

HEARTBEAT

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MILDURA
BASE PUBLIC HOSPITAL

WHEN PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

NURSING SOARS TO
NEW HEIGHTS AT MBPH

MICHAEL'S DEATH-DEFYING EXPERIENCE

A GRATEFUL MAN AND
HIS FAMILY GIVE THANKS

TRIBUTE TO A LONG SERVING GP

DR PHILIP WEBSTER TO STEP BACK
FROM EVERYDAY CONSULTING

THE A-LEAGUE'S ELITE VISIT MILDURA

THE INAUGURAL ONE AGENCY MILDURA
MBPH FOUNDATION FESTIVAL OF SPORT THRILLS
THE KIDS AND SUNRAYSA SOCCER LOVERS

SPRING
EDITION
2024



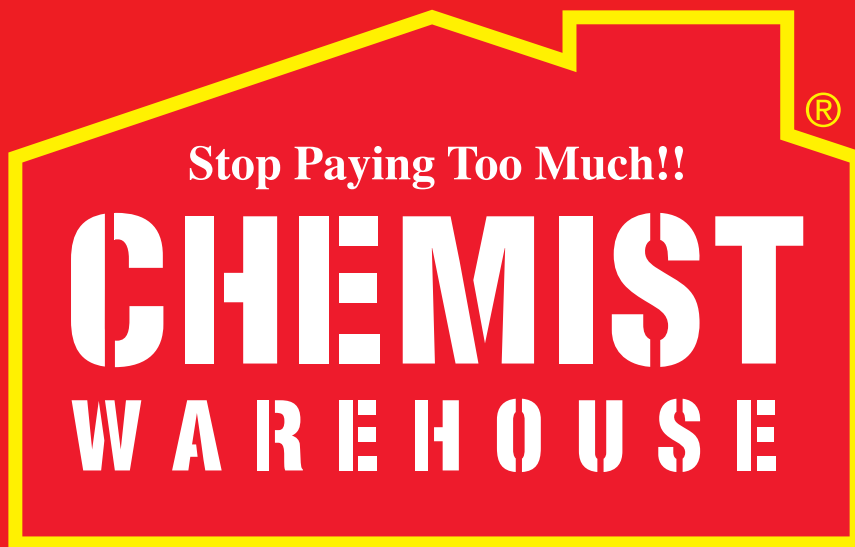
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YOUR FEEDBACK IS WELCOME!

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FROM OUR FOUNDATION CHAIR

As we approach 2025, I want to take a moment to reflect on another significant year for the Foundation and extend my thanks to everyone who has supported our various causes over the past 12 months.

This year, we have accomplished so much and hosted numerous successful events. The K C Society lunch was a standout, raising over \$50,000 to support local students pursuing health-related tertiary studies. Our fashion parade, generously supported by Mildura City Traders, also attracted impressive attendance.

A highlight of the year was the A-League Festival of Sport, showcasing some of soccer's best talents at the Mildura Sporting Precinct over two exciting days. The Gala Ball, filled with glitz and glamour, was another memorable evening.

While these events were enjoyable, it is the funds raised and the generosity of our community and sponsors that have enabled us to launch remarkable new initiatives. One of the year's key achievements was the purchase of a patient transport vehicle for the hospital. The Foundation contributed \$180,000 to make this project a reality, allowing patients to receive care closer to home.

Without a doubt, our most significant accomplishment in 2024 has been funding a mobile skin cancer screening truck, set to hit the road in 2025 and serve communities across the Northern Mallee. With two in three people estimated to be diagnosed with some form of skin cancer by the age of 70, this life-saving initiative will transform how we address skin cancer in our region. We are incredibly proud to have funded the \$2.5 million needed for this essential project.

