



## Respite, a new lease on life

The decision to leave a loved one in the care of someone else, even for just a few hours, can be heart-wrenching.

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

Since the day they married in Sri Lanka, they’ve travelled the world together, raised three sons and built a happy life in Nedlands, where Ranji supported David to establish his esteemed career as a respected General Practitioner and paediatrician.

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.

“I’m very happy with MercyCare, they’re the best in town.

“And I love their motto - Every Person Matters - because everyone (in their care) is somebody’s loved one.”

At Davis House, David enjoys art activities, reading, listening to music, playing his harmonica and strolling in the gardens.

“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.

“It gives me time to take care of my house, to cook and care for my family.”

## At home at Davis House

Respite services give carers time to look after themselves, with the peace of mind of knowing their loved one is cared for by a caring team of professionals.

Specialising in high care dementia support, MercyCare’s Davis House offers a home-like, friendly and cheerful atmosphere with a high standard of support and care.

We provide a number of respite options which can include day, evening, overnight or 24-hour care, seven days a week.

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

## What is a Home Care Package?

A Home Care Package is a selection of services that can support you to continue living at home independently and safely, connected to your community.

We can support you at home in many ways, from nursing and personal care to house cleaning and getting out-and-about in your community.

You can select services that best suit your needs – you have full control, choice and flexibility over your home care.

To chat more about our services, give our friendly team a call on **1800 637 299** or email **agedcare@mercyCare.com.au**

## Home Care Services



**Personal care**



**House cleaning**



**Home maintenance**



**Gardening**



**Meals**



**Shopping**



**Community connection**



**Nursing care**



**Allied Health support**



**Companionship**



**Transport**



**Aids and equipment to keep you safe**

## Meet our staff

### Ruth Lewis Service Co-ordinator

There is a small but mighty team at MercyCare's West Perth headquarters, working to ensure thousands of aged care clients across Perth receive their vital in-home support.

Ruth Lewis is part of that team.

Although most of her clients will never meet Ruth in person, hers is the cheerful, bubbly voice they hear on the phone at least weekly.

There's no doubt they will have come to recognise her caring manner and distinct Irish accent.

Ruth is in charge of rostering support workers and scheduling

services for MercyCare's Home Care Package and Commonwealth Home Support Program clients in the South East region.

Her role ensures clients receive the home care support they need, while ensuring support workers are also supported in their role.

"No day is ever the same. It's fast-paced and it's busy but I like knowing that I'm able to help people," she said.

"What I really love is that people (both clients and support workers) are seen as individuals and we work to adapt services to their needs."

With over ten years' experience as a support worker herself, Ruth has a valuable insight into the needs of her support worker team.



"I think having that experience in the field makes a difference. I know that things like travel time is really important for our support workers so I try to allow extra time for that."

Her wealth of experience and background in disability support and respite care enables Ruth to anticipate and genuinely support the needs of her clients and team.

## Enjoying the Goode life at home

At 83, Alice Goode relishes the feeling of living in her own home – it's her "first real home", it took many years to come by and she's proud of it.

"I remember calling my brother to tell him 'it's even got a backyard'. It's the first time I've had a backyard," Alice said.

"I know I'm getting to a point where I need full time care. I know it's coming, and I feel fine about that, but I'm not there yet."

After a lifetime devoted to community work through the Methodist Church and Salvation Army, Alice says she feels blessed to now receive support that enables her to continue living in the home she loves.

Alice started with MercyCare with Short Term Restorative Care before moving to a MercyCare Home Care Package that provides assistance for her around the home, in the garden and with grocery shopping.

She also received physiotherapy through a MercyCare Short Term Restorative Care package.

Her support workers visit twice a day to help her with meal preparation, showering and general housework while a registered nurse visits twice a week.

"I feel so blessed to have them come twice a day to help me," Alice said.

"It's made my life a lot easier and a lot more comfortable.

"The staff are all very polite and caring and they're happy, which makes my day."

There is no doubt that her home care is much more to Alice than merely a useful service.

She knows each of her support workers and after receiving services from them for over three years, she has developed strong bonds.

"I always look forward to their visits.... Every day," she said.

"I get to hear about their families and their children, and I learn about their cultures.

