

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

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**Seventy-eight graduates start their nursing and midwifery journey**

They are an eclectic group of people – everything from a former flight attendant and a hospital personal service assistant, to a palliative care nurse and even a stay-at-home mother of five – but they all have one thing in common. They are members of the 78-strong 2020 Mercy Health Graduate Program.

Last week, the graduates began their year-long journey to become a registered nurse, midwife or mental health nurse, Mercy Health Graduate Program Lead Janine Kinston said.

“Thirty-eight of the graduates will be based at Werribee Mercy Hospital, where they will learn from a team of educators and put into practice their skills alongside senior clinicians across a number of nursing and midwifery specialties, including emergency, perioperative, medical, surgical, palliative care, rehabilitation, Special Care Nursery, maternity services and mental health,” she said.

This year is the first year that a specialised palliative care nursing graduate program has been offered. Enrolled nurse of more than 20 years, Melissa Channer from Hoppers Crossing, is one of the eager palliative care program graduates.

“I’ve worked in aged care nursing for a long time but this graduate program gives me the opportunity to fully commit to this area of work,” Melissa said. “People at all stages of life need to be given the utmost care. There is so much emphasis on sustaining life, but I want to give the very best of care, and of myself, to those at the end of their lives.”

Melissa will work at Werribee Mercy Hospital’s dedicated palliative care unit, the Gabrielle Jennings Centre, for six months of the program, while the other six months will be community-based. She will also have a very supportive buddy helping her to study during the next 12 months – her 18-year-old son who is doing VCE this year.

Fellow graduate program student Kristy Short has also been supported by her children while she studied her three-year nursing degree ahead of starting the Mercy Health graduate program. The mother of five started university at the same time as her 21-year-old daughter.

Kristy, who drives the 25-minute trip from Geelong to Werribee Mercy Hospital, decided to commit to a career in nursing after raising her children, fulfilling a life aspiration in the process.

“I’ve had this lifelong desire to become a nurse, and now is the right time,” Kristy said. “I think that my life experience helped me to get into this program, and as a mother of five I have a natural instinct to care, so I’m really looking forward to putting everything I’ve learned from life and from my degree into practice. A nursing degree is like a pre-apprenticeship and a graduate program is like an apprenticeship, so it will be an exciting year of learning on the job from some very experienced clinicians and educators.”

This year, Mercy Health celebrates its 100th year in healthcare and nursing education.

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