

THE GROUPWIDE NEWSLETTER OF MERCY HEALTH SUMMER 2018

Inspired to serve

Mercy Health welcomes new Board Chair Ms Virginia Bourke and farewells Chairman Mr Julien O'Connell AM

A little help from my (feathered) friends

Six chickens have moved into Mercy Health's Community Care Unit to help clients on their road to recovery

Healing after heartbreak

How talking about her babies help<mark>ed mother</mark> Sofia Harris heal after the tragedy of stillbirth compassion

How speaking about loss helps to heal



Sofia Harris birthed all four of her babies at Werribee Mercy Hospital, but tragically, she and her husband **Richard only took** two of their children home. Their other two babies were stillborn. The Hoppers Crossing mother says speaking about her double tragedy is helping her heal.

ofia longed to be a mother. When she discovered she was pregnant at age 40, she and Richard celebrated every day of her pregnancy.

"Everything went perfectly," Sofia reminisces. "It was such a joyful time and I felt so connected to this little life growing inside of me; so much so that I wrote a journal to my baby every couple of days throughout my pregnancy."

Three days after her due date, Sofia went into labour. All went well at first, but then events took

a devastating turn when Sofia's beautiful baby boy was born without a heartbeat. Despite the best efforts of the Werribee Mercy Hospital team, baby Laurence could not be revived.

Sofia and Richard spent precious time with their baby, taking many photographs and creating beautiful memories, but the loss of their baby was overwhelming. Laurence's death was made worse because Sofia felt she couldn't talk about him openly.

"I was heartbroken, but just like any other new mum I wanted to talk about my birth story and Laurence's perfect triangularshaped nostrils, cupid lips and long fingers," Sofia says. However, Sofia soon discovered that talking about it felt 'taboo'.

Sofia and Richard somehow found a way to move forward and when they found out they were pregnant again nine months later, they were equally overjoyed and scared.

Back in the care of Werribee Mercy Hospital Director of Maternity Jacqui Van Dam, Sofia felt safe.

There are so many people who lose babies who, just like me, want to speak about them. Ask if they want to speak, ask what their baby's name is, ask if they have memories to share. They are our children too."

"The care and compassion that Jacqui, the amazing midwives, particularly Kathy Murphy, and the wonderful paediatrician Kevin Dunne showed throughout Laurence's birth was incredible, so I felt like I was in the best hands back at Werribee Mercy Hospital."

When Sofia delivered a perfect and healthy baby named Jorge-Raphael, Sofia, in "disbelief and relief" was overcome with emotion.

Although better able to understand the loss of Emiliana. the hurt was still immense. However, Sofia did not give up on her hope of having another

never forget."

About Our Voice

wsletter of Mercy Health. an Australian Catholic organisation founded by the Sisters of Mercy Each year, we provide care for approximately 100,000 people in health services, 3,000 people in our 35 aged care homes and 8,500 people in their own homes from the people we serve and the 9,000-plus people who w for Mercy Health. These storie demonstrate the Mercy Health values of Compassion Respect. Innovation. Stewardshi and Teamwork. To share your o story or provide feedback, contac



The new parents were thrilled to share stories and photographs of baby Jorge, but the loss of Laurence remained present. Their grief resurfaced when Sofia discovered she was pregnant for a third time and the baby had Trisomy 18, a chromosomal abnormality that causes stillbirth or early infant death. They were devastated.

"I didn't think my heart was big enough for what I was feeling," Sofia says. "We delivered Emiliana, our beautiful daughter, stillborn when I was 26 weeks pregnant. But we got to spend some precious time with her too, memories we'll

baby. Almost three years ago, Sofia delivered another baby boy, Gabriel.

Like all parents, Sofia and Richard love talking about their children - Gabriel and Jorge-Raphael, who are happy and healthy young boys - as well as Laurence and Emiliana, who are with them forever in their hearts.

"There are so many people who lose babies who, just like me, want to speak about them," she says. "Ask if they want to speak, ask what their baby's name is, ask if they have memories to share. They are our children too."