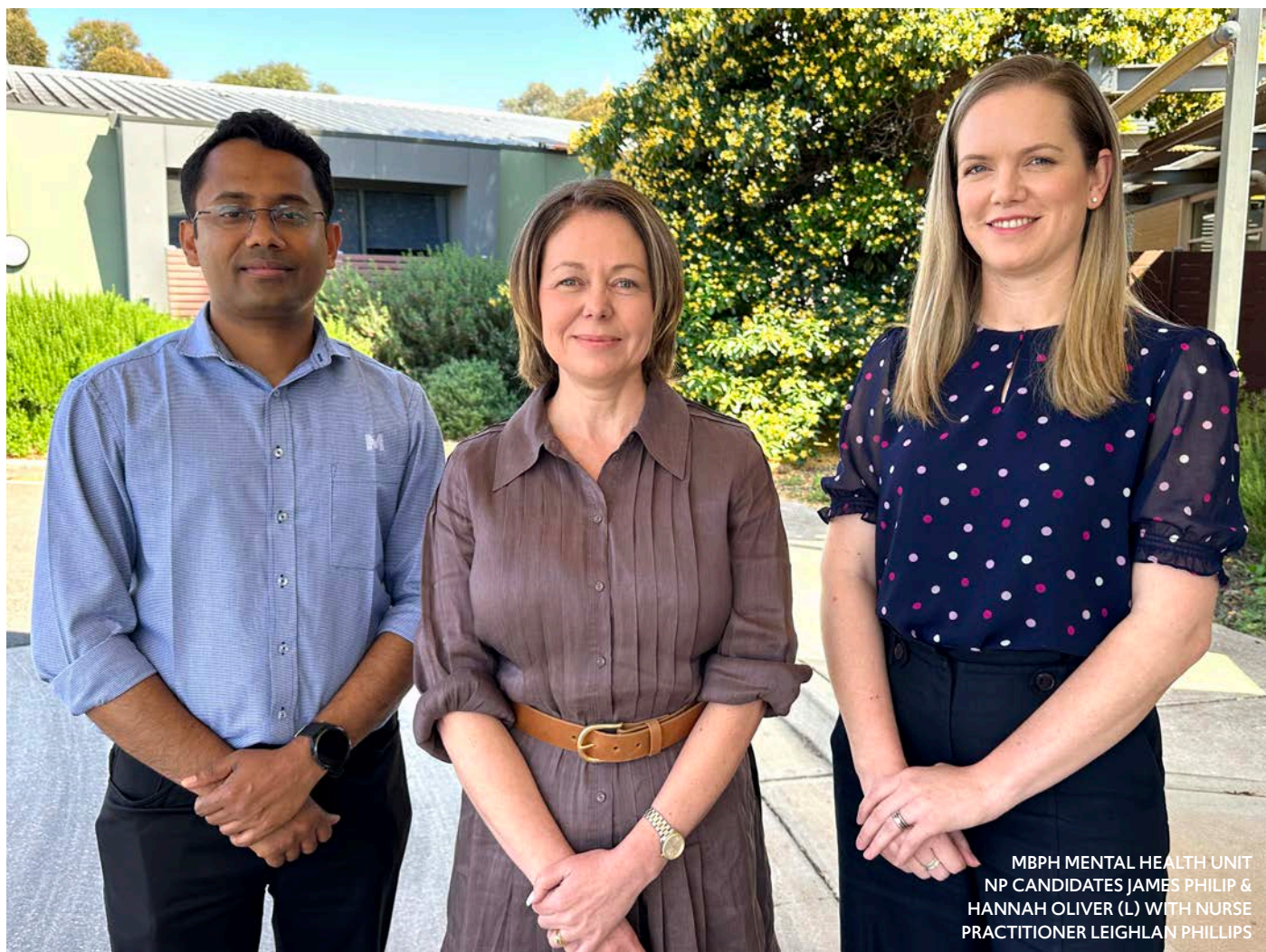
Additionally, the Foundation continues to support families in need through Lucas's Legacy and university scholarships via the K C Society.

On behalf of the MBPH Foundation and our dedicated team of employees and committee members, I extend my gratitude to everyone who has supported the Foundation in 2024. Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Warm regards,

Ross Lake OAM
Chairman
Mildura Base Public Hospital





MBPH MENTAL HEALTH UNIT
NP CANDIDATES JAMES PHILIP &
HANNAH OLIVER (L) WITH NURSE
PRACTITIONER LEIGHLAN PHILLIPS

WHEN PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

NURSING SOARS TO NEW HEIGHTS AT MBPH

By John Dooley

At a time of doctor and allied health worker shortages, highly qualified nursing staff are a real asset to any hospital.

Mildura Base Public Hospital (MBPH) is fortunate to have one Nurse Practitioner in its mental health unit, while several other of its registered nurses are completing their Nurse Practitioner training.

A Nurse Practitioner must have a graduate-level degree of education and advanced clinical education and training.

NPs, as they are known, share many of the same duties as doctors performing physical

exams, making diagnoses to treat diseases and other health conditions, and they can also prescribe medication.

NPs provide patient-centred care, focussing on disease prevention, living a healthy lifestyle and understanding patient's health concerns. An NP can serve as a primary care provider or as a specialty care provider focusing on a specific group of people.

