



Message from the CEO

To mark 175 years since the Sisters of Mercy's arrival in Western Australia, MercyCare commissioned an artwork from local artist Vanessa Liebenberg and unveiled the stunning piece at our annual Staff and Volunteer Conference.

Drawing from historical photographs, Vanessa has created a unique piece using different mediums such as wood burning, drawing and painting which feature depictions of both the Sisters of Mercy and elements of what MercyCare is today.

The artwork was part of telling the story of our history at our Staff and Volunteer Day.

Held during September at Optus Stadium, the Day saw a fantastic turnout as we came together in one place to connect, have fun and learn something new.

It was an inspiring day to hear the heartfelt stories from not only our keynote speaker 2021 Australian of the Year Grace Tame, but also from the people who work across MercyCare.

We want to share this spirit of storytelling with you here.

As you read the stories from our staff, volunteers and incredible clients in these pages, we hope you find a story that connects with you.

Anthony Smith
MercyCare CEO



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MercyCare Annual Report out now!

MercyCare took out the much-coveted bronze award at the Australasian Reporting Awards for its 2020 Annual Report. We've just released our 2021 Annual Report. Check it out at mercycare.com.au/news-and-resources/publications



Worms with no teeth...

Our Early Learning children's words of wisdom were the inspiration for our Early Learning Services' winning team t-shirts at this year's MercyCare Staff and Volunteer Conference.

Challenged with creating the best team t-shirt, our Early Learning team from across our 14 centres entitled their shirts Koorlangka (children) Yarning and used delightful statements from the children to create individual quotes on the back of their t-shirts:

"We feed our scraps to the worms, but only small coz they don't have teeth" – Liam and Asha age 3

"My favourite part of the day is going to see the chickens and collect the eggs" – Hugo age 3

"We ask our friends 'are you ok?' and if they are sad we hug them or tell a joke that's funny"
– Harper age 3

"We need to look after the environment coz the animals will eat the rubbish and be sick and have to see the pet doctors"
– Aviana age 4

"Reconciliation means we respect the Aboriginal people and the Torres Strait Island people" – Deegan age 4

"I like MercyCare because I see all my friends, I fly there with my wings" – Katie age 4

Heart is MercyCare

MercyCare unveiled its Heart is MercyCare video, capturing the essence of what we do here and the pure heart each of our staff members put into their work to make a difference in others' lives.

Tune into MercyCare's YouTube channel to watch the video.





Support releases Stew's creative flair

“MercyCare gave me a dimension of freedom, releasing time to live a normal life. Before, household tasks were impossible or would take me such a long time. With their help, suddenly I had the time released to be creative and that is when I picked up my writing again,” MercyCare Home Care client Stew Cameron said.

With support in his home, 72-year-old Stew has rediscovered his creativity, culminating in a novel of his adventures on the Solomon Islands during the 1960's, where as a 17 year old he left the UK and to build rural health clinics, schools and bridges.

“I needed encouragement to finish my book off. My support worker Mark provided the motivation I needed and I have now self-published *Footprints on a Tropical Island - A Solomon Island Adventure*, published by Blurb” he said.

Five years ago Stew suffered two strokes and underwent 15 operations. He was unable to speak, walk and couldn't undertake simple tasks. When his Home Care Package came through five months ago, he opted for MercyCare to provide home care support.

“Initially it took a bit to get over that feeling of intrusion that someone else was coming into the house, but now they have just melted into the routine and it is no trouble at all,” he said.

“Having the MercyCare support workers enter my life has made a wonderful difference.”

Stew receives MercyCare home care services including support for grocery shopping, domestic assistance, cleaning the filters in his koi pond, companionship and prepping and cooking meals.

Stew has lived an action-packed life and has now regained the confidence and zest to get back to doing the things he has always loved.

A leading Civil Engineer, Stew was instrumental as the City of Perth Manger of Operations in

reconstructing Barrack, William, Hay and King Streets in the 1980s and developing Hillarys Boat Harbour and Whitford Nodes recreation areas. He was the go-to man when the Westgate Bridge collapsed in Melbourne and has worked all over the world building tunnels, roads and bridges from Venezuela to Stockholm.

Stew has gained the confidence to regain some of his prior independence. “For five years I wasn't able to leave the house. Now I have the confidence to go down to the river by myself to regain that little bit of freedom,” he said.

