

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

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Sensory wellness room makes perfect sense for residents

Rustling leaves, a trickling stream or stroking the soft petals of flowers are all soothing sensations that many of us experience in nature every day. At Mercy Place Fernhill, the creation of a sensory wellness room has given residents an opportunity to safely explore and stimulate all their senses.

Sensory rooms can be used to stimulate the senses and to calm you down,” Mercy Place Fernhill’s Service Manager Josh Wonder says. “It’s such a relaxing environment. The walls are covered with tree wallpaper so it looks like you are in the middle of a forest; there’s flooring made to look like grass; a wall of foliage that residents can touch; and boxes of natural materials, including pine cones and feathers, for our residents to handle.”

The most interactive aspect of the room, however, is the big television screen with The Virtual Forest™ software, which was recommended by Dementia Australia.

“There’s a beautiful moving image of a forest and river on the screen that residents control with hand movements to introduce birds, sounds into the scene and they can even change the season,” Josh explains. “It’s a wonderfully peaceful, interactive experience.”

The sensory wellness room not only has a calming effect, it also positively impacts cognition.

“Cognitive stimulation is really important for all of our residents, so everyone here will benefit from this pretty amazing room,” Josh says. “But for people living with dementia, many of whom can have difficulty controlling their behaviours, these sensory wellness rooms also provide a peaceful environment that helps to calm their often overactive and distressed minds.”

Mercy Place Fernhill resident Sr Rosaleen McCaffrey is an avid fan of the sensory wellness room. “It’s just so peaceful in here and I imagine it would be especially comforting and reassuring for people with dementia,” she says. “It’s lovely to come down and hear the birds singing and the sound of a stream. And it didn’t take long for me to get the hang of using my hands to control the virtual scene on screen either.

“I also enjoy playing videos of birdlife and flowers, and I’ve even tried Google Earth on the big screen, visiting countries far away while sitting here in the sensory wellness room.”

Research indicates that for people with dementia, sensory activities can calm them and help them see things more clearly. Although targeted towards those residents, the room is available to everyone living at the Sandringham residential aged care home.

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