The latter is an apt description of MBPH mental health and wellbeing service Addiction Specialty Nurse Practitioner, Leighlan Phillips.

Leighlan graduated earlier this year with her Masters of Nurse Practitioner and Heartbeat

was keen to chat to her role at attached to the hospital's Mental Health Unit where she specialises in treating drug and alcohol addiction.

"I was born in Broken Hill where my father was a miner. But my family moved around a lot, and I ended up in Townsville as a teenager. That's where I met my husband who was in the Army at the time," Leighlan said.

"I started as an enrolled nurse when I was 21 and I pretty much went into the drug and alcohol area immediately and enjoyed it.

"I then went on to do my registered nursing before working in quite a large detox unit in Brisbane.

"I moved to Mildura in late 2017 as a registered nurse to take up a position with Sunraysia Community Health Services as an addiction nurse working within the community.

It was at that point that Leighlan realised that she wanted to become a Nurse Practitioner.

"I could see that there was a need to increase access to addiction treatment in Mildura, particularly around the provision of Medication assisted treatment of opioid use disorder (MATOD) Methadone and Buprenorphine. There is still limited access to this service in this area and in rural areas in general," she said.

"To become a Nurse Practitioner, you need to have at least five years post graduate experience as a registered nurse. In addition, you need to have two years in advanced practice and two years in a speciality area.

"And to be accepted into the course you also need to have a postgraduate certificate in your chosen field

Along with the academic studies, Nurse practitioner students (called candidates) are required to undertake supervised clinical practice over two years with mentors who are either an Endorsed NP or a medical Dr.

I was very fortunate to have very experienced supervisors and Mentors. Dr John Buckley was my main GP mentor and I spent countless hours working with him at the community MATOD Clinic. I was also supervised by Addiction specialist Professor Edward Ogden from the State-wide specialist centre for addiction and mental health and Psychiatrists Dr Robert Lundin and Dr Scott Hall.

Nurse practitioners also need to develop leadership, education and research capabilities.

"In addition to my clinical supervision, I also had professional mentors within the Hospital; Endorsed NP's Nola cupper and Adele Morrison and our Director of Transformation, Merryl White, so as you can see, I had a wonderful team supporting me."

Whew!

Leighlan admits she was fortunate to have been granted a number of scholarships that means her HECS fees are effectively paid for.

"So effectively I didn't have to pay for my Nurse Practitioner training," she explains.

"I am the first Nurse Practitioner to be

employed by the hospital and that is a great step forward for the MBPH."

Leighlan is providing solid support for the hospital's cadre of fellow nurses now in the throes of completing their NP qualification.

"Nurse practitioners can work autonomously to diagnose and treat patients within their speciality area. we can prescribe medications and order investigations having more of us 'on the ground' will be a real boost for the hospital."

Heartbeat asked Leighlan what had motivated her to work in the challenging area of treating drug and alcohol addiction.

"As I mentioned earlier, I spent some time living in Townsville, where I had the opportunity to work with First Nations communities. My first job after completing my TAFE training was at an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre," Leighlan shared.

"I found working with marginalised communities very rewarding. You're often thrown in at the deep end, needing a broad skill set because you're dealing with a wide range of health issues - from dressing wounds to managing chronic conditions like diabetes and heart disease. It wasn't just about addressing drugs and alcohol."

"I still love working with First Nations communities; it's probably where my greatest passion lies, alongside supporting patients dealing with addiction. These communities are often under-served and face a lot

of stigma related to addiction and healthcare in general. I really enjoy working with people who've had negative healthcare experiences due to stigma and judgment, and I strive to change that perception."

Leighlan also strives to help change fellow health care professionals' perception of people with drug and alcohol problems.

"I think our team is doing that, and that is helping to breakdown that stigma," she said

"Working in the challenging area of drug and alcohol addiction has its rewards, particularly with MATOD. You can see people's lives change almost overnight.

"Once you can get people out of the circle of withdrawal, using and craving. they can start working on the other things that

are important in their lives, like gaining employment, reconnecting with family and improving their mental health.

"And you don't get to see that very often where you give a medication and see someone's life change almost immediately. That is really rewarding."

Leighlan said that the team also carries out blood-borne virus testing and treatment.

"We have cured people with Hepatitis C here in this hospital," she said.

"In health care we often work with chronic conditions so you don't normally get to cure people that often. To cure someone of a disease is pretty special - love it."

Leighlan was asked if there was a cross-over between mental health and drug and alcohol addiction or were they symptoms of each other.

