words to tell us, but children grieve as deeply as adults – perhaps even more deeply. Mercy Palliative Care’s bereavement groups for children are a safe space to open up, to remember – and to celebrate.

Philip is the smallest member of the Mercy Palliative Care team, but he may be one of the most important. His big, brown eyes are the kind children feel most comfortable looking into as they talk about their hurt and loneliness.

Philip the seal is a hand puppet Bereavement Counsellor Birgit Vogel uses to engage participants in her children’s bereavements groups. Run to support primary school aged children whose loved ones have received palliative care, the twice yearly groups meet an often overlooked need to recognise the depth of a child’s grief.

“Philip speaks to the younger ones and asks ‘What has happened in your family? Tell me about it,’” Birgit explains. “So they talk to Philip, not to me. He is interested, and he

might have had a loss too. So the child tells Philip what is helpful for them, what he can do to feel less sad.

“Children process via play. They grieve, then play, then grieve, then play. Often when they play, they are working on their grief. I do sand play and ask children to make a picture of their family. So they show me where they are at, where their parents are, if there is somebody in bed.”

“Adults in their illness or grief sometimes don’t see that their children are grieving too,” confirms Colleen Kannegiesser, Bereavement Services Coordinator. “We often see the parents for counselling which is how they hear about the groups. We recognise that children are as important in grief as adults, even though their way around it is different.”



Mia and Casey light a remembrance candle.

Acknowledging that difference is vital to helping children work through loss not only when it is raw, but throughout their lives. Early intervention in grief management can avoid more complex, unresolved pain in later life.

“Often a parent will say ‘My kid’s OK, he’s playing a lot’”, Birgit explains. “If parents or grandparents don’t recognise that this is how children deal with it, the support isn’t called upon. It may come from their school; the teacher may, with the family’s permission, contact us to talk about the child’s behaviour.

“Younger children need to be reassured that they’re safe, that they’re loved, that someone is looking after them.”

This is another benefit of the group structure: showing children they are not only heard, but also not alone in their sadness.

“The group is activity based, allowing everyone to listen to each other and know other children are going through it too,” Colleen says.

“They’re structured to get the attention of the children,” Birgit adds. “After a welcome, parents can leave and we sit in a circle and talk about who has died in the family and how it is for the child. Then we focus on the particular time of year, so if Mother’s Day is coming up we talk about how it will feel different this year, no matter who has died in the family. The children can talk about what to do if somebody cries, how they can help and who will be there to help them get through the day.

“Then we talk about whether we can do or make something for Mother’s Day, which can be given to someone or taken to the cemetery; a little letter or card. So in a recent group we



Birgit, Colleen – and Philip



Riley and Jacob join the talking circle



“Adults in their illness or grief sometimes don’t see that their children are grieving too”

laminated a photo of their loved one, then put it in a jar with some water and glitter to make a ‘snow dome’, and the outside was decorated by the children to take home. It’s simple and low cost but very effective. The children thought it was just magic.”

Something so basic yet enchanting speaks directly to a child in their own language, in which reality, memory and imagination are melded. It can also offer adults an insight into the child’s experience.

“After the activity we invite the parents back in and we all sit down and have a little

ceremony,” Birgit says. “We have a candle in the middle and little tapers. The children each come up from their seat and say something special about the person who died that they never want to forget. Then the parents come up and speak too.

“Then we might switch off the lights and have a bit of stillness. It’s a really magical, beautiful moment, integrating the loved one who has died and the ones who are still alive.

“Sometimes the children don’t want to leave. They may come up and say ‘Can I have a few minutes at the end with you Birgit? I need to tell you about something.’”

When someone is dying, children often miss out on activities that can take them away from the fear and sadness.

The Urgent Need Appeal can fund small treats, like a day at the movies, which can make a big difference.

Donate to the Appeal at mercyhealth.com.au/urgent



Animal magic

When Harlem enters a room, the atmosphere changes. Faces light up, hands reach out and a ripple of joy warms the air.



Collecting his certificate of appreciation at the Volunteer Week morning tea

As a part time therapy dog and full time heartbreaker, Harlem has been a welcome visitor to Melbourne's Mercy Place Parkville community almost every week for a year now.