With one book under his belt, Stew is enthusiastically tackling writing further books, alongside enjoying the many hobbies he loves in life, brewing fruit wine in his garage, getting his hands dirty in the thriving vegetable garden in the raised garden beds his partner built for him and feeding his koi fish.

Music therapy a hit

MercyCare Occupational Therapist Siobhan Tyndall wanted to find a way to help residents at MercyCare Maddington Residential Aged Care Home reminisce about the things they love most in life.

Studies have found that music can be a powerful therapy tool which can trigger fond memories, bring a sense of calmness and improve cognitive function for people living with dementia or Alzheimer's disease.

Siobhan has signed up for a 12-month Spotify subscription providing ad-free access to a variety of music genres and the ability to create personalised playlists based on each resident's individual taste.

As part of the project, Siobhan also acquired four Bluetooth speakers which are spread across different wings in the home to allow residents to access their music playlist whenever they want to reminisce, relax and unwind.

Dedicated students a lesson for volunteer

“They come when it is freezing cold and it's pouring with rain or when it's a stinking hot 40 degrees. On those sorts of days when they show up, it puts a lump in your throat. They come because they want to be here,” MercyCare volunteer Russell Waters said of the dedicated students of his English classes.

At MercyCare's Mirrabooka office, Russell teaches three free classes a week of English as a Second Language and computing.

“My students, most of whom are refugees or migrants, have often been through the most horrific experiences, yet they come to my classes each week because they want to be there,” Russell said.

“Each individual is different in what they get out of class and their motivations. They come for the community and social aspect of the classes and because it is a safe place where they can practice their English. Some people, especially the younger participants, come because they are ambitious and want to learn so they can progress to TAFE or University study.

“Our classes aren't competitive, it's all about camaraderie. If

someone is struggling, everyone helps them out, there's a real spirit of looking after each other.”

Russell took up volunteering following a degree in Accounting and Finance, a Masters in Teaching English as a Second Language, working as a teacher and university academic and years of travelling.

“I've always liked teaching. Helping people achieve something is a really lovely feeling. I get to know my students and I learn a lot from them.

“They really put life into perspective for you. Essentially, I'm an Australian living a comparatively privileged life. You hear what they have been through and it really gives you some perspective to appreciate life.”



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The power of storytelling: MercyCare Staff and Volunteer Day

The importance of storytelling took centre stage at MercyCare's Staff and Volunteer Day at Optus Stadium last month, where 470 staff enjoyed a jam-packed agenda of moving stories, engaging activities and inspiring speakers.





Vaso treasures friendship

To MercyCare Disability participant Vaso Maric, Garry Bhatti is more than just a Support Worker. Since being partnered with Garry in 2019, Vaso said they have developed a trusting bond, so much so that he considers Garry a “friend”.

“He’s a good person,” Vaso said. “He’s open, very friendly, knows his job, good at shopping and I like that about him. I feel I can trust him.

“My daughter is very picky, but she says he is a friend.”

It was more than 11 years ago that mechanical engineer Vaso’s life changed forever when he fell 7m from his roof while cleaning the gutters.

The incident left him paralysed from the waist down and in a wheelchair.

But since taking up MercyCare’s NDIS Disability Support

Services in 2018, Vaso has been able to get to important medical appointments and receive support for domestic tasks such as preparing food and grocery shopping.

But he said it was the community support service that has kept him doing the things he loves most.

Vaso has many passions from sport to academic pursuits with a keen interest in history, geography and science.

He considers himself a fit, active man and is determined to continue the activities he most enjoys, such as swimming.

Every little action

Our unique Eco Warrior program, which instils sustainable practices and values in children across our Early Learning Centres, gained momentum in 2021 with innovative and practical actions focused on water, energy, transport, biodiversity, purchasing, waste, community and family.

An Eco Warrior has been appointed at every MercyCare Early Learning Centre – a dedicated educator with a passion for protecting the environment and championing eco-friendly learning activities with our children.

The program is part of our commitment to environmentally

sustainable practices and education as part of MercyCare Early Learning’s Philosophy and our Mission Ethos Shapers.

The environmental learning activities are fun and teach children that every little action can make a big difference for our world.

In many of our centres, children learn to take care of our worm farms and chickens, which eat all our kitchen scraps and reduce green waste. Our little ones are so proud to harvest ‘homegrown’ vegetables from our garden beds, watered with collected rainwater.

We love getting creative and using upcycled materials in our art and craft activities. All our centres have recycling programs in place, diverting as much waste as possible from landfill.



