



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

From: Kasey McCulloch, Media Officer, Mercy Health

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Mother Baby Unit hosts international delegation

Delegates from the International Marcé Society's Biennial Scientific Conference visited Werribee Mercy Hospital's Mother Baby Unit on Thursday 29 September to hear from staff about the unit's sector-leading programs.

The Marcé Society for Perinatal Mental Health is an international scientific association formed to advance the mental healthcare of women, their infants and partners around the time of childbirth.

Werribee Mercy Hospital's Mother Baby Unit is only one of six in the state. The eight bed, eight cot inpatient unit provides specialist inpatient mental health care for mothers with infants up to 12 months of age. Delegates from as far afield as Yale University and Cambridge University travelled to Werribee to learn more about the unit.

"We're extremely proud to be able to offer firsthand experience of the unit to these very highly regarded perinatal health professionals from around the world," Nurse Unit Manager Jess Barnes said. "It speaks volumes for the contribution our unit makes to this area of care."

"We've got some real heavy hitters here, all very interested in what we do," said unit psychiatrist Dr Kristine Mercuri. "In the USA, because the health system is run by private insurance companies, they don't have inpatient units. The best they can offer now is accelerated day programs. So they are very eager to gather information to take back and pitch the concept of residential units."

The seminar included a warmly-received address from new mother, Renee, who recently completed an eight week stay at the unit with son Hamish.

"By the time I entered the unit in April, my depression and anxiety were so bad that I endured nine out of thirteen days without any sleep," Renee said. "The overwhelming feeling I experienced when I was admitted was one of relief. I was able to recover from my illness in a safe and secure environment, and to develop my confidence as a mother.

"Critical to my stay was the specialist medical and nursing team. As well as the care I received, I learnt more about being a mother here than I have anywhere else. If we could use some of that education in antenatal classes it would be a huge help to parents.

"To say that this experience has changed my life is a big understatement, and I'm very grateful for my time here."

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