Harlem's owner and Mercy Health Home & Community Care's Practice Leader - CMS Amber Knox can't hide her pride as she describes Harlem's effect on Parkville's residents. "If someone goes into a room without him, the resident will ask 'Where's Harlem?' They genuinely look forward to his visits. He's a really good fit in this environment. I also get requests for him to come in at other times; one resident who was close to the end of their life asked that he come and see them.

"When Harlem and I go out for a walk, often I'll look up and find him with his head on the lap of a resident sitting on a bench. Or people will approach us and spend time patting and

talking to him. He's just got that beautiful nature. Something about him makes people gravitate to him."

Incorporating pets into our aged care homes is a tangible way to maintain continuity in residents' lives. Many people have cherished animals throughout their lives and still value the unconditional love, companionship and energy they bring. "Harlem attended the Fernhill open day and many people remarked on what a great idea it is to include pet therapy," Amber recalls.

Its value is clear at a Volunteers' Morning Tea held at Parkville in May, at which Harlem is one of the honoured guests. People pause their morning activities to watch him make his rounds of the rooms, accompanied by a carer. Harlem darts between residents, staff and visitors with equal enthusiasm. At the end of the tea Harlem is presented with his own certificate of thanks along with the rest of the volunteer team.



“The residents genuinely look forward to Harlem’s visits”

Harlem charms Mercy Place Parkville resident Rosemarie Kosberg

"Pet therapy is so valuable to residents; I've seen it personally," Amber notes. "When a resident will get up and walk back to their room just to get Harlem a biscuit or proudly tell other residents and staff that they gave Harlem a bath, you can see the joy they get out of it. And the joy he gets out of it is just as evident. I've been delighted by the way he interacts with residents. The staff have complete confidence in him."

"Everyone looks forward to his Monday visits," confirms Mercy Place Parkville Lifestyle Assistant Nina Alvares-Gonzaga.

"It makes our home feel even more familiar and relaxed.

"He's especially welcome in the Memory Support Unit; one of our residents, Grace, finds interacting with people challenging at times and will pretend to be asleep. But when Harlem visits she'll become very alert, holding his leash and making sure she's taking care of him. That's actually the longest time I've seen her engage in any activity. He's a reassuring presence."

Harlem's charms aren't restricted to his winning personality. He

can open and close doors, pick up and carry things, walk without a lead, move items out of the way of walkers and wheelchairs, and be gentle around people. He most recently learnt how to scroll an iPad!

These almost uncanny skills give Harlem the perfect credentials to make himself useful in a range of environments. But his main contribution is a far simpler one, summed up by a beaming resident.

"They win your heart, don't they?" she says.



Charity begins at home

Residents of two Mercy Health WA aged care homes are contributing their time and energy to help others in the local and global community.

Mercy Place Mandurah

Perth's Mercy Place Mandurah might be a world away from the children in cyclone affected Vanuatu but, with the help of staff and carers, its residents are rallying to help

Aware that rebuilding the shattered island community could take years, they have been filling shoeboxes with crayons, pencils, colouring books and other gifts to send to children in Tanna, one of the worst affected areas.

The plight of the children on the island has been drawn to the attention of residents by Natasha Venables, a volunteer with the Red Cross and daughter of Mercy Place's Service Manager Christina Venables, who has been working extensively on the island.

"Natasha has been working with aid agencies in the affected area since the cyclone hit, after having been on a year-long secondment to run programs teaching locals how to prepare for disasters," Christina explains.

"When Natasha confirmed she was coming back to

Perth for a short visit, I told our residents and they immediately wanted to help the children.

"Our community here at Mercy Place sees this as an opportunity to send a message of hope to the island's children. They feel that filling a shoebox with pencils, notepaper and crayons is a very simple but meaningful way to let the children know people in Australia care about what's happened."

Currently, more than 80 shoeboxes have been filled and Christina is currently in talks with both Qantas and Virgin to come on board and ship the shoeboxes free of charge, or at a nominal fee.

"The residents have had a great time packing all of the boxes, which has actually taken us weeks," adds Christina.

"We've also had volunteers helping us and we just can't believe that we have managed to fill over 80, it's a fantastic result and we're all thrilled.

