

Our Voice



Mercy Health

Care first

THE GROUPWIDE NEWSLETTER OF MERCY HEALTH

SPRING 2017 EDITION – Recognising the coming together of two highly regarded Catholic organisations: Mercy Health and Southern Cross Care (Vic)

The young and young at heart

Smiles all around at a Southern Cross Care (Vic) playgroup

One man's great gift

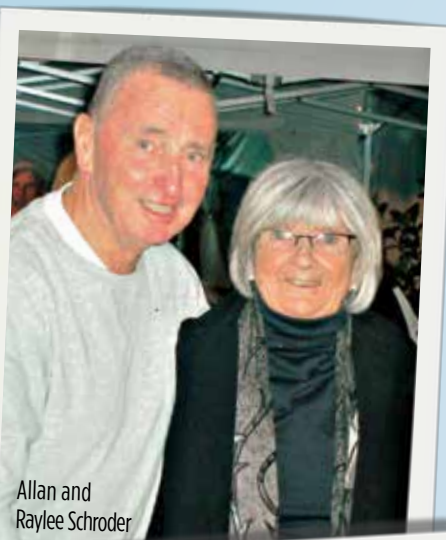
Why a Werribee Mercy Hospital volunteer donated his kidney to a stranger

Our new partners in care

The history of Southern Cross Care (Vic)



Giving the gift of freedom



Allan and Raylee Schroder

After his wife Raylee lost her battle with kidney disease, Allan Schroder vowed to continue her legacy of compassion. Inspired by her courage, he became a kidney donor, giving the gift of freedom to a transplant patient. He now works as a volunteer at Werribee Mercy Hospital.

Allan Schroder (right) with Associate Nurse Unit Manager Ewan Reid outside the Werribee Mercy Hospital Renal Dialysis Unit



Allan Schroder is mad about footy and his beloved team the Western Bulldogs. But there is one thing he is even more passionate about: helping people with kidney disease. When his brave wife Raylee lost her fight with end-stage renal failure in 2014 — after more than 30 years trying to overcome the disease — a light went out in Allan's life.

"We were married for 49 years before she passed away," Allan recalls fondly. A former mechanic and keen golfer, Allan regularly accompanied his wife to Werribee Mercy Hospital's (WMH) Renal Dialysis Unit three times a week. The four-to-five-hour dialysis procedure replicates the filtering job kidneys usually do, by removing fluid and toxins from the blood and returning the 'clean' product to the body via a machine.

"Raylee was like all these people on dialysis — very courageous,"



Allan Schroder in the Werribee Mercy Hospital Renal Dialysis Unit, where his wife Raylee received treatment

“When she was in her 30s, she was offered a kidney transplant which gave her 20 years of ‘normal’ life without having to visit the hospital for weekly treatment”

Allan continues. “She absolutely hated it but she knew that it had to be done.” Like most people, Raylee and Allan found the dialysis journey exhausting and lonely. “Just when people are feeling better, it’s time to go back for dialysis again. It’s a real rollercoaster,” he explains.

Raylee began by taking daily medication before doing dialysis at home and, later, in hospital. When she was in her 30s, she was offered a kidney transplant which gave her 20 years of ‘normal’ life without having to visit the hospital for weekly treatment.

It was a wonderful reprieve for the pair, who lived in west Melbourne. They made the most of their free time socialising at their local footy club, dancing, going to movies and travelling to the Victorian/New South Wales border for holidays. But a tragic turn of events transformed their lives into an extraordinary story of loss, courage and generosity. When Raylee was in her 60s, she got an infection in her leg and X-rays revealed a cancerous lump on her transplanted kidney which had to be removed. This meant returning to hospital for dialysis three times a week.

Soon after, weakened by her experience, Raylee collapsed in the kitchen and shattered her pelvis, rendering her wheelchair-bound. “I saw a 3D X-ray — it was horrendous — almost like she had been hit by a truck,” Allan recalls.

Hoping to save her from further dialysis, Allan offered to donate a kidney to his wife — but the organ was not compatible. Unwilling to give up, the couple applied to the Royal Melbourne Hospital's Australian Paired Kidney Exchange Programme where Allan offered to donate his kidney to another transplant patient in return for a healthy organ for Raylee. Sadly Raylee died, aged 67, before a transplant was possible.