After spending Christmas with her family, Alice was admitted to hospital and spent the New Year period in treatment.

She's had a few hospital admissions in the past few years and although she knows she needs the care, she misses her home and her friends.

"I missed the girls. It was a long 10 days it was lovely to get back to my home."

Change may be ahead for Alice, but for now she is able to stay independent at home thanks to the services MercyCare provides under her Home Care Package.

She is able to continue enjoying her home, reading novels on her iPad, watching Netflix mystery series and listening to music via her brand new voice-controlled home stereo.



## Meet our staff

### Jo Fawcett Support Worker

For MercyCare support worker Jo Fawcett, getting to know her clients is the highlight of her job.

Jo visits about four clients in their homes every day and helps them with their personal care, meal preparation and grocery shopping.

“I see the same clients every week so I really do get to know them and after a while, they do come out of their shell,” Jo said.

“I love listening to their stories, and everyone’s got a story to tell.

“Some of them have amazing stories about the war and growing up in Perth and others talk about their different cultures. I actually learn quite a lot just listening to them.”

Jo has worked for MercyCare Home Care for the past three years but it’s her second stint, having previously worked six years with the organisation.

“It’s a great organisation; I’ve always got support from my supervisor and the people are very nice,” she said.

Having worked in community services since she was 19,



Jo says her role, especially talking with and spending time with her clients, gives her a special satisfaction.

“I love that time with the clients. It’s amazing to hear their life experiences and get to know them.”

### Caring beyond duty

When Marlene Emmett made a career change from beauty therapy into home care, she never thought her clients would have such an impact on her life.

As a senior support worker for MercyCare’s Home Care services, Marlene visits new clients and helps them complete the necessary paperwork to action their Commonwealth Home Support Program.

But Marlene’s empathy and compassion for her clients goes well beyond a house call.

She visits up to eight clients a day, providing domestic assistance, meal preparation, shopping and social support.

“I see some of my clients a couple of times a week, so I almost feel like part of the family,” Marlene said.

“I’ve always gotten along with elderly people; they’ve always got a story to tell and they’ve got life experience.

“It’s what I love most about my job – getting to know them.”

Her genuinely caring nature and attentive service has made Marlene a much-loved support worker among her clients. Most call her their friend.



And because she knows her clients so well, it’s hard for Marlene not to feel worried if they don’t seem their usual self or if their refrigerator isn’t stocked with their favourite foods.

“In this job you’ve got to be sensitive, compassionate, respectful... all the MercyCare values really.”



## Social connection “rekindles purpose” for Don

Of all the Home Care support he receives from MercyCare, 89-year-old Don Mitchell says it’s the social support that has been most meaningful.

“I would say it’s rekindled a purpose in my life because I had lost motivation,” Don said.

“I have something to do during the week.”

Over the years, Home Care has helped Don and his wife Dina-Marie continue living independently in their home despite ill-health and ailments having reduced their mobility and ability to do household tasks.

Mopping floors, changing bed linen and vacuuming have become too physically demanding and unsafe

for Don and Dina-Marie, but with cleaning assistance twice a week, the Belmont couple can focus on doing the things they love.

MercyCare Home Care support workers also provide personal care for Don, which includes help to shower and prepare meals.

But the conversations he has with his support workers, the outings and social interaction is what Don looks forward to most.

For Dina-Marie, 67, knowing Don is safe and supported at home enables her to continue her part-time work.

“If someone is at home with Don, I know that he will be okay and that he’ll eat a proper meal,” she said.

“There was a time I needed to go to hospital, but (I thought) what about Don, how would he manage at home by himself but now we know he can remain comfortably at home.”

“It’s a huge help for us.”

Don started with MercyCare with Short Term Restorative Care so he could quickly regain previous levels of independence, before moving to a Home Care Package where together with Dina-Marie, both have selected the services that suit them best.



## Kate and Jack reflect on golden years

From their penthouse balcony at Mercy Village apartments, Kate and Jack Evans can spot the old-time dance hall where they first met, streets they walked hand in hand and even the church they married in.

“We don’t need photos, we can see those places from our balcony,” Mr Evans laughed.