WA State Manager Anita Ghose said residents were

keen to get behind the idea and send as many shoeboxes as possible.

"This initiative is very typical of the caring people who make up the wonderful community that is Mercy Place Mandurah," she says. "Our residents genuinely want to make a difference, not only in their own community but, when they get chance, in the global community."



Natasha Venables and resident Lewis Fitzgerald surrounded by care packages for children in Vanuatu (Image Courtesy of the Community Newspaper Group)



Jess Burrows, with residents Barb Swiney and Pieternella Boys, preparing for the Biggest Morning Tea (Image courtesy Emma Goodwin)

Edgewater Mercy Hostel

Countless cuppas were on hand in May at Edgewater Mercy Hostel as more than 30 residents joined in Australia's Biggest Morning Tea to raise much needed funds to fight cancer.

Anita Ghose says this year's event saw residents, families and volunteers enjoy morning tea for a very good cause.

"Our residents were keen to get involved in this year's Australia's Biggest Morning Tea and they don't need too much persuasion to indulge in a steaming hot cuppa, a

delicious morning treat and an opportunity to catch up with friends and family," Anita says.

"As well as raising money for a good cause, we believe it's important to join in with community events and our residents enjoy getting involved; the philosophy of giving is alive and well at Mercy Health and we're very proud of that."

In total, more than \$350 was raised by Edgewater Mercy Hostel and has been sent directly to the Cancer Council.



A model of happiness



One of the existing murals

Imagine having a team of people around you, dedicated to ensuring you have the best day possible, each and every day.

Care. “The first thing you lose is initiative. It can become difficult to start a conversation. The murals provide a focal point to talk about; they can trigger pleasant memories.

“They also disguise doors to the unit which can make people feel institutionalised. Beautiful images really warm up the environment.”

Murals have already been painted on internal and external walls of other Victorian homes including Mercy Health Bethlehem Home for the Aged in Bendigo and Mercy Place Shepparton.

MP Parkville: Virtual reality glasses

In another initiative to support residents living with dementia, technology is offering new and transformative experiences from the safety of their home. Virtual reality glasses transport the wearer to exotic locations or activities that spark positive memories and emotions.

Lifestyle Manager Karren Gooding has witnessed their benefit directly. “The glasses give people a 360 degree view – if they look up they can see the sky, or look down at the ground, so it feels like you’re there,” she explains. “We trialled them with seven residents living with dementia at Mercy Place Parkville, sending them on a helicopter ride over France, Iceland and Africa.



Virtual reality glasses offer new experiences



Residents enjoying playgroup at Rice Village

“I was concerned the headset may agitate someone living with dementia, but it was fantastic. One gentleman finds it hard to express his thoughts. After he took it off, he was able to tell us clearly about coming to Australia, what he likes about living here – it triggered enjoyable reminiscing. It was quite remarkable.

“The other residents were equally moved; they kept asking ‘Can we do that again, that was amazing!’

“We plan to roll them out to all our other home as soon as we can.”

Rice Village: playgroup

They say it takes a village to raise a child, and interaction with people of all ages is at the heart of that maxim.

But the benefits of those interactions flow both ways, as a recent initiative at Geelong’s Mercy Place Rice Village shows. The home hosted a free trial playgroup in May, run by Hey Dee Ho Music, at which more than 40 people aged 3 months

to over 90 years enjoyed a fun hour of singing, playing and chatting together.

Maintaining relationships with community and more specifically with children is central to our new model of care’s emphasis on staying connected to the full spectrum of society.

“The feedback was extremely positive from the residents, the parents and the staff,” Karren Gooding confirms. “We mainly focused on residents living with dementia; we found that people who were normally anxious participated calmly, they were singing along, their facial expressions were amazing.

“It’s definitely something we’ll implement in other homes as soon as practical.”

Gardening at Mercy Place Wyndham

Mercy Place Wyndham resident John Pilsbury has left an evergreen legacy at the home he loved. Before his passing earlier this year, John had taken charge of two above ground vegetable garden beds in the central courtyard. Under his stewardship, “John’s Garden” grew extremely productive, generating a profusion of vegetables and interest within the resident community – so much so that his mantle has passed to fellow resident and friend, Maurice ‘Bomber’ Dougherty. Yet John will remain very much a part of the garden as residents and staff will soon unveil a plaque dedicated to his memory.

