

# Winter Newsletter

Mercy Health Foundation



## Message from the Chairman

Welcome to the Winter edition of the Mercy Health Foundation newsletter for 2022. I would like to start by thanking everyone who gave so generously to the Autumn Appeal. I am delighted to report that we purchased much-needed sleep apnoea machines for the Mercy Hospital for Women Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). Your generous and ongoing support means that Mercy Hospital for Women and Werribee Mercy Hospital can continue to provide high-quality care for those in need.

As we approach the middle of the year I hope that you are all adjusting to the 'new normal'.

I have thoroughly enjoyed being able to reconnect with friends and family I had been separated from throughout the pandemic. Simple pleasures such as a coffee in the city or seeing a film at the cinema

have brought back so much joy over the past few months. We are pleased to be hosting a cocktail function and Indigenous art auction on Friday 17 June to raise funds to support the life-saving research being conducted by Mercy Perinatal — I look forward to seeing many of you there for our first in-person event of the year.

We have recently launched our Tax Appeal, which you may have seen in your mailboxes and inboxes recently. This year we are raising funds to support Mercy Perinatal's life-saving research and their latest groundbreaking trials to find a treatment for preeclampsia. You can read more about their incredible work, and how you can support the team, on the next page.

Also in this edition, you will find an article about the generous donation of recliner chairs to the

NICU by two very grateful families whose babies were cared for in the NICU. We also provide an insight into Mercy Health's heritage and how a gift left in a Will allowed Catherine McAuley to found the Order of the Sisters of Mercy. Finally, if you are looking to support Mercy Health in other ways, you can view our upcoming fundraising events on the back page.

On behalf of the entire Mercy Health Foundation team, please enjoy this issue of the Mercy Health Foundation newsletter and stay safe and well.

Best wishes



**Mr Julien O'Connell AO**  
Chairman, Mercy Health  
Foundation

# Mercy Perinatal's breakthrough drug discovery to treat preeclampsia.



Shannon Boland with baby Hudson and her mother.

Every year, preeclampsia claims the lives of 500,000 unborn babies and 70,000 pregnant mothers around the world.

Young Werribee mother, Shannon Boland, knows these statistics all too well.

In 2020 Shannon tragically lost her daughter, Mia, to preeclampsia and says the pain of losing her baby never goes away.

“Our beautiful little girl Mia was born on 29 September 2020. Instead of waiting in anticipation for her to cry after labour, my husband and I were mourning our loss. She was unwell but she was a perfect, beautiful girl.”

Almost a year afterwards, a courageous Shannon gave birth to a healthy boy, Hudson.

Her spirits buoyed by Hudson's birth, Shannon also welcomed international news of a clinical breakthrough.

Until now no drug had been discovered that slows preeclampsia from progressing to cause life-threatening injuries to major organs in the mother — her kidneys, liver, lungs and brain.

Late last year, a joint team of researchers from Mercy Perinatal and colleagues in Cape Town, South Africa reported the results of a breakthrough clinical trial in the prestigious British Medical Journal.

**“If our findings are confirmed, it may mean that the diabetes drug, metformin, could be used to save the lives of thousands of mothers and their infants,”**

co-director of Mercy Perinatal Professor Sue Walker AO says.

The biggest beneficiary of the work undertaken by the Mercy Perinatal and South African team of researchers are pregnant women and their babies.

“That's what gets us out of bed

and brings us to work each day. It is the vision that we might be able to reduce the number of lives lost,” Sue says.

Shannon says it is amazing that such occurrences are happening. “Knowing that future outcomes for others might be different to ours... I could not hope for anything better,” she says.

A third set of trials soon to start may provide final confirmation that a simple, cheap tablet metformin could be used to significantly reduce the 70,000 mothers and half a million babies globally that are currently lost to preeclampsia.

**Your gift will help Mercy Perinatal realise their vision of reducing the number of mothers and babies lost to preeclampsia each year.**



Scan the QR to support Mercy Perinatal.

## Other ways to support us.

Not able to attend our Indigenous Art Auction and Cocktail Reception on Friday 17 June but still want to support Mercy Perinatal? Authentic and Original Aboriginal Art Gallery will be donating a portion of the sales between 17 June – 17 July to Mercy Perinatal — you just need to let the gallery know that you came through Mercy Health Foundation's recommendation.

[www.uthaboriginalart.com.au](http://www.uthaboriginalart.com.au)

**Donate today through the Mercy Health Foundation website or call our team:  
[mercyhealthfoundation.org.au](http://mercyhealthfoundation.org.au) | 03 8416 7766**

# Kangaroo cuddles now possible thanks to some very generous families.

Late last year, the staff and patients at the Mercy Hospital for Women Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (MHW NICU) received two new recliner chairs, perfect for mothers and babies, just in time for Christmas.

The recliners were donated to the NICU by two very generous families — the Hunters and Bonazingas — both of which have a deep connection to the MHW NICU and maternity services.

In 2017, Shannon and Brett Hunter's twins, Jack and Ally, were born premature at 26 weeks at Box Hill Hospital. The twins were then transferred to the MHW NICU.

"Jack was born at 780g and Ally 689g. Sadly, Ally passed away from NEC (Necrotizing enterocolitis) on day 55, the infection came on very fast and she passed away in my arms two hours later. Jack came home on oxygen on day 118," Shannon says.