Opposite page: Sofia Harris alongside photographs of all four of her children. Top: Sofia Harris with the youngest of her four children, two-year-old Gabriel.

Front cover: Sofia Harris wears a necklace engraved with the names of all four of her children.







*Southern Cross Care (Vic) merged with Mercy Health in July 2017. Their inspiring stories will continue to feature in Our Voice going forward.

A harvest to nourish body and soul

Borislava (Borka) Veselski points to her cat, a stray named Mitz. "Naughty, naughty," she says. Mitz has been tucking into the lettuce and spring onions Borka has been growing in her beloved vegetable garden, which was provided by Southern Cross Care (Vic)* Home Care Services through the Australian Government's Home Care Packages Program.

orka, who emigrated from Croatia in 1964, began receiving help from Southern Cross Care (Vic) Home Care Services in 2014 after a hard season of ill health and personal misfortune. Borka suffered two strokes in 2012 and 2014 and her beloved husband passed away in 2012. In the aftermath of these sad events, everyday tasks such as cleaning became a struggle for Borka and her devoted daughter,

Donna, who was living with her at the time.

"After dad passed away, things just got hard around the house," says Donna. "At the time, we had a big double-storey house



with five bedrooms, which was difficult to manage with just the two of us. Then when I moved out, it was very hard for mum - very, very hard."

Since then, with funding for help at home provided by a Commonwealth Home Care Package, Southern Cross Care (Vic) Home Care Services has done a great deal to lift the burden, including helping Borka with house cleaning, mowing the lawn, and coordinating a podiatrist and occupational therapist to manage some of her ongoing health issues.

It was Borka's occupational therapist (OT) Parke Player, who suggested a vegetable garden could help her to get out and about in the sunshine.

"Parke asked mum what kind of activities she enjoyed and mum said she missed having a veggie garden to work in. She then organised a raised veggie patch and I went out and bought mum some different varieties of veggies. Now mum has all sorts of tomatoes growing out there.

The small harvest that it yields nourishes not only Borka's body but also gives her enormous joy."

She's also grown beetroot, spinach, lettuce, carrots, garlic," says Donna. "All beautiful!" Borka adds.

Borka has grown her own vegetables throughout her life. "Mum and dad used to have a holiday house in Rosebud, which was a quarter-acre block, and the entire backyard was a vegetable garden - every inch," says Donna. "Even the caravan in the backyard was covered in a passionfruit vine. When we lived in Kew, half of the garden there was full of vegetables."

Opposite page: Home Care Services client Borka Veselski. Left: Borka, her daughter Donna and her beloved vegetable garden. Right top: Borka's lettuce is ripe for the picking; Mitz the cat is particularly fond of Borka's lettuce and spring onions.

Borka now lives in Cranbourne East and she tends to her veggie patch every couple of days. The small harvest that it yields nourishes not only her body but gives her enormous joy. It also gives her the dignity and confidence to keep doing the things she can do — the things she loves - despite her ill health.

If you are interested in learning more about how Mercy Health Home Care Services can help you, call 1300 466 322 or visit homecare.mercyhealth.com.au



Memories roused while honouring the fallen

A collaboration between Mercy Place Mandurah and Mandurah Libraries that encourages remembrance has had far-reaching benefits for all participants.

hen Mercy Place Mandurah Service Manager Christina Venables reached out to Mandurah City Council to ask if the city was dementiafriendly, the conversation led to a partnership with Mandurah Libraries that is not only helping residents but is also honouring those who have fallen serving their country. Over the past few months, Mercy Place Mandurah residents have participated in poppy-making workshops through a library project with local archaeologist Sue Carter, whose charitable



If a picture or a photograph can spark a memory ... that's when we get to see these residents for who they really are; we see their essence, and that's very rewarding."

organisation, Loyal Poppy Crosses, endeavours to place a poppy on the war graves of every fallen soldier in France each year on November 11, Remembrance Day.

Attending the workshops not only honours fallen soldiers; it has also proven beneficial for residents on many levels, Christina says.