Jordan's story: Building a better life

“I now see life has a better plan. My hope is to never look back and to now continue my life,” said MercyCare client *Jordan, who with great strength and the right support has turned her life around, from experiencing homelessness while pregnant, to keeping her own home and supporting her son to build a better life.



“For my son *Ethan, I want for him to have a better life and for him to be able to graduate because I never did. I want him to be involved with his surroundings and to know that I am always going to be here for him and that I will never leave,” Jordan said.

For 23-year-old Jordan, life today is unrecognisable to a few years ago.

Jordan was taken into care at a very young age, due in part to her mother's own history and substance use. In and out of many different care placements, Jordan was homeless and street present from 14 where she started misusing substances and became involved in wrong doings.

She became pregnant at 17 and she and her daughter were both taken into care together by a foster carer. This child is still being raised by the same foster carer and Jordan now has regular contact with her daughter. She also had another child who is being raised with family in the country.

In her early 20's, Jordan was diagnosed with PTSD, had a large rent debt and was experiencing homelessness. It was then she was referred to MercyCare's Coolock Program.

MercyCare's Coolock Units provides externally supported transitional accommodation for young mothers experiencing homelessness.

“I came to Coolock because I didn't want my baby to have the same lifestyle as me,” Jordan said.

Along with parenting workshops, life skills and working towards an independent home, Jordan was also linked with several community agencies to provide support.

On the birth of Ethan, the decision was made to remove him from Jordan's care. This was a massive shock to Jordan and her supporting services.

Jordan, all her supporting agencies and MercyCare advocated for Ethan to be reunited into her care.

After 12 weeks Ethan was reunited fulltime into Jordan's care. This was a very quick reunification due to Jordan's remarkable efforts and the collaboration with her support services including MercyCare.

“I'm not the sort of person that lets my emotions out and even though at the time I didn't think I needed it, my MercyCare case worker was always there for me to give me

that emotional support that I actually did need,” Jordan said.

After six months of successfully maintaining her home at Coolock unit, Jordan was offered her own Housing Authority home.

Jordan's empowerment continues to grow and she now needs less support from her MercyCare case worker.

“I am honoured to be part of Jordan's journey. To be on that journey, to see how strong Jordan was through all that, to see her ability. It was an absolute honour,” Jordan's MercyCare case worker said.

“Jordan has the confidence, capacity and competency to thrive and is a very successful tenant, and more importantly she is an extremely loving, nurturing, safe, confident and competent parent to her son.”

For Jordan, she will continue building a future for her and her 13 month-old son.

“A big thank you to MercyCare for helping me along this journey – for the support and just for being a part of this journey, and for being alongside me. They've helped me and made me feel like a person again,” Jordan said.

*Names have been changed to ensure clients' confidentiality.

Growing Tree feeds a life of learning

Research has shown early childhood development is a key predictor of future outcomes for children, so it's important that when children first start school, they are equipped to navigate their new learning environment.

The Growing Tree Program delivered at MercyCare's Warriapendi Child and Parent Centre and funded by the Department of Education is doing just that, working to prepare children for a life of learning from an early age.

The centre, which is co-located at Warriapendi Primary School in Balga, provides families of young children in the area with support and a connection to their community.

Families with children enrolled for kindergarten in the following year are invited to take part in the Growing Tree.

The program runs in the third and fourth school terms with a catch-up also held in the summer school holidays ahead of the new school year.

Weekly sessions based on the Early Years Framework and Curriculum give the three and four-year-old children the chance to familiarise themselves with a classroom environment, socialise and work on their developmental skills.

Through fun routines and activities, the children get opportunities to socialise and to practice their fine motor skills.

They learn to start to recognise their written name, they grow to understand the idea of sitting on a mat and they get used to following routines such as putting away their backpacks.

The Growing Tree program is just as much about parents as it is the children.

While getting an introduction to their little one's future school, families are provided support and information about children's physical health and wellbeing, social and emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills.

With a Dental Unit, Child Health Nurse and Speech Pathologist also co-located at the school, the program incorporates sessions that provide parents with information on each of these areas and others that help support them to understand their important role as their children's first teachers.



These interactions not only establish positive relationships between families and the education system but provide opportunities for support and early intervention for any issues parents may be dealing with.

Warriapendi Primary School Principal Natasha Doyle said the teachers had found the children were far more settled than in previous years and ready for day one of Kindy.



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

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