



Media Release

From: Bill Lane, Media Manager, Mercy Health

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World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly and it's a perfect 10!

Semi-retired lawyer Bernie Shinnars worked for one of Melbourne's best known law firms, he has served on boards and he has even provided counsel for the AFL Life Members' Association.

While busy with a professional career, he and his wife Anne raised a family one shy of a cricket team – although if you include mum and dad, the total of 12 provides the full complement.

Bernie and Anne always intended having a large family but probably would have initially nominated a mere five or six children.

Proudly, Bernie says his children were brought up in a close and loving family.

"They shared most things, which helped them appreciate what they were given."

The first of their children is James, who was born on 13 March 1975, while Elizabeth is the baby of the clan, coming along 18 years later on 2 January 1993. In between are Matthew, Louise, Paul, Angela, Patrick, David, Andrew and Clare.

Altogether there are now eleven grandchildren, with three arriving in just the past 12 weeks!

Mercy Health's focus on the Shinnars' family coincides with an announcement earlier this year from Pope Francis that World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly will now be celebrated every year on the fourth Sunday in July.

Pope Francis has written that younger people will take the dreams of older people and make them come true.

"Our vision of justice, of peace, of solidarity can make it possible for our young people to have new visions; in this way, together," Pope Francis said.

Bernie suggests that role modelling was an on-going and important facet of the rearing of his children.

"Anne and I were blessed to receive loving support from our parents, who were involved particularly with our older children," he said.

Bernie says each of his children had their own personalities, so sibling rivalry was always a part of growing up but aside from the occasional upset, they have always been close and connected.

“When I meet someone for the first time, they ask whether we have a “blended family” and when I say no, they are taken aback but then usually ask, more often of Anne, how we managed to cope.

“Life was busy with many things going on every week but we always had time to enjoy precious moments and ultimately they have grown into adults we are very proud of,” he said.

During COVID lockdowns, Bernie says the family has stayed in touch via social media “but we do notice the times when we are unable to give our children, or grandchildren a special hug”.

Anne Shinnars says for her, Mercy Hospital for Women was a fabulous hospital which “changed over the years”.

“The care was always very good. The nursing care was excellent and pastoral care was available even if it was just for a quick visit and general chat.

“I began to look forward to a few days in hospital – it was a mini holiday,” she says.

Mercy Health Chief Executive of Residential Aged Care, Home Care and Seniors Living, Adjunct Professor Felix Pintado has also extended a special acknowledgement to all aged care elders.

“At Mercy Health we want to protect the rights of all older people in our care and beyond. We want to give them the same opportunity to share their dreams, stories and memories, and to keep making more, like every other citizen in our society,” he said.

(ENDS)