"Making these poppies opens up conversations about our residents' pasts and brings back memories for them," she explains. "Not only are they benefiting from reflecting on memories, they are using fine motor skills, and better yet, they feel useful being involved in this project and feel a greater sense of belonging to the wider community."

It is the second time that resident Beth Vine has been involved with the poppy-making project.

"Last time we knitted the poppies, but this time we are folding them out of tissue paper and attaching them to wire so they can be stuck in the ground," Beth describes. "I've probably made 50 or 60 of them and have been told that they will end up in France. It is wonderful knowing that. It makes you think about what happened all those years ago."

Resident Sylvia Willcock was particularly keen to be involved with the project.

"My late husband's uncle died in the war and he is buried in Bruges [in Belgium], so



although I didn't know him, I feel close to him when I'm making these poppies," she says.

"It's good to think about the old days, and it's good to get out to the library and speak to people outside of our home."

Mercy Place Mandurah residents also look

forward to regular 'Reflecting with Art' visits that are organised through the library. Paintings, ceramics, pottery and even early household items, like old irons or knife sharpeners, are brought to the home for residents to discuss and reminisce over.

"Seeing these things and talking about them brings back memories for our residents and gets them to think about and use skills they may not have used for a while. If a picture or a photograph can spark a memory — even if it's only for a really small window of time that's when we get to see these residents for who they really are; we see their essence, and that's very rewarding," Christina says.

Opposite page: Mercy Place Mandurah resident Kingsley Bremner. This page: L-R Mercy Place Mandurah residents Pam Hancock and Jeanette Harper; the long poppy-making production line at Mandurah Library; Mercy Place Mandurah resident Sylvia Willcock.

Mercy Health | 7

innovation

Farewell Mr Julien O'Connell AM

Mercy Health has been blessed with the visionary leadership of Chairman Julien O'Connell AM over the past decade. In farewelling Julien, we are also thrilled to welcome long-serving Board member Virginia Bourke to the role.



ou cannot afford to stand still," Julien says, reflecting on the growth he has overseen in his time as Chairman of Mercy Health. Growth has enabled Mercy Health to remain sustainable in the face of increasing governance and regulatory requirements, necessary capital upgrades and innovative new approaches to care.

Julien joined the Mercy Health Board in 2004 and was appointed Chairman in 2008. He supported the establishment of the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea, which laid the groundwork for Mercy Health to expand our footprint into Western Australia and Queensland. Mercy Health is now looking to further enhancing our operations in New South Wales, with an eye to creating a truly national organisation.

Since Julien became Chairman, Mercy Health has grown from 3,300 employees to more than 9,000. He is particularly proud of the advancement we have made in the gender equality space, including having 50:50 representation on the Board based on merit, not tokenism. When Julien approached Virginia to join the Board in 2008 he predicted she would one day succeed him. "She is phenomenal," Julien says.



"I have been blessed with the support of an incredibly talented Board," Julien says. "They have sustained me and lifted me. I must also thank my mentor, Barry O'Callaghan AO, for his sound advice on difficult issues, as well as (Group Chief Executive Officer Adjunct Professor) Stephen Cornelissen and the Executive."

It is, however, the compassion and dedication of the 9,000plus people who choose to work for Mercy Health that has given Julien the greatest joy as a leader. During a visit to one of Mercy Health's regional aged care homes, he met a carer whose shift finished at 4pm, Julien overheard the same woman promising to return after her shift to take a resident to get her hair set - something she did every single week. "I almost couldn't speak afterwards; I was so moved," Julien says. "The people who work at Mercy Health are truly amazing."

We extend our deepest gratitude to outgoing Chairman Julien O'Connell AM for his all-encompassing support and stewardship. Under Julien's leadership, Mercy Health has grown and solidified its position as a highly respected, national Catholic provider of health and aged care. We welcome the new Chair of the Mercy Health Board, Virginia Bourke, whose vision and expertise will help Mercy Health fulfil our mission to bring God's mercy to those in need.

