

# MEDIA RELEASE

## For immediate release

### **Werribee Mercy Hospital wins Victorian Healthcare Award for Neonatal and Paediatric Hospital in the Home program**

**27 November 2025** – Werribee Mercy Hospital has won a 2025 Victorian Healthcare Award for its Neonatal and Paediatric Hospital in the Home (HITH) program, an innovative model that enables babies and children to receive hospital-level treatment safely and effectively, while in the comfort of their own home.

The award-winning program, that took the top spot in the Care in the Community category, combines the expertise of the Paediatrics team and the HITH service to provide daily in-home clinical reviews and 24/7 access to senior clinicians. Families receive tailored feeding and growth support, monitoring and phototherapy treatment for jaundice, holistic disease management, and ongoing clinical assessments, all without an inpatient stay.

This model is delivering significant benefits in Melbourne's rapidly growing west, where rising birth numbers and high demand frequently push inpatient services to capacity. By shifting appropriate care into the home, the HITH program is reducing pressure on hospital beds, improving patient flow and enhancing the overall experience for families.

Director of Paediatrics Dr Kathy McMahon said the award acknowledges a program built around compassion, cultural responsiveness and family needs.

"The service delivers true hospital-level care in the place where families feel the safest, their own home. It keeps parents close to their baby, builds confidence and strengthens their understanding of their child's care. We're incredibly proud of the difference this program is making for families in our community."

The model has shown strong clinical outcomes. Between February 2022 and June 2024, 932 of 2,240 neonatal admissions were transferred to HITH, with infants recording excellent average daily weight gains and requiring fewer hospital visits compared with traditional inpatient pathways.

Home phototherapy has also supported reduced time to treatment of neonatal jaundice without prolonged hospitalisation.

Paediatrician and Medical Lead of Paediatric and Neonatal HITH services Dr Jye Gard said the success of the program reflects both clinical strength and community trust.

"Families tell us every day how much it means to keep their baby at home, and the outcomes are outstanding. The services help strengthen the pillars of health provided by a child's home, and the flow on effects for the child and family are incredible. It reduces multiple stressors for the family, strengthens bonding, improves feeding, health outcomes and gives parents real confidence. This award is a testament to the team's commitment and the impact this model is having across our region."

Demand for the service remains high, with HITH beds frequently operating at full capacity and waiting lists of neonates and children ready to be accepted.

The program continues to expand to meet the needs of a diverse, multicultural and often vulnerable population whose health literacy and advocacy challenges are better supported through in-home care.

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