

# Summer Newsletter

Mercy Health Foundation



December 2022

## Message from the Chairman

Last Christmas, Pope Francis delivered these wise words that still resonate today as we approach the festive season — “Stop for a bit and think of Christmas as a message, a message of peace”.

We have witnessed another year marked by tragedy, from the ongoing war in Ukraine to the floods that have continued to devastate vast areas of our beautiful country. Personally, I have also experienced a great deal of loss this year and I know that I am not alone. Personally I know that many of you have experienced the loss of loved ones this year but I am comforted by the extraordinary expressions of thought and prayer I know many of you would have received.

However, in the face of loss and tragedy, we have also witnessed great acts of kindness, bravery and support here in Australia and across the world. We have also seen immense generosity

from people, including you, our generous supporters and donors, who have continued to support Mercy Health’s mission to bring God’s mercy to those in need.

In this edition of the Mercy Health Foundation newsletter, I am pleased to share with you our 2022 Christmas Appeal, which is raising much-needed funds for the Imagine Fund. The Imagine Fund supports aged care residents to achieve something they’ve always dreamed of, which would otherwise not be possible — residents like Robert and Marie, whose stories you may have already read. You can read more about Robert’s incredible dream, and how generous donations from people like you have enabled us to make it come true in time for Christmas.

You will also find stories of Mercy Health’s intergenerational program, iGEN, in this edition and the incredibly positive impact it

is having on aged care residents and high school students alike. The iGen program is one of many ways Mercy Health is ensuring that everybody can experience healthy ageing.

I am also glad to share the heartwarming story of our new therapy dog program. Recently launched at Mercy Hospital for Women, and soon to be rolled out at Werribee Mercy Hospital, these beautiful dogs are bringing joy to some of Mercy’s sickest patients.

I hope these stories fill you with happiness, peace and positivity.

On behalf of Mercy Health Foundation, I wish you and your families every blessing for the Christmas period and a safe and happy New Year.

Warm regards,  
**Julien O’Connell AO**

“I love it. It honestly feels like a second grandparent”



*Ivy Conole and Taylah Petrusma at the ABC*

# New friendships formed at all ages

Given a 70-year age gap, high school student Taylah Petrusma and aged care resident Ivy Conole are unlikely friends. However, the pair say they have forged a strong connection through Mercy Health’s innovative iGEN program.

“It is lovely to talk to the young ones about what they’re doing and what they want to do. We talk and we laugh about different things and

stories about when I was young and what it was like,” Ivy says.

Taylah explains that having a 94-year-old mate is pretty special.

“Every time Ivy and I catch up, there is never a dull moment. We always have amazing chats — it’s as if we’ve known each other for years,” she says.

“Each week is an opportunity to get insight from Ivy into what things were like in ‘the olden days’, and how it was so different from now.”

Ivy and Taylah formed their special friendship through the iGEN program, a groundbreaking intergenerational program that brings together Catherine McAuley College (CMC) students and Mercy Health Bethlehem Home for the Aged residents.

The program encourages relationships and respect between secondary students and aged care residents. Taylah is one of 350 students taking part in the program since it began in 2020.





Ivy Canole with student Lucy Daley

Ivy says exchanging stories with Taylah during their visits is invigorating.

“The age gap doesn’t seem to matter — you feel as if you’re young again. So many things happen in your life and you never

think you’ll have the opportunity to pass the stories on,” Ivy says.

Mercy Health Chief Executive Residential Aged Care, Home Care and Seniors Living Adjunct Associate Professor Felix Pintado says “a highlight of the two-year

program has been the connection and warmth forged between students and residents”.

“Some of the first CMC students who took part in the program still maintain regular contact with residents, while others are offering to return to the home to undertake some work or as part of their work experience,” says Felix.

“There is evidence that the initiative is encouraging some students to consider a career in aged care and we welcome that aspect of the program.”

Thanks to the generosity of Mercy Health Foundation donors, Australian Catholic University researchers are analysing the intergenerational program using participants’ feedback, with results to be published later this year.