"It's a good question. I don't think we really know. I think it all meshes. Some people use drugs to deal with their trauma and mental health symptoms, but drugs aren't always very helpful for mental health," she said.

"The good thing about this service, is that we no longer treating them separately. Now our drug and alcohol team also directly address mental health.

"People come in and they can get help for their mental health and their co-occurring addiction at the same time. It used to be separate. This is a new approach that was only introduced in February this year and I am proud of the service we have developed at MBPH."

Leighlan is part of the alcohol and drug integrated treatment team found within the MBPH Mental Health Unit, who she revealed are dedicated to the community and providing a continuity of care as patients move between services.

"Our AODIT team includes an addiction specialist, two nurses and a registrar. Mental health also has two nurse practitioner candidates who will soon graduate as Nurse Practitioners and that is going to add enormously to the resources here at MBPH," Leighlan said.

"The great thing about our mental health NP's, is that we are all invested in this community. We are very much a part of this wonderful community and not going anywhere. We have young families, children at school and have bought homes here. We plan to be in Mildura for the long-term."

One of the mental health nurses training to be an NP is Hannah Oliver.

Hannah's formal title is Perinatal Emotional health program, Nurse Practitioner Candidate, who graduated as a registered nurse in 2012.

"I started mental health training straight after I graduated from university," she told Heartbeat.

"What really struck me in my uni training was the prevalence of mental health issues through all sectors of medical care in the wards. I felt like it was an area that was being poorly addressed.

"I also felt a lot of empathy for people and their situations and could see that it was a large part of their suffering that wasn't really being treated.

"Therefore, I was drawn to mental health early on in my training. Then in my first year, I underwent fertility treatment myself because I was having difficulty starting a family and that journey really started my curiosity and interest in the perinatal sector. "Understanding and talking to women and families who had struggled with the issue of starting a family and the mental health burden this brought with it, further reinforced my view that it wasn't always being dealt with adequately."

Hannah said it was in that context that she was really drawn to trying to fill that service provision gap.

"After being blessed with four children, I returned to my training again and completed my post-graduate studies in mental health and then I went on to join the perinatal mental health team here," she said.

"After a few years of doing that, I was inspired by Leighlan to do the Nurse Practitioner training and started to imagine what that could look like in the perinatal service."

Hannah added that another of her motivations to become a Nurse Practitioner was the acknowledgement of the workforce shortage in health care.

"I'm a local. Born and bred in Mildura. I think understanding that in rural areas we are in many ways the product of the city-centric policies that come out of the Department of Health and at a federal level too. We are often the ones who are forgotten," she said.

"Nurse Practitioners, therefore, have a really important role to support small communities and when you have speciality services operating with Nurse Practitioners, I could see how that would benefit our community greatly.



MBPH MENTAL HEALTH UNIT ADDICTION SPECIALTY NURSE PRACTITIONER LEIGHLAN PHILLIPS.

"And we are a small service. We only have the services of a specialist consultant for half a day a week. Having the ability to have a Nurse Practitioner provide those extra services, like prescribing particularly, is a real boost."

Hannah undertook her registered nurse training through La Trobe University's Mildura campus and then completed her postgraduate online through RMIT in Melbourne. She is now undertaking her Nurse Practitioner course through Monash University.

This is a great example of how you can live, work and advance your career through additional study right here in Mildura.

Another of the mental health Nurse Practitioner candidates at MBPH is James Philip.

Originally from India, James moved to New Zealand when he was 22 to pursue his then passion of working in hospitality, initially as a baker.

"There were a lot of nurses in my family, including my sister, brother-in-law and brother and that's what attracted me to nursing. That, together with what I perceived to be a rewarding career," James said.

"When I started nurse training, I wasn't thinking of mental health. It wasn't a common area of health we talked about at home in India. When I was looking toward my first placement, I was looking toward medical or surgical nursing.

"When I did my placement, I was then enlightened into realising that mental health is part of a person's overall health and I gained a big insight into it.

"I was working in a community setting where we had patients with drug and

alcohol issues, working with them and listening to their life story and that is when I realised that this was 'my cup of tea'.

"I finished my Bachelor of Nursing in New Zealand and by that stage I was the only member of my family left there, the others having moved to Australia. So, I decided to do the same.

"I had just started having a family. My wife and I had just had our first son, and we thought it would be good to be close to our extended family."

When James and his family arrived in Australia in 2019, he had two options to continue his nursing career -- one in Melbourne and the other in Mildura.

"I chose Mildura at random really. However, I had always lived in a regional town, and I thought if we come here for one year, we could always move around Australia later on," he recalls.