From John’s passion the seeds of a new program were sown, in which family members will be invited to work with residents in maintaining the gardens around the home, including the feature rose garden at the entrance to the building.

“It’s a great initiative which helps to keep residents active and involved, and draws on the broader

community of the home,” Tracey Williams, Mercy Place Wyndham Service Manager, explains. “Both the residents and their families enjoy the hands on involvement and interaction. It’s also a nice way to get some fresh air and sunshine, while doing something with real meaning and purpose.”



'Bomber' Dougherty cares for John's Garden

What is the Mercy Health model of care?

It’s a philosophy that guides the way we design and deliver aged care to our community.

Its aim is simple: to ensure our residents can have the best day possible, each and every day. This means supporting people to live as independently and actively as possible, connected to their family, friends and the wider community. It also means ensuring they can guide their own care based on their needs and preferences.

The model of care comes to life in the growing, range of activities we’re introducing to ensure residents enjoy life now as much as they always have.

You can find the full model of care at mercyhealth.com.au



The bonds of sisterhood

Sr Madeleine Fox has one particularly poignant memory from the time before her sister Bernadette decided to enter the order of Sisters of the Good Shepherd. “She made the decision, then sat in a chair all afternoon crying,” she says. “Good Shepherd was a cloistered order; they didn’t go out. She was afraid she’d never see me again!”

Sitting side by side in Sr Madeleine’s apartment – just three doors down from her own – Sr Bernadette’s fears were clearly unfounded; both can laugh now. Yet within that memory are many strands of both sisters’ stories: parallel vocations, profound faith and the deep bonds of family.

Formidable figures within their respective orders, Sr Bernadette and Sr Madeleine are speaking to *Our Voice* today as their paths reconverge in another way: after decades under Good Shepherd stewardship, its aged care homes in Abbotsford and Boronia are passing into the hands of the Sisters of Mercy.

“There’ve been a lot of connections with Mercy from the very beginning,” Sr Bernadette notes. “Mercy nuns helped us establish the Abbotsford property in the nineteenth century; and there are Sisters of Mercy in our Abbotsford home now.”

This is a neat summation of a centuries-old partnership,

as close in spirit as a blood tie. Australia’s founding Sister of Mercy Ursula Frayne first encountered the Good Shepherd sisters in Cairo en route to her new posting in Perth, and was impressed by their work with those on the fringes of society. After travelling to Melbourne to found the Convent of Mercy and Academy of Mary Immaculate, Mother Ursula recommended the Good Shepherd convent in Paris send a contingent to help the ‘deviant women’ forced into prostitution to survive in the nascent city.

The first Good Shepherd sisters answered the call, arriving with firm purpose but, despite promises from various quarters, few means. The Sisters of Mercy immediately took them under their wing, sustaining them financially until they were able to acquire the current Abbotsford site for their own foundation. Over the next 150 years the order evolved into today’s Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, a multifaceted

mission-based organisation actively pursuing social justice and economic empowerment for the marginalised and disadvantaged in our community: the sibling of the Mercy mission to heal and elevate the vulnerable.

“Mission is always motivating both of us,” agrees Sr Bernadette. “We’re both spending a lot of time on formation of our lay group.”

While it may seem extraordinary to have two blood sisters enter religious life, and perhaps even more unusually, choose different orders, Bernadette and Madeleine Fox were each tracing a well-worn familial path.

“We both went to the Academy in Nicholson St – the first Mercy school in Melbourne,” Sr Madeleine recalls. “One aunt on my mother’s side was a sister of Mercy for about 50 years; but three aunts on my father’s side were Good Shepherd sisters.”

Both Bernadette and Madeleine embarked on

teaching careers, fulfilling one of the most fundamental roles in both orders: that of formation. It was the beginning of a remarkable journey.

“I taught domestic science for a few years,” Sr Bernadette says. “Later I was in charge of the junior sisters in formation, then went to France for my final vows in 1958. In 1969 I went to Rome as part of the general chapter of the congregation.”

Held every six years, the Congregational Chapter brings together Good Shepherd sisters from every foundation worldwide, to shape its mission and leadership.