Her death made her grief-stricken spouse even more determined to donate his kidney to someone in need, which he successfully did despite the fact he was 70 years old — the cut-off age for donors.

“The way I look at it, someone was prepared to donate their kidney to Raylee and we got 20 years of this change of lifestyle where we had the freedom to do things and weren’t confined to dialysis three times a week,” Allan explains.

Raylee’s giving nature became a guiding light for her husband who now volunteers once a week at the WMH Renal Dialysis Unit where doctors, patients and nurses are like family. “It can be difficult at times when one of the original group passes away,” says Allan. But the positives of being there outweigh any negatives.

When he visits his renal specialist for check-ups once a year, he knows that Raylee’s legacy of compassion lives on. “The donor process has always remained anonymous. But I always ask my doctor, ‘How is that kidney going?’ and she will just go, ‘All right,’” smiles Allan.



Play date brings generations together

There were smiles all around at Ave Maria Village when more than 30 youngsters — some as young as three years old — dropped in for a visit at the Southern Cross Care (Vic) Shepparton aged care home on 17 July.

Eager for a play and a chat, the children from Knight Street Multi-Age Learning childcare centre were delighted with the array of books and toys at the home.

“Since last July, we have been hosting a weekly playgroup at our home, so we have accumulated a variety of toys and children’s books over time. I’m glad they have come in handy when we have other young visitors over!” says Lifestyle Coordinator Jan Christenson.

From blowing bubbles to playing with blocks, the children had a great time making friends with the residents. Bernie Cummins, 98, was only too keen to share his keepsake talking bear with three-year-old Oliver Daniel. The 95-year age gap

didn’t deter the pair, who spent half an hour playing with the bear and other toys.

“Seeing the joy and smiles on the residents’ faces is priceless, especially those who don’t see much of their family due to distance. Many residents don’t have any contact with children anymore, so having children at the home is a big thing for them,” reflects Jan.

“The effect children have on older people is simply amazing. We have a resident who is very reserved and keeps mostly to herself in her room. One thing that never fails to make her venture out of her room is children. Her face just lights up whenever she’s around them.”

This was the third time children from the childcare centre had

visited the home. Jan says there are plans to continue this on a weekly basis so residents and children can form stronger relationships. “Our residents love it, and it’s also a great way for children to connect with the older generation. Hosting this on a regular basis seems like the next logical thing to do.”

Knight Street Educational Leader Alicia McLean can’t agree more. “The aim of our visits is for children to form relationships with older people,” she says.

“It’s good for children to have the opportunity to see the different stages of life and gain some knowledge from them. It helps with their development too. We’re hoping that Ave Maria Village can visit us on a regular basis.”



This image: Resident Margaret Matthew with Edward Freeman, 5. Right: Resident Joyce Clarke with Harrison Baxter, 5. Images supplied by Shepparton News.



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Resident Bernie Cummins, 98, with Oliver Daniel, 3. Image supplied by Shepparton News.



Keeping independence in sight

Since he was a young boy, Kevin Wood was full of dreams for the future. Sprightly and confident, nothing could dampen his spirit and zest for life — least of all his impaired vision.

Born with a severe congenital visual defect, Kevin grew up with limited vision. However, he never let his disability hold him back in life. Acute glaucoma eventually caused his eyesight to deteriorate and he became legally blind nine years ago.

Not one to wallow in self-pity, Kevin preferred to look on the brighter side of life and continued to enjoy an active and independent schedule with his wife, Ann, in their own home in Bentleigh.

“I’ve spent a lifetime overcoming discrimination and setbacks, but that only made me stronger, better and wiser,” said Kevin. “I don’t believe in feeling sorry for myself. I’d rather use my experience to help others.”

And that’s exactly what Kevin did during his decades-long career in the agricultural sector. He held key roles in Victorian agricultural peak bodies and was instrumental in uniting the state’s dairy groups and campaigning for reforms. He later went into

public service and held various senior management roles before retiring in 2005.

Kevin was also heavily involved in community work, with his proudest achievement being a milk project he spearheaded in Timor-Leste for underprivileged children.

“I was honoured to lead Brighton Kiwanis’ million-dollar project in 2000 to provide fresh milk for children who were badly malnourished. It was an experience I’ll never forget,” recalled Kevin.

“Even though I’m retired and no longer involved in community work, I’m not one who can sit still for long. I like to get up and about, and keep busy all the time. I can manage some activities on my own, but sometimes, I have to rely on Ann or my support workers who come in three times a week,” he said.