- With thanks from Mercy Health Group CEO Adjunct Professor Stephen Cornelissen, the Mercy Health Executive and all Mercy Health staff. Welcome Ms Virginia Bourke

ope Francis' oft-quoted metaphor of the Church as a 'field hospital' has captured the imagination of the incoming Chair of Mercy Health.

"We are responding to people amidst the reality of their lives, acknowledging their 'griefs and anxieties', striving to deliver the services of our ministry in circumstances that may be less than perfect, with fewer resources than we might need or wish for," Virginia reflects.

The challenges we face as an organisation, and indeed as a society, call for bold stewardship. Fortunately, there is inspiration to be found in Mercy Health's own founding story.

"Mercy Health was founded by a group of dynamic, faith-filled, pragmatic women who, like Catherine McAuley, saw a need within their community and showed courage and vision in establishing an organisation to fulfil those needs," Virginia says. "As stewards of Mercy Health, our Board needs to be just as courageous and visionary today."

A Melbourne-based lawyer and consultant, Virginia served on the Mercy Health Board from 2008-14 and was reappointed in 2016. Faced with changing landscapes in both health and aged care, Virginia seizes on two of Mercy Health's key strengths: the breadth and synergy of our services and our partnerships with other likeminded organisations.

"We have a unique capacity and responsibility to respond



creatively to the needs of the communities we serve by developing new approaches to the delivery of care," Virginia says. "A hallmark of our approach will be our continued support and collaboration with other Mercy and Catholic organisations that share our mission to bring God's mercy to those in need."



Mercy Place Rosebud resident Mike has always loved cycling. He grew up darting around York in England on his bicycle and his last job was as a postie. "He used to ride his bike to go to the shops, run errands and travel to and from work," Mike's wife Sue says.

Recently diagnosed with dementia, Mike moved into Mercy Place Rosebud in February 2018. Mike and his family thought his cycling days were over until the aged care home received an electric tandem wheelchair bicycle.

"Mike is really enjoying the wheelchair bike rides," Sue says. "It is important for him to still be doing things outside the home and he appreciates the company."

The bike works by carrying a detachable wheelchair at the front that acts as a wheel. The wheelchair has padding and adjustable foot and headrests. It can be tilted backwards when attached to the bike to provide stability and enable conversation with the person riding the bike.

Mercy Place Rosebud Service Manager Julie Milne says the home purchased the wheelchair bicycle with the support of Mercy Health Foundation.

"We wanted to be able to give our residents an opportunity to regularly interact with the local community and experience a true 'lifestyle' activity regardless of their physical or cognitive abilities," Julie says.

A \$12,054 grant from The Honda Foundation allowed the home to purchase the modified bicycle from a United States manufacturer. Mercy Place Rosebud covered the freight costs.

"The bike has been a big hit with residents, their families and staff since it arrived in late September," Julie says.

66

The wheelchair bike is proving a fun and safe way for our residents to enjoy the outdoors and meet people."

"Many of our residents rode bikes in their youth and they love that they can once again experience the fresh air and freedom that comes with riding a bike.

"The wheelchair bike is proving a fun and safe way for our residents to enjoy the outdoors and meet people."

Mercy Place Rosebud Lifestyle Coordinator Aeron Melbourne has been cycling residents around the beachside town



on the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria every Thursday since the wheelchair bike arrived.

Residents enjoy taking a spin along the esplanade, the pier and around the bike trails near the camping grounds.

Family members say the wheelchair bike is a great asset for the home.

"Mike has photos of one of his rides posted up on a wall in his room and a magpie was even intrigued by the bike on his last ride," Sue says.

"The bike is a great thing for the home — especially in the warmer weather and with the beach being so close to the home."

