

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

From: Kasey McCulloch, Media Officer, Mercy Health

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Mercy Health lodges planning application for a Retirement Living Unit development in Bendigo

Mercy Health has lodged a \$44 million planning application with the City of Greater Bendigo to construct more than 150 Retirement Living Units during the next decade.

Mercy Health is a Catholic not for profit organisation grounded in a 2,000 year tradition caring for others. Founded by the Sisters of Mercy, Mercy Health currently employs more than 7,000 people to provide acute and subacute hospital care, mental health programs, aged care and home and community care throughout Australia.

Mercy Health is proposing to build up to 176 Retirement Living Units on vacant land surrounding the organisation's newly redeveloped aged care home, Bethlehem Home for the Aged, at 36-42 Specimen Hill Road, Golden Square.

Mercy Health Group Chief Executive Officer, Adjunct Professor Stephen Cornelissen, said the organisation has close to a 20 year history with Bendigo and was looking forward to strengthening its association with the city.

"In 1997, the Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst appointed Mercy Health to manage Bethlehem Home for the Aged and in 2006 it was gifted to the Sisters of Mercy," said Adj Prof Cornelissen.

"As our ageing population increases, Mercy Health wants to be able to provide suitable and affordable accommodation options to assist Bendigo's older citizens to live life easily and safely."

According to the government's *Victoria in the Future 2016 Report* released earlier this month, 16.6 per cent of the greater Bendigo population is aged over 65 and this is expected to increase to 23 per cent by 2031.

Mercy Health's Retirement Living Unit development would be completed in eight stages over 10 years and include access roads, walking paths, extensive landscaping and a designated forest area to protect existing native trees.

"The development would be unique in that it would have street frontage and the one and two bedroom units would largely blend into the neighbouring community," explained Adj Prof Cornelissen.

"The units would also have multiple access roads to ensure the impact on local traffic would be minimal.

"Mercy Health is now looking forward to working closely with council and the local community over the coming months and years to see this project become a reality."

A separate planning application for a community hub, including a gym, a dining area for residents and a library, on the same site is expected to be lodged with the City of Greater Bendigo later this year.

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For interviews and photo/filming opportunities, please contact:

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