



## Message from the CEO

This year MercyCare celebrates 175 years since the Sisters of Mercy made their journey from Dublin up the Swan River with a vision of creating a better, more equal and compassionate outlook for all.

At MercyCare, we hold this story with great pride. It is a legacy we can draw inspiration from as we continue to strengthen, adapt and grow to meet the needs of Western Australians.

We support Western Australian families and communities – from the smallest members in our early learning centres; young people supported through fostering,

accommodation and wellness; vulnerable families through housing and support; new Australians through our multicultural services; Kimberley communities through our accommodation; and our most senior members through our aged care services.

We do all this founded on our vision for people and communities to thrive.

To celebrate the 175 year anniversary, MercyCare captured the Sisters of Mercy's important story in a booklet to share and enjoy. In its pages we see Perth through the eyes of a young Sister Ursula Frayne. Her incredible journey, along with the six other pioneering Sisters of Mercy, has created a lasting impact on the Western Australian community.

To learn more about this slice of our State's history, our Celebrating 175 Years booklet can be found online at [www.mercycare.com.au/our-history](http://www.mercycare.com.au/our-history).

**Anthony Smith**  
MercyCare CEO



We personalise our Home Care services for every individual, because **what matters to you, matters to us.**

1800 637 299  
[agedcare@mercycare.com.au](mailto:agedcare@mercycare.com.au)





## New pathways for young people

Young people who have been through challenging life issues have a unique opportunity to hone their mentoring and peer support skills to help others and form a pathway to a future career.

MercyCare is facilitating a free, 10-week Youth Peer Pathways course for people aged 18 to 25 years across Perth.

The course is designed for young people with lived experience of issues such as homelessness, substance abuse, mental health challenges, grief, loss, chronic illness and becoming a carer.

MercyCare Youth Accommodation and Tenancy Co-ordinator Kirsty McGeachy encouraged young people with similar lived experience and an interest in supporting others to apply.

“This is a great opportunity for a young person looking to get into peer work, advocacy or community services,” Ms McGeachy said.

“It is an industry-approved course that will help young people build confidence they need to safely share their personal life experience to help others.

“Youth Peer Pathways is for young people who want to step into mentorship and advocacy, and also to enhance their overall personal and professional skills within the peer support environment.”

For more information, email [peerpathways@mercycare.com.au](mailto:peerpathways@mercycare.com.au)



## Congratulations Multicultural Services

MercyCare was recently named a recipient of the highly regarded Community Organisation Award at the Western Australian Multicultural Awards.

Presented by the Office of Multicultural Affairs, the Community Organisation Award recognises MercyCare’s work with people who come from diverse, multicultural backgrounds.

“It has been a great motivator to all of the Multicultural Services staff as well as MercyCare in general, to continue with the grass roots engagement and support for people who are new to Australia and need support to get established and integrated into their new home country,” she says.

## Engaging the next generation

Every morning, children and staff at MercyCare Kelmscott Early Learning Centre begin their day of fun and learning with an Acknowledgement of Country.

It's a great way to start the day, regardless how old the children are.

"In this industry we are given the opportunity to introduce children to the Aboriginal culture and its traditions; it is here where we plant the seed," said Kelmscott Early Learning Centre Manager Kym Corbett.

During storytelling activities, children have the opportunity to build their knowledge of the Wadjuk language, learning key words that they can practise in other activities, such as music and singing.

Their bush tucker garden is something the children take enormous pride in; they planted every single edible native plant

with help from a child's family member, who came in to teach children about Indigenous plants.

Kym said incorporating Aboriginal traditions and culture into everyday activities and having visual representation of it throughout the centre went a long way in welcoming Aboriginal families to the centre and making it a culturally safe place for their children.

**"Acknowledging Aboriginal culture and having it embedded in our service is really important to us," she said.**

"Things like having the Aboriginal and Torre Strait Island flags



around our centre and having the Acknowledgement to Country are important ways to embrace the culture of many families that attend our centre."

Kym and a cohort of MercyCare staff recently immersed themselves in a five-week Wadjuk Language education course, which will support ongoing Aboriginal learning activities across MercyCare's early learning centres.

## Have you met Alfie?

Alfie, the three-year-old cavoodle (hybrid of a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel and a Poodle) is a qualified therapy dog, having begun his work experience and training as a six-month-old pup.

Alfie's job is to make the residents happy, and he's excelling at it. But the place Alfie has had the most impact is in the Ursula Wing – among residents living with dementia.

His handler, MercyCare Lifestyle Therapy and Spirituality Coordinator Emma Chapman said Alfie had made a series of breakthroughs

with several residents in his short time with them.