"But when we got here, we just loved it. Mildura provide is a lovely place to raise a family and you have the convenience of everything you need in close proximity.

"The MBPH organisation was very supportive. I started off in the ward as a graduate and Hannah was there. They were all my mentors back then."

James then had the opportunity to work in the community and I did a rotation with the aged person's mental health team.

"And I thought that was to be my speciality within mental health," he says.

"I continued in the ward and at the same time I was chasing my graduate diploma. That ended up being a Master's Degree in Nursing Mental Health," James said.

"Eventually there was a vacancy in the aged person's mental health team and since then I have been part of that team, which I really enjoy.

And now you're studying to be a Nurse Practitioner?

"Yes. I was talking to Leighlan and some of the other Nurse Practitioners within the organisation, and I thought that would be area to further advance my career and clinical skills," James recalled.

"I have never worked anywhere else and so you could say I am a product of this organisation."

By the end of 2025 Hannah, James and two other MBPH candidates, one of whom is in the Emergency Department and the other in cardiology, will have graduated as Nurse Practitioners.

Heartbeat wishes them all well and will follow their careers with interest.



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THE TALENTED BOY FROM RED CLIFFS WHO ENJOYED GLOBAL SUCCESS AND THEN RETURNED HOME

A CREATIVE SOUL, WHOSE PASSION FOR ACADEMIA, ART AND GIVING BACK TO COMMUNITY, DEFINES THE EXTRAORDINARY CAREER OF THE PERSON YOU ARE ABOUT TO MEET

By John Dooley

BORN and bred in Red Cliffs, Giuseppe 'Joe' Simonetta, grew up on a fruit block, which apart from the sultana vines, had a bountiful mix of fruit and vegetables, which in between the grape season, supplemented his family's income.

In 2021, in the midst of COVID, Joe returned to Mildura and initially worked as an Authorised Officer, following which in 2022, he was appointed business development manager with the Christie Centre Inc.,

where he remains today. We will find out a little later in the article why Joe returned to the region he farewelled four decades ago.

Young Joe Simonetta, excelled academically at school and completed his Year-12 studies at St Joseph's College Mildura, in 1984. He then went on to gain a Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Science Honours at Monash University and following that, Joe completed a Doctorate in Physiology at Monash. He would then go on to be a lecturer at the University of South Australia in Adelaide for the School of Biomedical

Sciences and he also lectured at the School of Physiology and Pharmacology at the University of New South Wales in Sydney.

Joe's glowing CV reveals his extensive academic qualifications and the senior positions he has held in a variety of major organisations, both in Australia and overseas.

In the corporate sector, Joe is recognised as an accomplished senior executive with extensive experience driving cutting-edge strategies within the technology commercialisation industry.

He has a proven capability in operations, compliance and quality, as well as excellence in people management, business development, marketing, sales and he is a performance-driven professional with strong business acumen and strategic thinking achievements.

In the academic sector, Joe also has proven success. He established an independent research laboratory, delivered successful funding and demonstrable productivity and publications as a medical research scientist and supervisor. His abilities across all administrative and education responsibilities within the tertiary system, including student mentoring and counselling are also lauded.

One career highlight that stands out, is the role Joe played in the expansion and success of international research and education software and hardware company, ADInstruments.

From 2002-2008, he was product manager based in Sydney and travelled conducting approximately 5-6 workshops per year globally. In 2007, after having visited South America numerous times, he saw an opportunity for local representation and proposed to the board the opening of the company's eighth international office. The board accepted the proposal and from 2008-2010 Joe was appointed to the role of general manager of 'ADInstruments do Brasil' office in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

In 2010, he was offered the position of Director of Sales and Marketing from a spin-out company, Telemetry Research, from the Auckland Bioengineering Institute - the University of Auckland.

During his five-year tenure, he completed an MBA and grew the market and sales internationally for rechargeable telemetry implantable devices.

In 2015, Joe was approached to return to the company ADInstruments as Head of Strategic Partnerships. During that period, he secured new international business partnerships, led exclusivity negotiations and built strong relationships with key stakeholders. Additionally, Joe provided guidance on mergers and acquisitions, assessed vertical market opportunities across ADInstruments research, training, as well as education products and collaborations with company stakeholders. Today, ADInstruments is a thriving research and software development company that creates

simple, flexible tools to help scientists and educators record and analyse data quickly and efficiently.

