

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

From: Kasey McCulloch, Media Officer, Mercy Health

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A round of a-paws for The Wonderdogs

The joy of animal companionship was unleashed at Mercy Place East Melbourne with a special performance by The Wonderdogs marking World Alzheimer's Day 2017.

The talented performing pooches, well known for their roles in television commercials and films, showed off their im-*paw*-ressive tricks for residents, family members and staff.

Research shows that pets in aged care boost residents' spirits while reducing stress, fatigue and confusion. These benefits are why animal companionship is an important feature of Mercy Health's model of residential aged care.

The Wonderdogs' trainer Kelly Gill often witnesses the positive impact dogs have on people, in particular the elderly.

"We have also been lucky enough to perform in some aged care homes in New South Wales and it's extremely rewarding to see the smiles on everyone's faces," Ms Gill said.

"Often people relate to a certain dog as it reminds them of a relationship they've had with a dog in the past."

The *fur*-endly troop of border collies performed at the residential aged care home in East Melbourne as a part of Dementia Awareness Month.

Chief Executive of Aged & Community Care Kevin Mercer is a passionate advocate for animals in aged care. Every Mercy Health aged care home either has a live-in pet or receives regular animal visits.

"We aim to nurture all of our residents' needs including their health, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing, and we find pets and intergenerational activities have an extremely positive impact," Mr Mercer said.

"Pets of all shapes and sizes provide people living with dementia an opportunity to express their emotions, reminisce about their past and develop new bonds."

The purpose of Alzheimer's Awareness Day and Dementia Awareness Month is to encourage people to become more conscious of dementia. There are more than 400,000

Australians living with dementia, with up to 70 per cent of these people suffering from Alzheimer's disease.

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For interviews, photo or filming opportunities, please contact:

Kasey McCulloch

Media Officer

Mercy Health

Ph: 8416 7521

Mobile: 0477 720 337

Email: media@mercy.com.au or KMcCulloch@mercy.com.au