Through his Home Care Package with Southern Cross Care (Vic), Kevin received support with daily activities,

showering and transport to doctor’s appointments. Once a week one of Kevin’s support workers, John Strafford, took him out for a cuppa or lunch or accompanied him on social outings with friends.

“John is fantastic. He really takes an interest in what I like, and what’s important to me. It’s good to be supported by someone who understands me and helps me to maintain my independence. I can’t ask for more from a support worker,” said Kevin.

Southern Cross Care (Vic) also supported Ann, who was Kevin’s full-time carer, by helping her with house cleaning and gardening, and occasional respite.

This article is a tribute to Kevin Wood, who passed away shortly after the story was written.

“

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Kevin Wood (in grey) shared a great rapport with his community support worker, John Strafford



It's a balancing act

Anyone can suffer a fall, but the risks are higher for people aged over 65 due to various health-related factors such as muscle weakness or problems with balance and mobility. The Southern Cross Care (Vic) Wellness Centre in Melbourne's north strives to help those at risk by providing fresh, engaging health and fitness programs tailored for older people. Rozanne McDonough, 86, approached the centre after a series of falls that left her feeling vulnerable.

"It can do a lot of damage to your self-confidence when you have multiple falls all within a short period of time," says Rozanne, who lives alone. "For over two years I've had a number of falls on the street and also in my own home. I started to worry about my condition and was even thinking of getting a mobility walker when I fell in my backyard and broke my wrist while gardening."

"That was the worst injury from my falls. I don't know how I fell. The garden bed was soft, I guess. I remember having to roll myself over to the side to get up. I rang my daughter who lives nearby to take me to hospital," she recalls.

Shaken from the experience, Rozanne's self-confidence took a dip. On the advice of her doctor at Austin Hospital, Rozanne

decided to take up strength and balance training after her wrist healed. She began attending weekly Tai Chi and exercise sessions at the centre and has never looked back.

"At the centre I learned how to walk properly and how to turn around and not fall over. Now, I no longer have that constant fear of falling when I'm out on my own. That's a great confidence booster. I'm also very conscious of how I walk these days. For every step I take, I remind myself: heel down, heel down," says Rozanne.

An avid gardener, Rozanne is pleased that her improved physical condition has enabled her to continue doing what she loves at home and in the community. When she is not tending to her veggie patch and

chooks, Rozanne volunteers twice a week at local charities. On Fridays, she visits the centre for her weekly workout.

"I really enjoy my training program at the centre. We do all kinds of exercises to help us build our muscles and keep our balance. We only do what we are able to. We always start on the bike or treadmill, before moving on to other exercises such as standing on one foot or doing leg lifts. We do weights as well."

Rozanne's perseverance has certainly paid off. Since attending the centre in February 2016, Rozanne has not had a single fall — a record she hopes to maintain for as long as possible.

"I feel so different now. I'm more confident and fitter overall, and I intend to stay on my feet!"

“

I feel so different now. I'm more confident and fitter overall, and I intend to stay on my feet”



