MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

From: Kasey McCulloch, Media Manager, Mercy Health

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Mercy Health launches 24-hour palliative care service in Sunshine

Mercy Palliative Care, a community-based palliative care service, has launched a 24-hour service to benefit the more than 600 people requiring specialised care in Melbourne city and its western suburbs.

Launched on 9 April 2018, Mercy Palliative Care now provides every patient with access to a palliative care nurse, accompanied by a personal care worker, at night. The specialised staff visit palliative care patients and assist to manage pain and other distressing symptoms.

Mercy Palliative Care Services Manager Fran Gore said the response from patients and their families has been amazing.

"Mercy Health's new model of care enables patients to have access to specialist care 24 hours a day, seven days a week," Ms Gore said.

"Patients are impressed their concerns are listened to by a specialist palliative care nurse and impressed by how quickly their calls are triaged."

It is not uncommon for community palliative care services to use a district nursing service to attend to overnight calls for assistance. Often the attending overnight provider has limited palliative care experience, resulting in unnecessary emergency department presentations or visits being triaged for follow-up the next day.

"With our specialised overnight service, we hope to provide holistic end-of-life care for individuals and their families whenever they need it," Ms Gore said.

"When a patient contacts the 24-hour palliative care number, they now speak directly with the specialist palliative care nurse who will be visiting them that evening. The nurse provides advice to them over the phone and gives them an estimated time of arrival to their home."

In the first six weeks that the service was made available, 89 patients were visited by a palliative care nurse between the hours of 10:30pm–7am. In the six-weeks prior to that, district nurses provided advice to 64 patients and only 25 of these were provided a home visit.

"Comparatively, this represents a dramatic improvement in service to the community," Ms Gore said.

"Patients and their families are greatly comforted by the increased access to specialised care, giving them improved quality of end-of-life care.

"We expect an average of three to six extra visits a night; these are people who previously weren't receiving care."

Through this innovative model of care, Mercy Palliative Care hopes to set the standard for all metropolitan community-based palliative care services.

For more information, visit mercyhealth.com.au

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For interviews and photo opportunities, please contact:

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