Joe's final foray in the corporate sector, was the appointment as CEO to the rebranded company he had originally come to work for in New Zealand in 2011, Kaha Sciences. This would have him overseeing the optimisation of product development, unique offerings and growing the business in partnering with key research institutes internationally.

Outside of work, Joe has been a long-time enthusiast and collector of art. Throughout his travels, he seized every opportunity to visit galleries and exhibitions, with New York being a regular destination, and immersing himself in diverse artistic experiences.

His passion for collecting began in 1992 during his early travels overseas, when he started acquiring egg-shaped objects as unique mementos from each place he visited. Later, after relocating to Brazil, he developed a particular interest in collecting crosses and crucifixes, primarily sourced from across South America.

Joe's appreciation for art continued to deepen during his time in New Zealand, enriching his collection further and continues to this day. While working as a research scientist, academic and biotechnology executive, Joe travelled to destinations including North and South America, Europe, the Middle East and Asia, where his collection of eggs, crosses and crucifixes grew.

In 2020, New Zealand House & Garden published a feature about Joe and his passion for collecting. Joe's unusual collection includes a lava egg from the top of Mt Vesuvius and a stone egg from Petra.

"I decided to start collecting crucifixes, initially throughout Brazil and South America and after 12 years, I have around 470 individual pieces from 30 countries and 90 cities," he told House & Garden.

Joe's passion for art moved to collecting and commissioning art works by New Zealand artists.

From 2011, he commissioned eggs, or crosses from 10 New Zealand established and upcoming artists. One of his acquisitions, was a golden egg in a ceramic nest, crafted by well-known Finnish ceramic artist, Wilhelmiina Drummond, who creates ethereal and whimsical sculptures in her studio located

in the beautiful city of Hamilton, south of Auckland.

After returning to Mildura, in collaboration with NAP Contemporary Gallery, Joe had an exhibition, launching the N & M Collection, showcasing a portion of his collected works, which featured the many crucifixes he had collected over the years from some of the most exotic locations around the world. On his return to Mildura, Joe applied and joined the Mildura Arts and Culture Advisory Committee and is enjoying being part of the local arts fraternity.

So, what brought the boy from the bush back to Sunraysia? Heartbeat spoke to Joe to find out.

"I had been away from Mildura for about 40 years and after selling the company Kaha Sciences, just after COVID, it was the perfect timing and opportunity to return to Mildura," Joe said.

"That, combined with the fact that my ageing parents sold their property and home and wanted to rebuild rather than purchase, I thought it was the perfect opportunity for me to come back home and project manage the new build."

"With mum then 80 and dad nearing 90 and deciding not to drive anymore, it presented a number of challenges, including having to deal with smart phones, online banking and cashless shopping."

Joe said that at that point, he hadn't given much thought to what he might do on his return to Mildura.

"I did have an idea that I would like to do something in the not-for-profit sector," he said.

"That opportunity didn't arise until later in 2022, as I was kept busy with the new build during 2021. Initially in 2022, I worked for the Department of Health as an Authorised Officer, which at that time, saw me doing COVID welfare visits to people's homes to ensure they had access to the right care and knew where to access support.

"Because of my keen interest in the arts, I became a member of the Mildura Arts and Culture Advisory Committee and it was through this connection that I met a board member of the Christie Centre.

"I was then introduced to the Christie Centre executive officer, Florence Davidson and we discussed my background and a previously advertised and unfilled role of Business Operations Manager.



SOME THE EXOTIC EGG SHAPED OBJECTS COLLECTED BY JOE PHOTO NZ HOUSE AND GARDEN.



JOE IN HIS HOME IN AUCKLAND PHOTO NEW ZEALAND HOUSE AND GARDEN.

The position was readvertised and I applied, was interviewed and offered the position in August 2022, I was delighted to join the organisation."

In his role, Joe is responsible for the promotion, marketing and development of the Christie Centre Inc. some of the social enterprises. This sees Joe overseeing the GrowAbility Nursery, Mildura Chocolate Company and the Spark Kiosk at the Powerhouse Precinct, which is where Heartbeat met with Joe.

"In my role in business development, I focus on growing these enterprises by enhancing marketing strategies, driving sales, nurturing existing relationships, and establishing new partnerships" Joe said.

"We have many partnerships with government, industry, philanthropic and community with my focus to grow and develop new opportunities. we currently have partnered with Atlas, one of the Tronox mines operating in Balranald," Joe said.

"The company approached us because they wanted to beautify the residential area on the site.

"The project officer from the mine contacted us to have GrowAbility supply plants and also have them do the plantings, with this to be an ongoing partnership.

