

Mercy Health provides compassionate care for people



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Mercy Health

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Health
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AT A GLANCE

WHO: Mercy Health

WHAT: They care for the whole person: physically, emotionally, socially and spiritually.

WHERE: QLD 4013, Australia

WEBSITE: mercyhealth.com.au

Mercy Health is a Catholic organisation which was started by the Sisters of Mercy who developed an organisation to look after the health and aged care needs of the people in Victoria. It has grown over recent years and now provides acute and subacute hospitals, residential aged care, home and community care, mental health services, palliative care and a training institute.





The reach of Mercy Health extends to Victoria, southern New South Wales, Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and most recently Queensland. While the organisation was started by the Sisters of Mercy, it is now run by lay people who are continuing the Sisters' mission to care for people in need. Mercy Health employs people from diverse backgrounds and cultures, but they are all bound by a common thread, that of providing the highest degree of care to residents and clients while treating them with respect and dignity.

Adjunct Professor Stephen Cornelissen, Group Chief Executive Officer, describes the inception of Mercy Health and how it achieved its current size, "The Sisters set up their first Victorian hospital in 1920. They then built a private women's hospital in 1934 and then set up a public women's hospital in 1971."

Subsequently Mercy Health expanded into palliative care, providing services to help people die in their community and their home with dignity. Then they set up another public hospital in 1994 (Werribee Mercy Hospital) and started providing aged care during the mid-1990s followed by mental health services in 1997. In 2003 Mercy Health started providing early parenting



Stephen Cornelissen

services. The big project of the past decade has been the relocation of Mercy Hospital for Women from East Melbourne to Heidelberg. It is a tertiary specialist teaching hospital for women and babies.

“We have grown from about four aged care services and about 300 beds over the last 10 years to be what is

a critical care unit, new operating theatres and more inpatient beds.”

Professional training

Mercy Health has extensive training facilities for its staff and conducts various courses for them in order to deliver the most appropriate care. Professional training is available at Mercy Health Training Institute and post-graduate courses are conducted by Mercy Hospital for Women and Werribee Mercy Hospital.

The entire organisation’s culture is focused on compassion and respect

for its residents and clients. Adj Prof Cornelissen explains his views on the subject.

“Our strength is our people and it is the people who deliver the services and care at the very grass roots and it is these people who determine whether our business lives or dies,” he said.

Care for residents and clients

Mercy Health offers aged care homes that are of the highest order and

We are also re-developing our community hospital here in Werribee

now 22 aged care facilities with almost 2000 beds.” Adj Prof Cornelissen said. “During that time we have redeveloped our sites and turned them into purpose-built aged care homes that meet the contemporary care needs of the aged community.”

“We are about to do capital development in an aged care facility in Montrose,” he said.

“We are also re-developing our community hospital here in Werribee thanks to an \$85 million State Government grant. This will deliver



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include low-care, high-care, dementia specific care and independent living units. Mercy Hospital for Women offers the entire range of maternity services including neonatology and paediatrics, diagnostic services and a special care nursery. Werribee Mercy Hospital provides surgical, medical renal dialysis, emergency, aged care, palliative care and community care services.

All Mercy Health sites use state-of-the-art equipment and are staffed by Division 1 or 2 registered nurses. Additionally, all the staff undergo a police record check and a minimum of two reference checks. Mercy Home & Community Care is one of the few home care services that uses its own staff for providing care. This ensures that all the staff members are selected and screened by Mercy Health.

Collaborations

Mercy Health has a wide range of suppliers and service providers. “Our working relationships go through a range of people and I would call them our collaborators and they would be anyone from individual home practitioners to health providers, hospitals and physiotherapy companies,” Adj Prof Cornelissen said.

“Our most important collaborator is the community, because at the end of the day if we are to provide care effectively we have to be engaged with our community. Where possible we have local relationships and that is how business is part of a community.”

A tradition of caring

Mercy Health’s values are rooted in a tradition of providing an appropriate level of care with compassion, while ensuring the dignity of the resident or client. From a small start almost a hundred years ago, the organisation has grown to a \$500 million enterprise with 6,500 employees.

Speaking about the future prospects of Mercy Health, Adj Prof Cornelissen describes his vision, “The future is very bright for Mercy Health. We have gone through a pretty rapid expansion

in our aged care services and we are in the top 20 largest aged care service providers in Australia. Our five-year plan is to continue to consolidate our position and our assets and make sure that we are able to be one of the best providers of residential aged care in the country.”

“The other is to continue to grow the portfolio appropriately, expanding our home care services so that we can offer people true care across the whole spectrum of their needs. We also want to continue to respond to the needs of the people that we are serving.”

“The big one for us is to make sure that we are strong enough and vocal enough to always advocate the case of those who cannot be heard. And in order to do that effectively you need to be a major player. We want to be a major player in the aged and health care industry and in doing so we want to make sure that those whose voices which may not be heard are always thought of and that we are continuing to look for ways to respond to the most vulnerable people.”

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