

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

From: Kasey McCulloch, Media Officer, Mercy Health

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Pastoral Care Teams win Spiritual Care Australia Award

The Pastoral Care Teams at Mercy Hospital for Women in Heidelberg and Werribee Mercy Hospital were recognised in the 2017 Spiritual Care Australia Awards presented at their annual conference in Surfer's Paradise.

The Pastoral Care Teams received the Best of Care Award in recognition for the holistic, compassionate care they provide to patients, their families and staff within the maternity and neonatal services at the two hospitals. The teams respond to a variety of pastoral needs in any one day, including pregnant women unexpectedly admitted to hospital, parents of a premature baby, or families struggling with the death of a baby. Such care requires a compassionate response to each individual, capacity to assess spiritual needs, and skills to provide appropriate spiritual care.

Werribee Mercy Hospital Pastoral Care Manager Trudy Keur said the award meant a great deal to the teams who provide support across a range of emotional and difficult situations.

"There is nothing more stark or confronting than when a mother and her partner are expecting life but instead are dealt death," Trudy said.

"We work closely in the interdisciplinary team to provide care with the deepest respect for cultural and religious differences. We offer emotional and spiritual support while enabling mothers, partners and families to create precious memories and honour their baby in whichever way is meaningful to them."

Pastoral Carers at Mercy Hospital for Women initiated the use of Reverie Harp as a pastoral intervention in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and Special Care Nursery. Nursing and medical staff often request pastoral care to play the harp when there is heightened activity or stressful medical procedures being undertaken. Some parents also borrow the harp to play for their baby – a way of active empowerment at times when they can feel quite powerless.

Families who have experienced the death of a baby frequently express their gratitude and appreciation to the multidisciplinary teams at Mercy Hospital for Women and Werribee Mercy Hospital. This appreciation often comes in the form of physical supports to enhance the care being offered to other families, such as donations of Cuddle Cots, teddy bears and quilts.

"There is such a short window of time for families to hold their little ones and honour their short lives before saying farewell," Trudy said.

"It is a privilege to walk with these families as they seek to find meaning at this sad and difficult time."

The Pastoral Care Team at Werribee Mercy Hospital also supports the spiritual, religious and emotional needs of patients and their families in the medical and surgical wards as well in the palliative care unit. While the Pastoral Care Team at Mercy Hospital for Women also responds to

the needs of gynaecology, oncology and surgical patients.

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For interviews and photo opportunities, please contact:

Kasey McCulloch

Media Officer

Mercy Health

Ph: 8416 7521

Mobile: 0477 720 337

Email: KMcCulloch@mercy.com.au