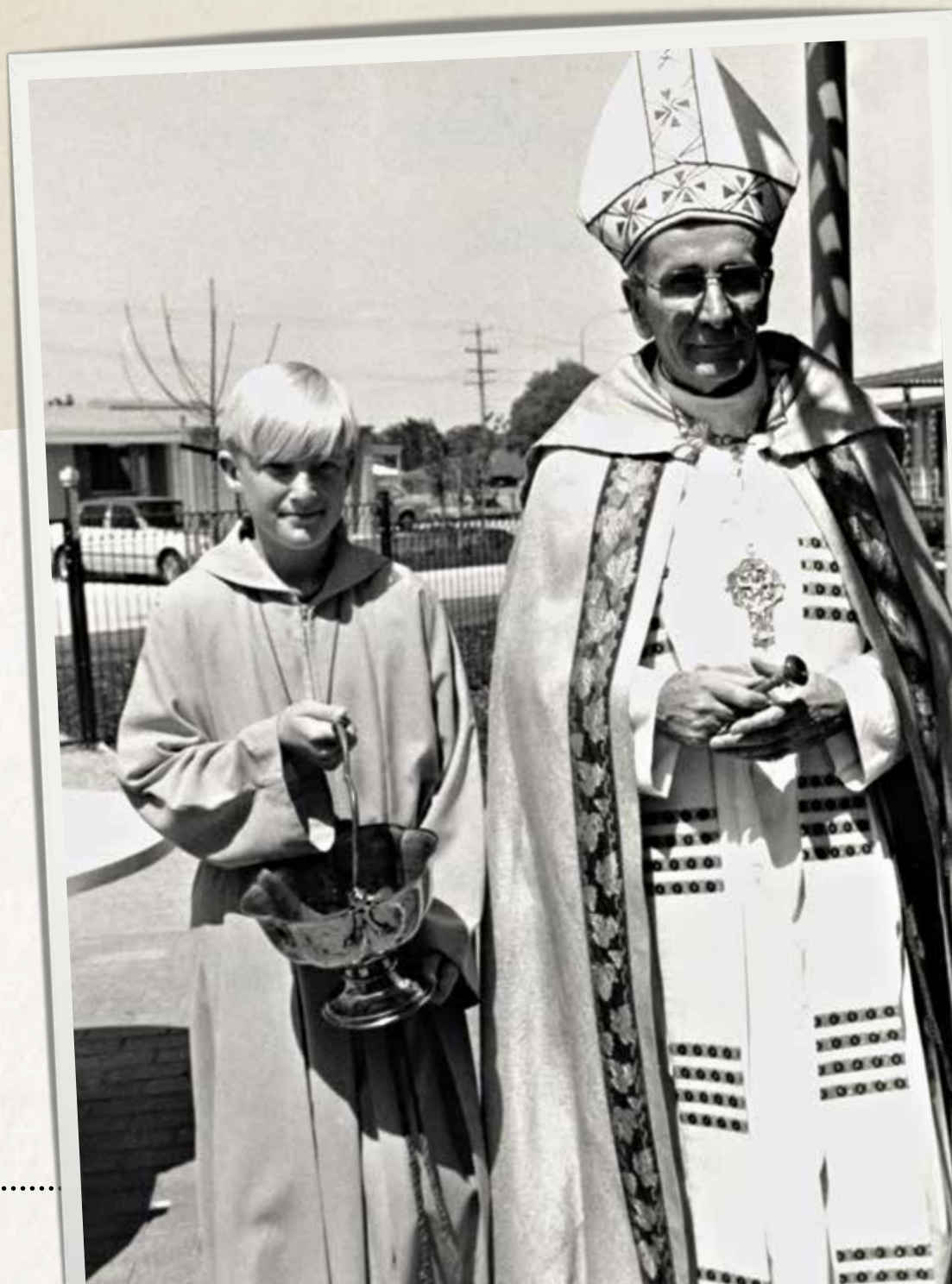
Balance and strength training has helped Rozanne McDonough stay on her feet



The history of Southern Cross Care (Vic)

The merger of Southern Cross Care (Vic) with Mercy Health in 2017 is an exciting new chapter in the history of an Australian organisation that spans almost a century.

The early 20th century was a difficult time for Catholics in Australia, marred by discrimination, prejudice and sectarianism. It was almost impossible for young Catholic men and women to find work. Two visionary men — Patrick Minahan and Joseph Lynch — united to improve the economic wellbeing and standing of Catholics in the community. In March 1919, they formed a Catholic organisation called the Commercial and Professional Men's Association. In July 1919, the organisation was renamed the Order of the Knights of the Southern Cross. A national organisation of Catholic laymen, the Knights operate with the support of the Catholic Bishops of Australia.



“Together, we will continue to provide exceptional care and support people to age healthily, stay connected and fulfil their hopes and dreams.”



By 1923, Knights of the Southern Cross branches had opened in all Australian states. During the early 1960s, the branches began to review their function and how they could play a bigger part in matters contributing to the welfare of the community at large. The lack of aged care accommodation was identified as a key concern, which gave rise to the establishment of Southern Cross Homes in 1968. The following year, the Victorian branch of Southern Cross Homes was incorporated and assumed its present name — Southern Cross Care (Vic) — in 2001. Today, there is a Southern Cross Care organisation in every Australian state and the Australian Capital Territory, which operate independently under the federated banner of Southern Cross Care (Australia).