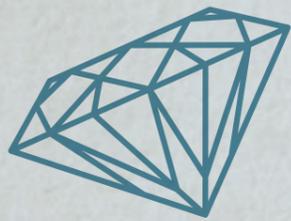
“We were there three or four months working on the new constitution,” Sr Bernadette continues. “Then I was elected Provincial Leader and became Mistress of the Juniorate. I was the youngest Provincial, then in 1973 I was elected Mother General of the congregation throughout the world and lived in Rome.”

This momentous appointment came as quite a shock to the devoted but unassuming Sister from Melbourne. Yet she accepted the challenge with the same energy and focus that had seen her leadership potential realised. If any self doubt lingered in Sr Bernadette’s mind, it was dispelled when she was elected for a second term in 1979.

Today the sisters can view Mercy Place Abbotsford and the convent from their windows, and reflect on the remarkable confluence of personal and religious history within their walls. “The Mercy Sisters have always been there when we needed them,” notes Sr Madeleine. “It’s good to know we’re still supporting each other.”

“The Mercy Sisters have been there when we needed them ... It’s good to know we’re still supporting each other.”





Delivering a decade of care

Anniversaries celebrate long, close relationships, and Melbourne's Mercy Hospital for Women has forged many over its ten years of dedicated service to our community.

The hospital opened its doors mere hours before Khoi Vu first opened his eyes in the brand new maternity wing. He and his family - mother Ngoc Nguyen, father Leon Vu and eight year old brother Minh - were honoured guests among several other VIPs at the 10 year celebrations in June.

Leon well remembers the high emotions of the big day in 2005. "We were a little bit worried to be honest because it was so new!" he admits with a laugh. "But we needn't have worried; the staff were so friendly and helped us both through the tough times in the birth. So we came back two years later to have Minh. We were originally booked into East Melbourne but Heidelberg opened just in time. We had chosen Mercy Hospital for Women because of its reputation for great service.

"We're really proud to be a part of the hospital's history,

and we're happy to bring the boys back so they can have good memories of the hospital."

"We're thrilled that our 'first family' could attend," confirms Chief Executive Health Services Dr Linda Mellors.

Mercy Health Group CEO Stephen Cornelissen ushered the family to centre stage beside other special guests: former Health Minister Bronwyn Pike, City of Banyule Mayor Cr Craig Langdon and Banyule CEO Simon McMillan, all of whom were instrumental in the hospital's genesis. The trio paid tribute to its enduring contribution to the community. "You've brought so much happiness to the area with the birth of children here and the wonderful services you offer," Craig noted. "On behalf of the City of Banyule, thank you for being here and for the services you provide. You have become the heart of this area."



21 years and \$85 million: the sum of us

Across the river, celebrations are also in full swing as Werribee Mercy Hospital comes of age and looks to the future.

After 21 years at Werribee Mercy Hospital, very few acts of generosity surprise Carmela Joyce, Nurse Unit Manager of the operating suite, central sterilising department and elective surgery access. Yet even she was astounded by the latest show of support the hospital has received.

"I was in Brisbane having a week off and I thought 'I haven't read the paper, I'll have a look at the state budget,' thinking 'oh, wonder what we're we going to get, oh \$85 million, WHAT?!' I could hardly believe it was true. Then I had texts from the staff here; it was so exciting."

The Victorian State Government's funding injection will enable the hospital to build a desperately needed Critical Care Unit

Images (from top): Khoi Vu 10 years ago. Leon Vu, 'first baby' Khoi Vu, Minh Vu and Ngoc Nguyen took part in the celebrations at Mercy Hospital for Women. Guests Sr June Rohan and Mayor of Banyule Cr Craig Langdon with Mary McCarthy and Mary Klasen. Celebrating 21 years each at Werribee Mercy Hospital: Rosalie Pryse, Carmela Joyce and Nicole Whiting. Former Health Minister Bronwyn Pike, City of Banyule CEO Simon McMillan are welcomed by Mercy Health Group CEO Stephen Cornelissen.

as well as expanding other essential services to better support residents of the rapidly growing Wyndham region. It's a vindication of the central role the hospital plays not only in the health of the community from which it sprang, but in its lifecycle. Thousands of Wyndham residents are born here every year and many will be cared for by its staff until the end of their lives. Many, like Carmela, also work here; it's this intense connection to place that guarantees its enduring 'community' feel and fosters long-term commitment from its staff.