"Each of the enterprises will have their unique customers, however there is always an opportunity to cross-promote, our chocolates, plants and our art products at Spark.

"People, Place, and Planet are central philosophies of the Christie Centre and all its social enterprises, including AroundAgain.

"Local and sustainability are key and our chocolate range utilises local produce including almonds, sun muscat grapes and orange crisps sold at Spark, local stockists and nationally.

"We have one of our customers, Metro Trains Melbourne, who gift chocolates to

customers and clients, which promotes our chocolates and possibly provides a little sweetener for some of their passengers."

Joe said social media, radio and their network is used to promote and market their products and to identify and attract external funding opportunities.

"That includes using Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and so on. The whole purpose of the social enterprises is doing good, supporting local and providing employment opportunities for individuals who may have barriers to employment," he said.

"We work with people's capabilities and assist with reaching their goals through opportunities and skill development to discover their full potential.

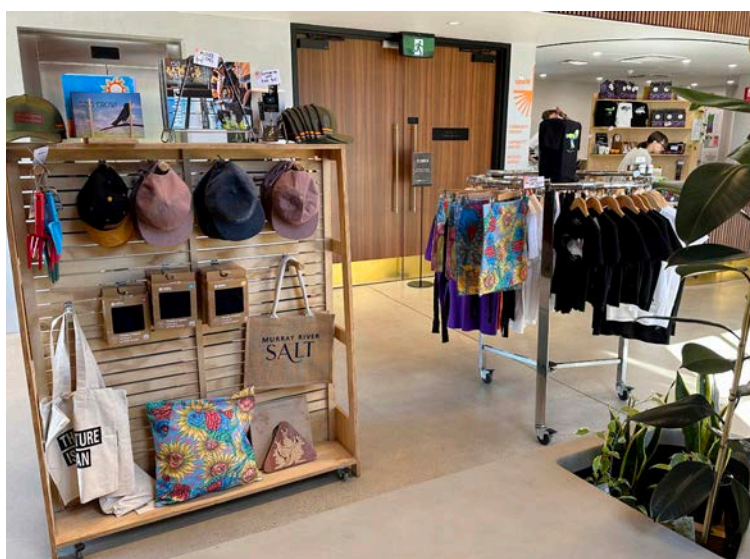
"There are also opportunities to advance through further education. We have staff at the GrowAbility Nursery for example, who have completed their Horticulture Certificate II at SuniTAFE.



ROBINVALE ESTATE OLIVE OILS AND SALAD DRESSINGS ARE ONE OF THE MANY REGIONAL PRODUCTS AVAILABLE AT SPARK.



CHRISTIE CENTRE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER JOE SIMONETTA, STAFF MEMBER MATTHEW SMITH WITH CHRISTIE CENTRE SPARK SITE SUPERVISOR, DANI PICK, IN THE SPARK KIOSK AT THE MILDURA RIVERFRONT POWERHOUSE.



SPARK STOCKS A RANGE OF PRODUCTS FROM THE CHRISTIE CENTRE SOCIAL ENTERPRISES AND ALSO LOCAL PRODUCE.

“At the Spark Kiosk, staff have had the opportunity to complete pre-accredited Learn Local courses in customer service and food handling and similarly at the chocolate company.”

Joe believes the name chosen for the Powerhouse kiosk is both inspiring and highly fitting.

“The name Spark was developed in partnership with the marketing company Point 3, and the word spark is very much about sparking inspiration, enthusiasm, creativity and inclusiveness and I think fits perfectly with the Powerhouse, which after all provided electricity for Mildura a hundred years, before it closed in the 1950s. It certainly has sparked the interest of the employees working in the kiosk, to further their vocation in hospitality, tourism and customer service.”

Established in August 2023, Spark is the newest social enterprise of the Christie Centre Inc. The kiosk inside the Powerhouse offers coffee, tea, cookies, slices, toasties

as well as cold drinks and icy poles. It's also an information hub for tourists and proudly stocks products from the Christie Centre's social enterprises, Mildura Chocolate Company, ArtRageUs and GrowAbility, as well as premium local products from Murray River Salt, Australian Garlic and Mildura Farms. Spark offers training and employment to people with different abilities and wishing to develop skills in hospitality, retail and tourism.

Asked whether he misses the excitement of living in a city and the cultural attractions that they offer, Joe said he is loving being back in Mildura, and a city indulgence is only a drive or a plane trip away.

“People did ask me how I would cope being back in a small town, given that I had been so used to living in big cities and other colourful locations around the world,” he said.