"He went to visit one lady the other day and she just rested her forehead on Alfie's," Ms Chapman said.

"She said, 'you've made my day' and that's we try to do every day – make each day the happiest we can."





## Respite, a new lease on life

Ranji and Henry “David” Weerasoriya barely spent a day apart throughout their 53 years of marriage.

Even when David, 88, was diagnosed with advanced Alzheimer’s disease, Ranji cared for her husband in their home for several years until it was clear that at 77, she needed support.

Respite care would give Ranji a well-needed break and time to look after herself but entrusting her beloved husband into the care of others was one of the most difficult decisions she has faced.

“That first day I was so distressed and cried all the way home thinking ‘what am I doing’,” Ranji said.

David has attended respite care at MercyCare’s Davis House for the past four years, now visiting four times a week, including one overnight stay.

According to Ranji, he loves his respite care and looks forward to his visits, which makes a

world of difference to his wife.

“When David is there, he’s happy and he comes home animated,” she said.

“He loves to be with people, he has his therapy and he likes the activities there.

“I don’t have to worry about him, I know the people there will look after him – because everyone (in their care) is somebody’s loved one.”

“It’s a huge help for me because it takes the extra stress away; at home I have to be with him the whole time, in case he falls or injures himself,” Ranji said.

Specialising in high care dementia support, MercyCare’s Davis House offers a number of respite options which can include day, evening, overnight or 24-hour care, seven days a week.

### Want more information about respite options with MercyCare?

Give our friendly team a call on **1800 637 299** or email [agedcare@mercyCare.com.au](mailto:agedcare@mercyCare.com.au)

## Culture and food-lovers at home in Mirrabooka

After a successful summer season, the Mirrabooka Markets have made a name for themselves by showcasing musical, artistic and flavoursome delights of over a dozen countries.

The markets were a huge draw card for families in the local area and beyond, with plenty of entertainment and activities for young children and teenagers.

MercyCare’s Capability and Inclusion Coordinator, Community Family and Children Shammy Baijnath said her Mirrabooka-based team was impressed with crowd numbers and the diversity of stall holders.

“We wanted it to be a place where diverse communities could come together to celebrate culture, but also a way to generate an income for those who had difficulty finding employment,” Ms Baijnath said.

“It was such a great atmosphere and a place where diversity is respected, receives exposure and is celebrated.”

Off the back of the market’s success, the Multicultural Services team is currently exploring options for stall holders to feature their products at other locations, with hopes to be ready for the upcoming spring season.





## Multicultural arts on display at Bennett Springs

In a fantastic community collaboration, MercyCare Bennett Springs Early Learning Centre partnered with Sacred India Gallery and environmental event group, Eco Gecko to educate the children about multicultural arts and the importance of environmental preservation.

About 20 Kindy children learned new painting techniques from Indian and Aboriginal cultures and used them to decorate various native animal shapes.

The animals they painted are indigenous to the Bennett Springs local area, with many species known to inhabit the nearby Whiteman Park.

MercyCare Bennett Spring Early Learning Centre Manager Jacenta Booth said the Eco Shapes workshops were a fantastic opportunity for children to harness their creative minds, learn new art techniques and develop their interest in local eco-systems.

“Our workshops aimed to drive for change and encouraged children to learn about culture, conservation and the local environment,” Jacenta said.

“This project is important as we can teach our children not only about the sharing of our culture through art but wildlife conservation; preserving and protecting animals, plants and their habitats.

“It is important that we ensure future generations can enjoy our natural world and the incredible species that live within.”

Staff at Bennett Springs Early Learning Centre come from a

number of cultural backgrounds, with at least seven languages spoken between them.

The centre is a reflection of the wonderfully diverse community it is part of.

“We have so many multicultural families at our centre and I think it’s really important to share one another’s cultures,” Jacenta said.

“It makes people feel welcome and supported.”

The children’s art works will be displayed at Sacred India Gallery – 76 Dulwich St, Bennett Springs – as well as the early learning centre.

## Musical trio retire after 50 years of volunteering

After entertaining MercyCare Wembley Residential Aged Care Home residents for a combined 50 years, MercyCare volunteers Pat Spillman, Val and Ken Metcalf recently retired from the musical limelight.

Pat has volunteered more than 25 years, while Val and Ken each contributed over 12 years.

From the Metcalf's home in Mercy Village, over a cup of tea and Val's mouth-watering date loaf fresh out of the oven, the songsters reminisced about old times, old tunes and old friends.

Unsurprisingly, most of their stories culminated in a group singalong.

"There were particular songs that got people – 'She'll be Coming Around the Mountain', 'It's a Long way to Tipperary...,'" Val said.