"I started here in August 1994 as a casual bank nurse," Carmela recalls. "I didn't even have a signed contract until 6pm that night!"

After 10 years at the inner city Alfred Hospital, Carmela immediately felt this was a very different space. "When I started here the feel was very much a larger version of the old Werribee District Hospital," she notes. "Everyone had a real connection to it. Lots of people already knew each other and you got to know others very quickly. It was a very relaxed environment; it was, and is, a pleasure coming to work."

The central role played by staff and Wyndham residents in nurturing the fledgling hospital also quickly became apparent. "I've witnessed the community support the hospital has received over the years firsthand. To begin with we were

privileged to receive donations from the Werribee Hospital Foundation, allowing us to purchase anaesthetic machines and other pieces of equipment.

"I've also been heavily involved in all the community fairs we've held to raise funds. My primary role was to beg, borrow and steal donations! In among my normal work I did all the cold calling and letters to local businesses to ask for goods and services to put items on the 'wheel', which I was charged with running for many years. I used to joke that every year I sold my soul for this hospital.

"Theatre also ran the cake stall. We were all very involved. Maybe the reason we were so keen was that this is our hospital. Many of us lived here, worked here, brought our families to the UMC (and later to the ED). It is part of us. We wanted to see our hospital grow and thrive. Everything we did came back into the hospital, so there was a deep sense of pride."

Can you help?

One of Werribee Mercy Hospital's star community supporters, Rick Wolany of Rick Wolany Toyota, has always been there for us - now it's our turn to be there for him.

See the back cover for details on how you can help.



Cairns:

Caring in all corners of the country



In the past nine months Mercy Health has expanded its services as far west as Perth and most recently as far north as Queensland, developing a truly national identity in Australian aged care.

On Monday 1 June 2015, Mercy Health started providing care to residents at two aged care homes in Cairns. Mercy Place Westcourt and Mercy Place Woree, formerly run by Holy Spirit Care Services, are state-of-the-art communities with proud histories of excellent care.

And while this is Mercy Health's first foray into Queensland, the Sisters of Mercy have long been involved in the region, arriving more than a century ago.

In 1888 the Sisters of Mercy landed in Cooktown before building St Mary's Convent of Mercy and Boarding School. The Sisters later managed Bethlehem Nursing Centre - now part of Mercy Place Westcourt - between 1967 and 1996.

Leading this new phase is Anita Ghose who blazed a trail for Mercy Health in the second half of 2014 as she steered our entry into Western Australia.

Now State Manager Western Australia and Queensland, Ms Ghose says Mercy Health is committed to providing the highest quality care to older Australians, living our values

“**Mercy Health is truly responding to the emerging needs of older Australians**”

for those who entrust us with their care, across Victoria, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, Western Australia and Queensland.

“Our expansion into Western Australia and now Queensland is testament to Mercy Health's commitment to respond authentically to the emerging needs of older Australians,” Ms Ghose says. “As a Mercy organisation, we take a holistic and community-focused approach to enriching the lives of those in our care, working with others nationally to achieve our mission.”

“The lessons we have learnt in establishing an aged care ministry in Western Australia have been extremely valuable. Culturally, contextually and demographically, what we

have learnt during the past nine months has given us a solid understanding of respecting diversity whilst achieving alignment.”

Ms Ghose says one of the most important aspects of entering a new area is partnering with the community, including staff, residents and their families. Her first impressions of Cairns were of an extremely strong ethos and spirit at the now Mercy Place Westcourt and Mercy Place Woree.

“This focus on community has been critical to our success in Western Australia,” she says. “And already our introduction in Queensland has been very positive.”

“It's very much business as usual at both homes, because our main objective is to ensure the seamless continuation of care.”

Ms Ghose is pleased to note that providing aged care services in different parts of Australia creates an even richer and more diverse demographic within Mercy Health's resident and staff populations, leading to new opportunities to learn and grow together into the future.