**To support Mercy Health please donate online or call our team:  
[mercyhealthfoundation.org.au](https://mercyhealthfoundation.org.au) | 03 8416 7766**





*Robert Hagan enjoying the brand new Aston Martin*

# A James Bond dream come true

Mercy Place aged care resident — and massive James Bond fan — Robert Hagan has always loved cars.

In the late 1950s, Robert's first car, a white FJ Holden, allowed him to venture from his family home in Brunswick out to "the bush" in Bacchus Marsh (now a lively Melbourne suburb) to put his car's horsepower to the test.

Robert is the first to admit that he has always liked to push the limits when it comes to driving and he wasn't shy of burning rubber in his younger years!

Now 79, Robert is described by Mercy Place General Manager



*Robert Hagan*

Tara Chandrasegran as a "really respectful gentlemen and one of the very first people to come and welcome me to Mercy Place when I first started".

When Tara first heard about the revised Imagine Fund project, recently launched by Mercy Health Foundation, Robert was one of the

first residents she wanted to put forward.

"We thought of Robert straight away because of his love for cars, and because it's not something he ever would have been able to experience, before coming to Mercy," says Tara.

Robert's love for James Bond films throughout the years led to his love for luxury cars, specifically James Bonds' car of choice – an Aston Martin.

Determined to make Robert's dream a reality, Tara and the Mercy Health Foundation team set to work. A few phone calls later and the Foundation's friends at Zagame Automotive were on board with an Aston Martin.

# “... that is superb, I can't believe this is happening!”



done it,” says Tara. “He has just been so excited and so grateful... and he's so deserving of this”.

Robert was almost at a loss for words when he finally returned to Mercy Place after a morning of recreating his favourite James Bond moments. “It was absolutely marvellous,” says Robert.

Dreams like Robert's are at the heart of the new ambitious Imagine Fund program, officially rolling out to all Mercy Health residential aged care homes in 2023.

“We have created this new program as we wanted to structure and expand the Imagine Fund to make more dreams come true for our residents,” says Mercy Health Foundation Chief Operating Officer Milva Bello.

“This is an ambitious and life-changing program that gives Mercy Health residents the opportunity to experience something that may have otherwise been out of reach.”

The Imagine Fund is only possible with the support of generous donors, so this Christmas please consider donating to help make dreams come true for more people like Robert.

“Thank you for your generosity and for making these dreams come true,” says Tara.

“When we told him we could get an Aston Martin, he was so excited, mouth wide open, smiling ear to ear and he said, ‘Are you serious? Is this happening?!’” says Tara.

A few weeks later, and with the help of many, including our incredible Imagine Fund donors, the big day had arrived.

In true James Bond style, Robert was dressed in a dapper tuxedo, purchased especially for the day.

As Robert walked out the front doors of Mercy Place, the eyes of his fellow residents on him, he could not wipe the smile from his face, especially when he saw the

brand new 2022 Aston Martin Vantage convertible idling outside.

“Oh my god... that is superb,” Robert exclaims as he walks closer to the car “I can't believe this is happening!”

Sitting in the Aston Martin, tuxedo on, roof down, and smile plastered from ear to ear, Robert looked right at home – a true James Bond.

As the car, engine roaring, drove off from Mercy Place, General Manager Tara shed a tear seeing how happy it had made Robert.

“I don't often get emotional, but seeing Robert so happy has really



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



# Everybody's talking about **Popcorn**

There's nothing quite like Popcorn on a Friday to lift spirits among staff and patients.

At least that's what Mercy Hospital for Women (MHW) Oncology Ward Nurse Unit Manager Elle Wilkes says about Popcorn — Mercy Health's very first therapy dog.

When Popcorn and her owner Ann first visited MHW in early September, the hospital was alive with excited whispers. Elle says the enthusiastic anticipation surrounding Popcorn's visits has become quite the tradition.

"It is still like that every second Friday — people are so excited to see Popcorn. You see Ann and Popcorn walk into the room and people's faces just light up."

Popcorn is a registered therapy dog with Delta Therapy Dogs and visits MHW every fortnight, thanks to Mercy Health Foundation and their paw-sitively awesome donors. The friendly pooch is a regular at the MHW oncology ward where her visits are eagerly awaited by many staff and patients alike.