Southern Cross Care (Vic) has grown in leaps and bounds since purchasing its first block of land in Mordialloc in 1972 to develop aged care hostels for the elderly. The organisation has since opened 12 aged care homes across Melbourne and regional Victoria and developed and grown their community services business to be the largest Commonwealth home care package provider in Victoria. Southern Cross Care (Vic) has received numerous accolades over the years, including being named the most outstanding organisation (HESTA Aged Care Awards 2015) to being recognised as a leader in positive ageing (Catholic Health Australia Awards 2015).

In July 2017, Southern Cross Care (Vic) merged with Mercy Health, forming the largest not-

for-profit aged care services organisation in Victoria and one of the 10 largest not-for-profit aged care providers nationally. Together, we will continue to provide exceptional care and support people to age healthily, stay connected and fulfil their hopes and dreams. Mercy Health will continue the organisations' shared Catholic heritage, building on the founding visions of the Sisters of Mercy and the Knights of the Southern Cross.

Main image: Archbishop of Melbourne Sir Frank Little blessing Cardinal Knox Village (now Southern Cross Care Templestowe) in 1991. Top image: Committee of Management members JT Cleary (left) and J Kerr (right) are discussing the Hastings Hostel plan with PE Shelly. Hastings Hostel was Southern Cross Homes Victorian division's first aged care hostel, opened in 1978. Southern Cross Care (Vic) no longer owns this home. Inset image: Southern Cross Homes Chairman Mr Peter Berwick with Mrs Jessie Busch, the organisation's first aged care home resident.



Getting the right support

It was 4am and Priscilla* could hear her daughter, Vivienne, crying. For the fifth time that night, Priscilla got up to settle her 14-month-old daughter. It was the same story every night. Priscilla was exhausted and wondered how long she could endure.



Vivienne as a baby

“Vivi would wake up five times a night... I would feed her and put her back to sleep, otherwise she'd be screaming for another hour. This would take about an hour, from getting up, to feeding, to getting her asleep,” Priscilla explains.

Priscilla's husband, Steven, tried settling their daughter but had no luck. Soon, the overnight effort took such a toll on the couple that they were going to bed after dinner and Priscilla was forgoing time out with Steven or her friends. “That was my reality,” Priscilla says.

Desperate, Priscilla tried all the advice she could find online. But none of it worked, and it left Priscilla feeling even more lost.

Thankfully, a friend told Priscilla about Mercy Health O'Connell Family Centre. Services at the centre are directed towards families who are experiencing complex parenting issues with young children. Priscilla, Steven



Vivienne all grown up

and Vivienne were advised to complete a three-night stay at the centre to receive staff support and advice.

“I was scared to go into the centre... but I thought, I can do anything if it is just three nights,” says Priscilla.

The three-night stay at the centre transformed Priscilla's life. Experienced Mercy Health staff were on-hand overnight to help with any issues. They taught Priscilla and Steven techniques for settling Vivienne, and how to differentiate between her different cries.

“It was amazing to have those women and men at the centre who were there in the corridors to talk you through the process. They are so experienced. You didn't have to do anything you weren't comfortable with. The staff treat you like an individual,” says Priscilla.

Mercy Health O'Connell Family Centre Nurse Unit Manager

Anna Seaborn says that this short-term intervention service is effective because it supports families every step of the way.

“We work with families; we don't impose on them. We work with the pace of the family, focusing on the positives and building on strengths,” Anna says.

“Issues that families typically visit us for include sleep and settling; routine; feeding — both breastfeeding and formula feeding; managing a toddler's difficult behaviour; and adjusting to parenthood,” Anna says.

The skills Priscilla and Steven learnt at the centre have stayed with the family. Although there are still challenges, the nights have become easier.



Priscilla and Steven with daughter Vivienne

“Vivi is 18 months old now, and she now wakes zero-to-once a night. It took two months to get to that stage,” says Priscilla. “My husband is now better at settling Vivi than me!”

Priscilla's advice to other parents struggling with young children is simple: “It's amazing how one-on-one support can help. The staff at the centre don't judge. Give it a go.”

*Mercy Health has chosen to withhold the family's surname.



Helping build the best possible health outcomes

Meisha Duckford and Lara Merritt are Mercy Health's new Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officers at Mercy Hospital for Women and Werribee Mercy Hospital.



Meisha Duckford



Lara Merritt

An Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer provides accessible and culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients. They ensure the services being delivered to the Indigenous community are culturally informed and respectful.