“**I really hope to support volunteers to have a real voice in the way health services are run**”

Marianne Mahony

CAC Chair

As Mercy Health's first Consumer Chair to our Community Advisory Committee (CAC), Marianne Mahony is breaking new ground in our organisation - but it's a relationship that began some years ago.

organisation. In 2012 I was thinking about retiring and doing some voluntary work. Then I heard that a position on the CAC had been advertised. I had no idea what to expect but I applied and they accepted me.

staff at Mercy Health, my mother had been at Mercy Place Parkville, so I'd experienced as a consumer what it was to have a parent in aged care; what was working well and what could be improved. That was a driver for me.

“I'd had a long history of working with staff from Mercy Hospital for Women as a social worker, going back to when I was manager of health promotion at the PANCH health service,” Marianne recalls. “Then I worked closely with the hospital's social work department, then with the Children's Protection Society. We developed a program called I'm an Aboriginal Dad which was taken up by the hospital.”

“From there the relationship continued; I helped the social work department write the submission for New Directions funding for additional mother and baby services. It was an exciting time to build those relationships, because it hadn't really been done before between a community service organisation and a maternity hospital.”

“I went on to become manager of volunteers at the city of Banyule. In that capacity I started to think more broadly about what volunteers can bring to an

“When I fully retired and having seen that the CAC was working well, and people were keen to do more, I wanted to take a more active role.”

Dovetailing with Mercy Health's recognition that empowering consumers to lead their own forum is essential, that more active role takes the form of CAC Chair, a new position within the consumer engagement space. Marianne's experience in and advocacy for the value of volunteering made her the natural choice to guide current and future committee members.

“I really hope to support volunteers to have a real voice in the way health services are run,” Marianne says. “I see that as a way of educating and empowering people in the health sector. It's often a hard area in which to volunteer; it might be new to you, or you may only know one part of it. Often people will have had an experience which draws them to volunteer here. For instance, apart from having worked with

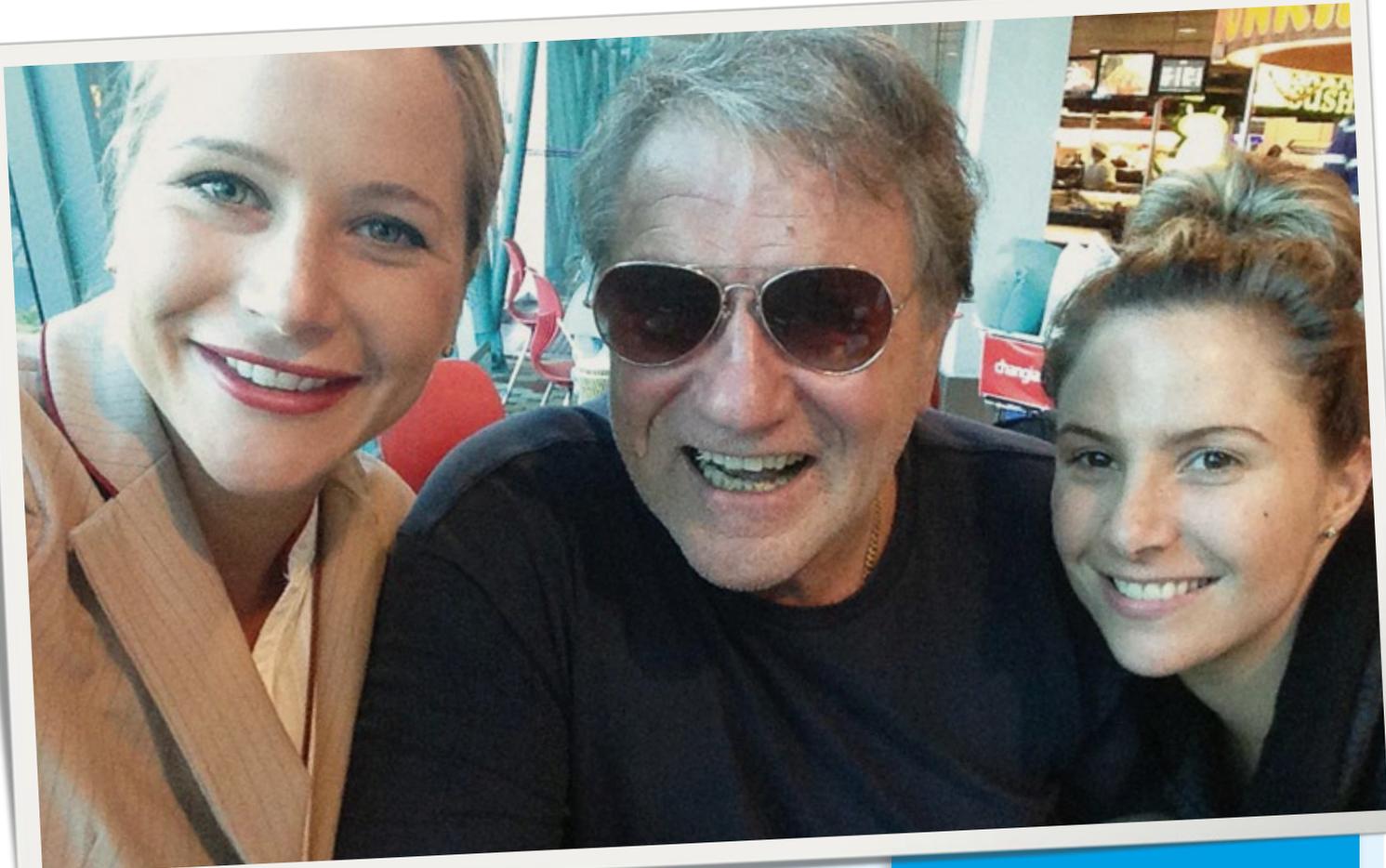
“So it's that combination, and wanting to make a difference, to make things better for people in future, which motivates me.”