"There are a couple of staff who haven't met Popcorn yet and they have specifically asked to be rostered on a Friday so they can be working when Popcorn comes in," Elle says.

"The therapy dog program really does bring joy to our hardworking staff. Popcorn has brought the team together and her visits create



*Elle Wilkes, Popcorn and Ann*

a good feeling around the ward on that day."

For patients, Popcorn is a positive distraction from their illness.

Vanessa, an oncology patient with terminal cancer, loved having Popcorn snuggle up on her bed. Vanessa was having a particularly tough day and was missing her own dog when Popcorn came to visit. Popcorn's gentle nature made Vanessa feel relaxed and brought a smile to her face.

Elle says Popcorn has a special way of connecting and comforting patients through difficult times.

"We had a patient recently who was receiving palliative care and

had been disengaged, but when Ann and Popcorn walked in the room, she smiled. It was just so heartwarming to witness. Although the patient was struggling, she was able to have a special moment of happiness with Popcorn," Elle says.

Popcorn's positive impact spreads beyond the oncology ward. From the moment Ann and Popcorn arrive at MHW, their presence is known. From patients and staff in the lifts and corridors to the staff at the screening desks and reception — everyone shares a smile and a chat with Ann and Popcorn.

"I'm really happy that something so simple brings so much joy to the

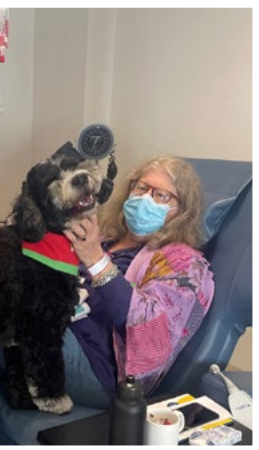


initiative to improve patient and staff wellbeing and it is certainly having a positive impact across the hospital.”

Mercy Health’s therapy dog program will be expanded to Werribee Mercy Hospital in coming weeks, with thanks to Wyndham Health Foundation.



*Popcorn visiting patients and staff*



### 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.

If you would like to secure a rose please email or call us on the following details:

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

03 8416 7766

*Purchase a rose*



whole team and the patients. The program has been a resounding success and I hope that it can continue,” Elle says.

MHW General Manager Tanya Darrer shares Elle’s passion for the program. “The therapy dog program has been a wonderful

**To support Mercy Health please donate online or call our team:  
[mercyhealthfoundation.org.au](http://mercyhealthfoundation.org.au) | 03 8416 7766**





*The winning team from  
VAC Facility Services*

## 2022 Mercy Health Foundation Golf Day a great success!

The weather was on our side on Tuesday 11 October as 60 keen golfers arrived at Kingston Heath Golf Club for our first charity golf day in many years.

With food and drinks galore on course, and a chance to beat-the-pro, Nick O'Hern (the only man to have beaten Tiger Woods in competition play - twice!), it was a great day had by all.

We are thankful to everyone who made this golf day a great success and helped us to raise much-needed funds to support Mercy Perinatal's lifesaving stillbirth and preeclampsia research and trials.

A special thanks to our platinum sponsor Oak Capital, without whom the day would not have been possible.

A big congratulations to the team from VAC Facility Services who took home the 2022 winners trophy on the day – we look forward to welcoming you back in 2023 to see if you can take home the trophy again!

Our 2023 Mercy Health Foundation Golf Day is returning to Kingston Heath Golf Club on Tuesday 17 October 2023. To register your team's interest, please contact the Mercy Health Foundation team.

### Silver sponsors

Hills Health Solutions  
Hamilton Wealth Partners  
Xacom  
R Bliem & Associates Pty Ltd  
Interleasing  
Warrigal Financial Services  
PMD Financial Advisers  
Gen Care Services Pty Ltd

### Non-playing sponsors

Atherton  
Virgona Provedoring  
Hills Health Solutions

### In kind support

Kingston Heath  
O'Brien's Pharmacy  
Mercedes-Benz  
Drummond Golf  
Golf Select

### Platinum sponsor



### Gold sponsors