Nevertheless, Mrs Evans proudly presents a beautifully kept album of precious black and white photos from that era.

Last month, the couple – both 97 years of age – celebrated their 73rd wedding anniversary, a milestone guaranteed to raise anyone’s eyebrow.

“Would you believe we’ve never had an argument in all those years. We’ve disagreed but we’ve

never argued, especially when it came to the kids,” Mr Evans said.

“We were very compatible, and we did things together, but we had our own interests too which is very important... and she’s a great cook.”

Mrs Evans said the secret to their happy marriage was simple: “we just loved each other.”

As a young girl, Mrs Evans giggled as she and her friend Bessie rifled through love letters that arrived for Bessie’s older brother from London by post.

It was 1945 and Bessie’s brother had just returned from the war. Less than a week after his ship docked, one of his friends convinced him to go to a town dance.

“It was at the Subiaco Hall on a Saturday evening and in those days, there was a great orchestra,” Mrs Evans said.

“I knew him as Bessie’s brother; he came up to me and must have said, “I’m Jack”.”

Those Saturday dances were among the young couple’s favourite outings. They loved all the modern dances – the waltz, fox trot, tango – so much so that Mr Evans opted to take dance lessons instead of attending night school.



They picnicked in the hills, cycled and enjoyed trips to the beach.

Eighteen months later, on November 18, they arrived at St Joseph's Church in Subiaco to be married.

As they tell these stories, it's clear their minds travel back decades. People, details and anecdotes they hadn't thought of in years suddenly spring to mind.

No doubt they could tell hundreds of stories of their four sons, 12 grandchildren and 15 great grandchildren.

For the past 13 years, the couple has lived at Mercy Village apartments, where they enjoy socialising with other residents, gardening and a million-dollar view of Lake Monger and the city.

"It's a happy place; so quiet," Mr Evans said.



*Kate and Jack on their wedding day*

"It's just as if we're living in a house in the suburbs. We love it here."

And if they ever feel like a trip down memory lane, they need only look out over their balcony.

## Celebrating 175 years

On January 9, 2021 MercyCare celebrated 175 years since the Sisters of Mercy sailed up the Swan River with the vision of creating a better, more equal, caring and compassionate outlook for all Western Australians, no matter who they were.



Begun by the Sisters of Mercy in 1846, today MercyCare continues to strengthen, adapt and grow to meet the changing needs of Western Australians.

As a not-for-profit organisation, did you know today MercyCare delivers 29 different services across 48 locations?

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.

To read more Sisters of Mercy's incredible journey to Perth and their first days, visit [www.mercycare.com.au/our-history](http://www.mercycare.com.au/our-history) and click on our Celebrating 175 Years booklet.



## Musical trio takes final bow

A trio of singers who, for a combined 50 years, volunteered their talents to entertain MercyCare aged care residents in Wembley have taken their final bow.

Pat Spillman, Val and Ken Metcalf recently retired from the musical limelight after decades entertaining aged care residents with their lively sing-alongs and war-time classics.

Ms Spillman volunteered a remarkable 25 years for MercyCare, while the Metcalfs each contributed over 12 years.

“We loved it just as much as the residents did and it was also a chance for us to get together,” Mr Metcalf said.

“I think volunteering is very important. It fills a hole when others are not available, but we got just as much out of it.”

There is something magical about old-time songs, the trio said, especially those from the war-time era that unlocked memories and feelings of years gone by.

“There were particular songs that got people – ‘She’ll be Coming Around the Mountain’, ‘It’s a Long way to Tipperary...,’” Mrs Metcalf 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.”

“There’s something about music that makes people remember things from such a long time ago,” Ms Spillman said.

MercyCare  
Residential Aged  
Care Homes:  
Joondalup  
Kelmescott  
Maddington  
Rockingham  
Wembley

MercyCare Chief Executive Officer Anthony Smith thanked the volunteers for their invaluable dedication and effort.

“Pat, Val and Ken have brought smiles to the faces of our residents not just once or twice, but for decades,” Mr Smith said.

“Their sing-alongs and performances really do take residents back in time; it’s wonderful to see them so happy, singing along and even dancing.

“Thank you Pat, Val and Ken for your incredible contribution over the years.”