**"At first, they'd be sitting straight and stiff and by the time we finished they were alive, singing along, tapping their feet."**

"You'd get to know all of them, that was the best part about it."

They agreed there was something magical about old-time songs, especially those from the war-time era, that unlocked memories and feelings of years gone by.



*Val, Ken and Pat revisit their song books*

"It's the music," Pat said.

"There's something about music that makes people remember things from such a long time ago."

For Pat, Val and Ken, who share a life-long love of music, volunteering has never been a chore or added responsibility, it was quite the opposite they said.

They were simply doing what they loved and happy to be able to continue their love of music.

"We loved it just as much as the residents did and it was also a chance for us to get together, especially when there were more of us," Ken said.

Their chorale originally took stage as a quartet, but one member passed away and another recently retired for health reasons.

The trio carried on singing and bringing smiles to faces, realising the impact their performances had on elderly residents.

"I think volunteering is very important," Ken said.

"It fills a hole when others are not available, but we got just as much out of it."

Retired they may be, but the trio doesn't need much convincing to break into song.

And there's no need for rehearsals; After so many years together, they know their songbooks and vocal parts by heart.

**Interested in volunteering with MercyCare?** Our Volunteer and Placement Coordinator would love to hear from you! For more information email the team at [volunteering@mercyCare.com.au](mailto:volunteering@mercyCare.com.au)

## Recognising dedication in Aged Care

Passion and dedication were acknowledged at MercyCare recently when 88 of our Residential Aged Care staff across our homes in Wembley, Joondalup, Kelmscott, Maddington and Rockingham were recognised for 10, 15 and 20-plus years of service.

“These people have made not only an enormous contribution to MercyCare but had a lasting impact on each of the residents they have connected with over the years,” MercyCare Aged Care and Disability Executive Director Joanne Penman said.

“For residents and their families, to see a familiar face each day is such a wonderful and comforting thing,” she said.

“Being able to connect with the same person regularly allows meaningful relationships to be formed. We are proud of this at MercyCare, and thankful and humbled by these staff and the contribution they have made.

“It takes a special person to work in Aged Care, and for these people to serve for this length of time shows their passion for their work. Compassion is the common ingredient we require in all our staff – and these people embody this.”

Our longest serving aged care staff members all work at our Wembley Residential Aged Care Home. Personal care assistant Gregorio has been working for 29 years, personal care assistant Amanda for 25 years and laundry staff member Dean has worked in a variety of roles over 22 years. What an amazing dedication of service.



## No interest loans a life-saver for women escaping violence

Last year, MercyCare’s Mercy Lending Services Program was selected to be one of three Western Australian referral partners in a three-month pilot as part of Good Shepherd Microfinance’s Federally funded expansion of the No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS).

Designed to provide safe, affordable loans up to \$2000 to victims of domestic and family violence, the pilot was a success, with the program now available nationwide.

“Money is often a big hurdle to overcome in order to leave or stay safe in an abusive relationship,” MercyCare Community, Family and Children Services Executive Director David Holden said.

“These loans offer fast access to that money without being saddled with unrealistic repayment terms and conditions.”

For more information on Family and Domestic Violence No Interest Loans, speak to our Mercy Lending Services team by calling **1800 268 472**.

## Meet Gemma: Foster Carer Support Officer

For those interested in becoming a MercyCare Foster Carer, Gemma is the first voice they'll hear at the other end of the phone and the first person they'll meet on their journey.

For Gemma, what makes a great Foster Carer is respect, patience, good listening skills, an openness to learn and develop, flexibility and adaptability. The most important factor though, is to have the child's best interest at heart.

"I always tell our Foster Carers they should never feel their fostering journey is something they are doing on their own. They always have the support of the MercyCare Fostering team. That's really important to us because there are challenges with fostering but at the same time there is so much fulfilment," says MercyCare Foster Carer Support Officer Gemma Marai.

"Knowing I am providing that support and I'm always there for them is satisfying in itself, but like our Foster Carers, knowing I'm making a difference in a child's life brings an enormous amount of satisfaction."

**"Everyone has the heart to give a child in need the opportunities in life they deserve."**

While MercyCare Foster Carers come from diverse backgrounds and situations – from couples to singles; parents with biological children or those with children that have flown the nest; younger to



older and everything in between – their common goal is to make a difference in a child's life.

For the MercyCare Fostering team, pairing a child with the right Foster Carers for them is critical. During the application process future Foster Carers list their preferences to ensure placements suit both child and carer within a positive and stable home environment.

"The common driver with our Foster Carers is they want to support a child who hasn't had the easiest start in life. Everyone has the heart to give a child in need the opportunities in life they deserve."



Open your heart,  
open your home.



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Become a  
**FOSTER  
CARER**