Meisha is a proud Aboriginal woman of the Wirangu people. Wirangu is located on the far west coast of South Australia.

Meisha's heritage, together with her background in maternity services, inspired her to help connect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients with the best possible health outcomes.

"I wanted to do this role so there is more support for Aboriginal

people. Many have told me that they've experienced racism, no support and that they feel unsafe when accessing health services," says Meisha, who works at Mercy Hospital for Women. "I want people to know that there are Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officers at Mercy Health and that we are there for them."

Lara is from the Wiradjuri people, located in central west New South Wales. She says it is important to ask patients if they are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander rather than assume a person's background by their appearance.

"Sometimes, people may avoid asking patients the question because some people may get defensive and ask 'why do you need to know that?'" says Lara, who works at Werribee Mercy Hospital (WMH).

"We ask that question because people who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander can link into

many additional services. It is important to record this information, especially for younger people, so that we can work to provide the best outcomes from an early age," Lara says.

Senior Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer Jo Pappas is excited to have Lara and Meisha on board.

"I am very happy to be working alongside my Aboriginal Programs team, which is full of strong, independent and passionate women," Jo says.

"I anticipate the Nangnak Baban Murrup Clinic (meaning 'nurturing mother's spirit') and Nangnak Wan Myeek program (meaning 'nurture, care, look after me and mine') becoming a crucial part of our mothers' and boorais (babies') antenatal and postnatal journey," Jo says.

"I also look forward to supporting Lara who is heading up our newly named Aboriginal space at WMH, Weelam-ik Murrup Dornong (meaning 'my home, life, heart'), and watching it grow."

Valuing the voice of the consumer



Marcel Mihulka is the first person to be appointed as Consumer Advisor to the Board Quality Committee

When Marcel Mihulka's mother fell ill, he quickly went from instructing doctors to consulting them.

"We found out it was ovarian cancer," says Marcel. "This was a three-year journey where I saw everything from the patient's perspective. There was good, and there was bad. And the bad there was could

have been easily overcome with better information."

It was this experience, and Marcel's unique background in health education and medical e-Learning, which inspired Marcel to volunteer with Mercy Health as a Consumer Advisor. He has volunteered in the role for almost five years.

Recently, Marcel was appointed to the Board Quality Committee as a Consumer Advisor — the first person to be appointed in this new role. The Board Quality Committee is a subcommittee of the Mercy Health Board. It makes sure the standard of services provided at Mercy Health is constantly reviewed and assessed.

Group Executive Director Quality, Risk & Service Improvement Clare Grieveson knows it is essential for an organisation to listen to consumers.

"Mercy Health recognises the vital importance of the role of the volunteer and consumer input. Having consumer representation on this committee ensures the voice of the consumer is heard at every level at Mercy Health," Clare says.

"I would like to thank the Board and the Executive team," Marcel says. "They have been proactive in this appointment and driving this change. They really value what consumers have to say. I would also like to thank the staff for jumping on board and for their enthusiasm."

Central to setting up the role was Board Quality Committee Chair Ian Haines.

"Volunteers are vitally important in the effective delivery of healthcare services. Mercy Health couldn't function to maximum effectiveness without volunteers. Likewise, consumer input is absolutely vital," Ian says.

You too can volunteer!

We are currently recruiting for our Consumer Advisory Groups. Consumer Advisors are volunteers who provide Mercy Health with insight into the consumer experience. They help make information and services more consumer-friendly.

"Volunteering at Mercy Health is flexible," says Marcel, who has

volunteered as a Mercy Health Consumer Advisor for almost five years.

"Some people may want to volunteer but believe they can't find time to due to other commitments, but there are so many options to help at Mercy. There are positions you can do where you can say 'I can't

do it this week, my kids are on holidays', and then you can pick it up the next week," Marcel says.

"Mercy Health makes sure that you're given time and resources to get your volunteering job done. This means you're effective as a volunteer," Marcel says.

Applications are now open.
Contact us at getinvolved@mercy.com.au or phone 03 8416 7872.

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Your feedback...

We hope you've enjoyed the spring edition of *Our Voice*, Mercy Health's groupwide newsletter.

Please send your feedback and stories via the details below:

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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 report was produced on Wurundjeri Country.



Our Voice will be back in December with our summer edition. In the meantime you can keep up to date with current Mercy Health news at mercyhealth.com.au

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