Clockwise from left: Mercy Place Rosebud Lifestyle Coordinator Aeron Melbourne and Mike enjoying a bike ride near the beach; Mercy Place Rosebud residents and staff enjoying some fresh air at the Rosebud pier; Mercy Place Rosebud Lifestyle Coordinator Aeron Melbourne and Mike cycling in the park.

teamwork



hen Mercy Health Chief Operating Officer Adjunct Professor Linda Mellors visited the CCU in 2017, a tour of the grounds revealed an old greenhouse and overgrown vegetable patch — the perfect spot for a chicken run. The concept of having chickens was considered a great tool to support CCU residents who are recovering from a mental illness and significant psychosocial disability. They would take responsibility for the daily

Healing with the help of feathered friends

Six chickens recently moved into our Community Care Unit (CCU) in Werribee, in a brand new, specially designed coop. They have become part of the daily routine for CCU residents, like Melissa Bowler, helping, in their gentle way, to support recovery and engagement.

> care of the chickens and fresl eggs could be used in weekly cooking classes, all of which support the development of activities of daily living and promotion of health and wellbeing.

Recognising the value of the project, CCU staff and residents funded the project through regular community fundraising barbecues. The funds were also used to re-establish a working greenhouse. A new wooden foundation and industrial-grade plastic covering were purchased to further rejuvenate the area. In February 2018, a chook run was built and six lucky chickens moved into their new home.

The residents at the CCU named the chickens Skittles,



Ms Cluckins, Steggles, Reboka Peggy and Brooke. The new, feathered CCU residents have settled in and are often given free rein around the gardens.

CCU resident Melissa Bowler, who has lived at the unit for 13 months, loves to help in the chicken coop every day, cleaning it out, laying down fresh straw and making sure the chickens have food and lots of fresh water. "I like giving them love," says Melissa. Of all the six chickens, Reboka is her favourite. "She's calm, gentle and respectful," she says.

The daily routine of cleaning out the coop, looking after the chickens and collecting their eggs has, no doubt, had a positive impact on the health at the CCU. The chickens have brought the residents together they feel much more connected and less withdrawn. "It's good for the residents to have responsibility for another living thing," says Mercy Mental Health Community Care Unit Associate Nurse Unit Manager

"It's also very therapeutic for them to be out in the garden and just spending time with the chickens. Watching them is a form of mindfulness, really," she says.

Helen Hill.



"It has been wonderful see this initiative come to fruition and make such a difference to the people who live at the CCU," says Mercy Health Chief Operating Officer Adjunct Professor Linda Mellors.

Clockwise from opposite left: CCU resident Melissa and Reboka the chicken are the best of friends; the chickens are part of the CCU family and roam freely in the garden; the chicken coop was installed at the CCU in February 2018 to help residents through recovery.



Keeping the ageing population Young

In 1968, a Sister of Mercy from Mercy Place Mount St Joseph's tapped Cliff Sheridan on the shoulder and asked him to join the home's board because she felt he might "be a bit useful". Push ahead more than half a century, and it seems the nun was right: Cliff has been more than a bit useful during his 50-plus years volunteering with Mercy Health's aged care, health and community services in Young, NSW.

'd been volunteering at the home for about 12 months when the nun approached me," Cliff recalls. "She probably thought I could be helpful because of my background."

Cliff is a public accountant, however, it may not have been



only his skills with numbers that prompted the nun's approach. Now 78 years old, Cliff has volunteered in his community in many capacities over the years. He is a recognised and approachable figure in the Young community and a valued voice on the Mercy Care Centre Young Community Advisory Group (CAG). The CAG provides Mercy Health with local advice from a consumer, carer and community perspective, to help our health services better understand and respond to the needs of the Young community.

"The CAG advises Mercy Health across all of the services at Young," he says. "But I'm also still asked by people in the community to do things like fill out forms for aged care services because I suppose I'm still recognised as being someone who understands the system."

But Cliff is far more than that. He was a strong leader on the Mercy Place Mount St Joseph's Board during redevelopments, mergers and rebuilds, and in recent years, he has been successfully involved with accreditations, fundraising events and community forums as a valued member of the CAG. Cliff has many achievements to reflect upon. His skills, knowledge and commitment have helped to shape the delivery of Mercy Health — Health Services in Young, however, it will be the obvious benefits to the ageing Young community that Cliff will consider his greatest achievement.

"To walk around Mercy Place Mount St Joseph's now, 50 years after I started volunteering, and see people far better off living there than where they were living before, that's very rewarding. To see them improve both health-wise and socially after moving into our home makes everything worthwhile."

