

# MEDIA RELEASE

## For immediate release

From: Kasey McCulloch, Media Manager, Mercy Health

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## Mercy Health to launch carer support group during National Palliative Care Week

Mercy Health will launch a support group for carers during National Palliative Care Week to allow people to connect and share their experiences.

National Palliative Care Week runs from 20–26 May 2018 and aims to raise awareness and understanding about palliative care in the Australian community. Palliative care is defined as specialised care and support for people with a life-limiting illness, their families and their carers. Palliative care looks after the physical (including treatment of pain and other symptoms), emotional, social, cultural and spiritual needs of the patient and those supporting them through their journey.

Mercy Health's palliative carer support group will be called 'Tuesday Chats' and provide a welcoming space for carers and staff to exchange information (legal, financial, community assistance, etc.) and to discuss their experiences and coping strategies.

Gabrielle Jennings Centre for Palliative Care Nurse Unit Manager Deanne Layton says the support group will meet at Werribee Mercy Hospital each fortnight and carers involved with the Gabrielle Jennings Centre and Mercy Palliative Care are all welcome to attend.

"We have identified a need for a dedicated palliative care support group for carers within our community," Ms Layton says.

"Carers play a vital role in palliative care however they often put their needs last while they focus on the care of their loved one.

"A dedicated support group will give them the opportunity for some self-care each fortnight for at least 90 minutes."

'Tuesday Chats' will be tailored to the needs of the carers who can attend. The first session will be held on Tuesday 22 May where carers will enjoy a morning tea and receive a carer's pack including a relaxation CD and candle.

'What Matters Most?' is the theme for National Palliative Care Week 2018 and Ms Layton says it is an important question everyone should take the time to answer.

"People at every stage of life need to ask themselves where they would want to receive palliative care," Ms Layton says.

"People also need to relay to their friends and family what their wishes are for end-of-life care and what is important for them to do before they die.

"National Palliative Care Week is the perfect time to start these essential conversations and fill out an advance care directive. An advance care directive captures your values and wishes to support decision-making with your future health care needs."

Mercy Health provides palliative care services to more than 500 people in the North and West metropolitan region of Melbourne.

Mercy Palliative Care is a home-based palliative care service providing care to patients in their own home or residential aged care home. The service provides holistic care to the patient and their family and includes nursing, medical and psychosocial care.

The Gabrielle Jennings Centre for Palliative Care is a 12-bed inpatient palliative care unit at Werribee Mercy Hospital. This specialist palliative care team provides multidisciplinary holistic care to patients and their families encompassing symptom management and end-of-life care.

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