***"The staff were amazing right through our journey, the most beautiful people anybody could meet, they supported us so well especially after Ally passed away, the care we were given that night by the staff was unbelievable."***

"I wanted to do something to say thanks. This donation was a way we could help out, as recliners were always hard to get when you wanted to do kangaroo care."

In 2019 Vanessa and Peter Bonazinga learnt they were having monochorionic identical twins — they were sharing the one placenta.

"At our 20-week scan the boys were diagnosed with Twin to Twin Transfusion Syndrome. This meant they were not sharing the placenta evenly. For the safety of the twins and myself, they needed to be delivered via emergency caesarean," Vanessa says.

Marc and Adam were born on 25 September 2019 at 24 weeks. They were born weighing 672g and 679g and spent four months in hospital before finally coming home.

"From the moment Marc and Adam were born, I felt they were in the best place. At every bedside visit we were informed, we were included, we were advised, we were kept up to date," Vanessa says.

Vanessa and her family wanted a way to say thank you and they "didn't think a box of chocolates was quite going to cut it," she says.

"If someone reads the plaque on the back of the recliner and asks about Marc and Adam, my wish is that hearing their story gives them hope that they too, will take their baby or babies home," Vanessa says.

Mercy Hospital for Women Neonatal Services Equipment Nurse Meg Salmetti shared the team's joy in receiving these generous donation:

***"Thank you, thank you, thank you for making our nursery a little more comfortable!"***

Shannon's gratitude also extends beyond the NICU: "We went



*Bonazinga family having kangaroo cuddles.*

through Mercy Perinatal to have our beautiful rainbow baby, Douglas. The care they took was amazing, they made sure all our worries were looked after. We can not thank the Mercy enough."

Vanessa has hopes that donations like hers will motivate others to give back as well. "Perhaps our donation may motivate others to pay it forward. I often think about mums who are currently in the midst of their NICU journey and hope they have a happy ending just like we did."

## Other ways to support us.

We have partnered with Silkies Rose Farm who are generously donating a portion of all sales of their Catherine McAuley potted rose to support Mercy Health. The plants will be sold from November at \$62 each. If you would like to secure a plant for November please email or call us on the following details:  
foundation@mercy.com.au  
03 8416 7766

**To support Mercy Health's neonatal services please donate online or call our team:  
mercyhealthfoundation.org.au | 03 8416 7766**

# A once-in-a-lifetime gift — ensuring a future that cares first



Founder of the Sisters of Mercy,  
Catherine McAuley

The modern story of Mercy Health began with the founding of the Order of the Sisters of Mercy in Dublin in 1831 by Catherine McAuley, who dedicated her life to serving people in need. This story began thanks to a gift in Will. In 1822, William Callaghan made an extraordinary gift to Catherine McAuley to pay tribute to her care. By naming Catherine as the sole beneficiary to his Estate, he bestowed to her his life's savings, valued at the time at approximately £25,000. With this gift, Catherine was able to establish the House of Mercy, a building to house and educate poor women.

Today, we continue to bring that gift to life for the people we serve.

Mercy Health can trace its origins back to the establishment of our health services in Victoria in 1920. The organisation has since grown from strength to strength, caring for the needs of the community from the beginning to the end of life.

**Every bequest makes a difference and we have been blessed by many donors who want to pay tribute to the care Mercy Health provided by supporting us in our mission and commitment to 'care first'.**

A bequest is a precious gift — it can be the most significant and extraordinary gift of your lifetime.

Gifts of all sizes can make a significant difference. A gift in your Will is a wonderful legacy for future generations and can change lives in many different ways, from supporting research and best practice in perinatal medicine, to improving facilities for hospitals and aged care.

## Whatever the amount, your gift can make a difference.

If you are considering including a gift in your Will to Mercy Health it would be our pleasure to discuss your preferences with you. If you would like more information please contact Ralf Sternad, General Manager Gifts in Wills:

0415 071 701

[rsternad@mercy.com.au](mailto:rsternad@mercy.com.au)

## Upcoming events

### Run Melbourne 2022

Sunday 24 July 2022

With closed roads and a fast, flat course, more than 20,000 runners will descend on the streets, heading past some of Melbourne's most famous landmarks. Join the movement, inspire our city to run, and raise money to support Mercy Health.



Scan the  
QR code to  
sign up today!

### Nike Melbourne Marathon Festival 2022

Sunday 2 October 2022

Join thousands of others and make a difference as you run, jog, wheel or walk your way through the city streets, passing iconic Melbourne landmarks before finishing with a lap of honour around the MCG's hallowed turf.

Don't miss the chance to go the extra mile and fundraise for the incredible work of Mercy Health.



Scan the  
QR code to  
sign up today!

### Mercy Health Foundation Golf Day

11 October 2022

Mercy Health Foundation's Golf Day will be held at Kingston Heath Golf Course and is raising much needed funds to support Mercy Perinatal's research.

**For sponsorship or event information please contact Belinda Barker, Community Fundraising and Relationships Officer:**

[b.barker@mercy.com.au](mailto:b.barker@mercy.com.au)

0402 628 447