"On behalf of the Mercy Health Executive I would like to thank Mr Sheridan for his commitment to Mercy Health and the Young community for the past 50 years," says Mercy Health Group CEO Stephen Cornelissen. "His example of service is exceptional."

Cliff Sheridan has served Mercy Health's aged care, health and community services for more than 50 years.

Gold standard care for our First Nation women

Mercy Hospital for Women's Nangnak Baban Murrup Clinic is participating in an important project started by La Trobe University 18 months ago, which seeks to enhance the process of identifying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander maternity patients and their babies, and offer them the Maternity Group Practice (MGP) model of care.

After extensive planning, Mercy Hospital for Women joined the project by setting up the Nangnak Baban Murrup Maternity Group Practice Clinic. Maternity Group Practice provides a patient with the same midwife throughout the duration of her pregnancy from her first appointment through to two weeks after the birth of her baby.

La Trobe University received funding from the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) to run the program. As well as the Mercy Hospital for Women, The Royal Women's Hospital and Sunshine Hospital are also taking part, and Goulburn Valley Health is expected to come on board in the future.

Mercy Hospital for Women Clinical Midwife Specialist Zoe Lock and La Trobe University Research Midwife Ingrid Holmes have been leading the project's implementation at Mercy Hospital for Women. Specifically, they have been recruiting patients for research and educating Maternity Group Practice, Antenatal Clinic and Birth Suite midwives about the project and how to identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients.



"In order to provide care for these Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women selecting Maternity Group Practice, we are creating an environment in which patients feel comfortable to identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women," says Zoe. "Ingrid and I are supporting staff to ask the questions which all patients should be asked on admission to our services."

The project is reaping excellent results. "A high number of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander maternity patients have been selecting the Maternity Group Practice model of



care," says Mercy Hospital for Women Senior Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer Jo Pappas.

"It's really important that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and their families have a choice about what type of maternity care they receive. The fact that so many of these patients have accepted the Maternity Group Practice model since this program was introduced is really wonderful," says Zoe.

Mercy Hospital for Women Clinical Midwife Specialist Zoe Lock and Mercy Hospital for Women Senior Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer Jo Pappas.

Christmas message from the Group CEO

Christmas is one of the most important dates on the Christian calendar, uniting communities around the world in celebration of the birth of Christ. It is a time of hope, peace and joy, and for spending time — where possible — with loved ones. It is also an opportune time for us to reflect on all that we have achieved at Mercy Health as we advance our mission to bring God's mercy to those in need.

It has been an extraordinarily busy and exciting year for everyone in the Mercy Health community. Over the past 12 months, we officially opened the Werribee Mercy Hospital expansion, including the region's first Intensive Care Unit; we opened Mercy Place Ballarat, our first



aged care home purpose-built around our communitycentred approach to care; and we officially merged with Southern Cross Care (Vic), welcoming their clients and staff into our community. These are just a few of the big changes that will enable us to continue caring for the people and communities who need us most.

Of course, there have also been many precious and heartwarming human interactions over the course of the year. Care is essentially a human act, whether it is in a hospital, health service, aged care home or in a person's own home. While the nuts and bolts of a service are essential, nothing can replace the genuine laughter of a client whose Community Care worker has cracked a joke, or the compassionate touch of a nurse's hand when there is bad news to deliver. The value we place on these relationships at Mercy Health is what enables us to care for the whole person, at every stage of life.

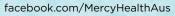
On behalf of the Mercy Health Executive, I wish you all a safe and holy Christmas and New Year.

Stephen Cornelissen Group Chief Executive Officer

Mercy Health acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the first Australians. We acknowledge the diversity of Indigenous Australia. We respectfully recognise Elders past, present and emerging. This publication was produced on Wurundjeri Country.



Our Voice will be back in March with our autumn edition. In the meantime, you can keep up-to-date with current Mercy Health news at mercyhealth.com.au/news



@MercyHealthAus

Follow us on...

in

@Mercy Health Australia

