

Media Statement

For immediate release

From: Bill Lane, Media Manager, Mercy Health

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Mercy Health frontline nurse the first to be vaccinated at Werribee Mercy Hospital

A frontline nurse was the first person to receive the coronavirus vaccination at Werribee Mercy Hospital at 10am today, with Mercy Health staff among the first to receive the vaccine so they can continue caring for communities in Melbourne's greater western suburbs.

Residential In-Reach nurse John Stafford, who was the first Werribee Mercy Hospital staff member to receive the vaccination, said the vaccination program would provide additional confidence and protection for hospital staff while also helping to protect communities in Melbourne's western suburbs.

Mercy Health Group Chief Executive Officer Adjunct Professor Stephen Cornelissen said the experience of the past 12 months demonstrated the urgent need to invest in Werribee Mercy Hospital's capacity to continue providing the best and latest in areas such as emergency, maternity and general medical care.

"As Wyndham was at times the epicentre of the virus in Victoria, the role Werribee Mercy Hospital played in shielding the community highlights the continuing need for expanded infrastructure and resources.

"John and the staff at Werribee Mercy Hospital have been on the frontline fighting coronavirus for 12 months — they know as well as anyone the critical role the hospital and our staff played in protecting the community from an even greater spread of infection.

"This has been an unprecedented time and it is a responsible approach to offer the first protection to our frontline staff," Adj Prof Cornelissen said.

"As well, our surrounding communities should feel comforted that the hospital and staff are doing everything we can to safeguard their health.

"In November's Victorian State Budget, WMH received \$4.8 million funding to finalise planning for the third stage of expansion, which we believe was a clear sign the

voices of the people of the West of Melbourne are being heard and Government is committed to meeting a major upgrade.” Adj Prof Cornelissen said.

“The pandemic has shown how effectively our staff can respond but it is vital that we keep pace and fully respond with the scope of services required and deserved by our communities,” Adj Prof Stephen Cornelissen said.

Nurse Unit Manager Angela Cook, who is overseeing the Werribee Mercy Hospital vaccination rollout as part of the Western Health COVID-19 vaccination hub, says her role is an honour but also comes with major responsibilities.

“This program could run for several months and after hospital staff, the program will be extended to our patients and community members,” she said.

“We are mindful of our responsibilities and that important protocols and processes will, at all times, need to be met.”

John Stafford, a conduit to all of the western suburbs’ 12 aged care homes, general practitioners in the region with Werribee Mercy Hospital, saw the impacts of coronavirus firsthand.

John said it is important that people get vaccinated as soon as they can.

“The pandemic has been a distressing time for everyone in our community. My greatest fear was that I would take the virus home to my two young children and my wife. Probably because of Werribee Mercy Hospital’s hygiene protocols and all our donning and doffing of PPE (personal protection equipment), we stayed safe,” John said.

During today’s first stage of the rollout, approximately 500 frontline workers will be vaccinated.

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