Improving the lot of others extends to that of her fellow committee members. “We've all worked together now for a few years and my aim is to encourage every member of the committee to have agenda items, to contribute freely to how things could be improved. Sometimes if you're working with very senior people it can be a bit intimidating; ‘What do I know, I've never worked in the system.’

“A template has now been developed to appoint CAC chairs across the organisation, which I think is terribly important. It gives a clear job description and some expectation of how much time, energy and effort it will take. It also gives our volunteers a sense of how long it may take to feel that they can be a voice in the meeting and in Mercy Health.”

To find out more about the CAC contact Bec Jolly on bjolly@mercy.com.au





Run 4 A Reason: *Run for Rick*

As one of Werribee Mercy Hospital's earliest and most staunch supporters, Werribee business Rick Wolany Toyota has donated more than \$80,000 over many years to fund essential programs and equipment for the hospital.

Sadly, last year Rick was diagnosed with a rare and devastating neurological condition called Progressive Supranuclear Palsy (PSP). PSP affects vital functions such as movement, balance, speech and swallowing. To date, there is no known treatment or cure.

Rick's daughters Bree and Sam urgently need your help to fund research that could find a cure.

As Team Run4aReasonPSP, Bree, Sam and their supporters have committed to running the Melbourne Marathon 42km in October 2015 to raise awareness and \$25,000 for PSP research. Proceeds will go directly to Parkinsons Victoria.

You can support Team Run4aReasonPSP:

Join the team at [facebook.com/run4areasonpsp](https://www.facebook.com/run4areasonpsp)

Sponsor or donate at [give.everydayhero.com/au/run4areasonpsp](https://www.give.everydayhero.com/au/run4areasonpsp)

“Finding out how many people he touched and the support he has from the community because of his generosity over the years will make a huge difference to my Dad, and this research will give other families hope.”

– Bree Wolany

“Rick always had that very strong connection with Werribee Mercy Hospital, particularly in its very early days.

He supported the hospital through the Bob Shearer Golf Classic, donating somewhere in the region of \$80,000 towards staff education as well as artwork and furniture for the Mother Baby Unit.

His connection was and is not just to the building but to the staff, management and patients. He truly believes in helping the local community.”

– Shane Bourke,
former Mayor of Wyndham and
partner in Rick Wolany Toyota

*Like to share
your story?*

We hope you've enjoyed the winter edition of *Our Voice*. In each issue 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.

We love to receive your feedback and stories at ourvoice@mercy.com.au



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