“The fact is, there is an advantage for me, in that everybody knows everybody. Being able to create partnerships and linkages is made somewhat easier and you are

able to facilitate a lot more because of a local awareness, which means you don't necessarily have to tell the whole story to organisations and customers.

“I am thrilled to be back in Mildura and grateful to be working with an organisation that I believe is making a meaningful contribution to the community through its services and products. I am proud to play even a small part in that effort.”

With Christmas just a few weeks away, the perfect last-minute stocking fillers and gifts for family and friends can be found at the Christie Centre's social enterprises. Whether it's an exquisite gift pack from the Mildura Chocolate Company, a native plant from GrowAbility or a gift with a difference from the Spark Visitor Inspiration Point and Kiosk, you are bound to find the perfect present.

Visit: www.christiecentre.com.au and you can navigate to find out further details of locations and opening times for each of the social enterprises.



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May 3rd and 17th	November 1st and 15th
June 7th and 21st	December 6th and 20th



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**ONE AGENCY A-LEAGUE
FESTIVAL OF SPORT
A SUPER SUCCESS!**



By Heath Kendall

On October 5, more than 2000 enthusiastic sports fans flocked to the Mildura Sporting Precinct for the inaugural One Agency MBPH Foundation Festival of Sport, featuring top-tier A-League action from both men's and women's teams.

The excitement began on Friday, October 4, with a special clinic designed for children, fostering young talent and encouraging community involvement in sports. The following day showcased thrilling matches, including a fierce showdown between Western United and Adelaide United in the women's league, and an intense men's match where Brisbane Roar and Adelaide United battled to a 1-1 draw.

The festival's success has laid the groundwork for a return in 2025, with

organisers eager to draw an even larger crowd and incorporate local clubs into the festivities. All proceeds from this year's event will support the Foundation's mobile skin screening initiative, set to launch in late 2025.

Terry Welch, CEO of MBPH, emphasised the significance of hosting A-League matches in Mildura, stating that it not only benefits the local community but also serves as a platform to promote the region to a broader audience across Australia.

"Having the best of the A-League play in our area is a tremendous win for the entire region," Mr Welch said.

"We learned a lot from our inaugural year, and we plan to use that experience to enhance the event in the future."

The feedback from participating clubs has been overwhelmingly positive. Mr Welch

noted that many teams were impressed by the professionalism of the event and the quality of the facilities, including the playing surface.

"We all know the Northern Mallee is a fantastic place, and by hosting events like this, we're raising awareness beyond our borders," he said.

Naming Rights Sponsor of the A-League Festival of Sport was One Agency Mildura and principal Mark Thornton speaking ahead of the Saturday games, said his personal commitment to the Mildura Base Public Hospital Foundation is something he is proud of.

"I think everyone in Mildura wants to see continual support for events like this. Whether it's live music or a big sporting event like the A-League, it needs to be seen to being supported," Mr Thornton said.





A-LEAGUE SPONSOR ONE AGENCY MILDURA PRINCIPAL MARK THORNTON (R) WITH FRIENDS & TEAM MEMBERS.

"And so, I think people will really be surprised about how impressive this will be. "Tomorrow is exciting by virtue of the fact, this will be the first A-League game to be played in Sunraysia and well done to the MBPH Foundation for organising this - it's fantastic.

"One Agency is excited to be part of it - happy to be part of it - and I absolutely think this is going to continue and we will have some of the best soccer- football players in Australia, coming to Mildura." Heartbeat also spoke to Mr Thornton at the Friday kid's soccer clinic, which was attended by almost 200 children, who were accompanied by family members. "There are kids everywhere all decked out in their kit and wearing their One Agency Mildura bucket hats that we bought for them," he said.

"I think it's a huge opportunity for the younger generation who participate in this sport, not only see a great day tomorrow with the best of the best A-League men's

and women's matches, but to also learns some tricks and tips from the players and coaches here today at the clinic.

"The weather couldn't be better. The Mildura Sporting Precinct is a fantastic venue and everybody is having a great time!"

Plans for the 2025 festival are already underway, with organisers hoping to secure commitments from teams early in the planning process. Adelaide United has already expressed their eagerness to return, and there are plans to attract another prominent club, such as Melbourne Victory, to join the line-up. With community engagement and support for local health initiatives at the forefront, the One Agency MBPH Foundation Festival of Sport promises to become an annual event, celebrating sports while benefiting the Mildura region and beyond.

A-LEAGUE MATCH ACTION PHOTOS: COREY BROWN

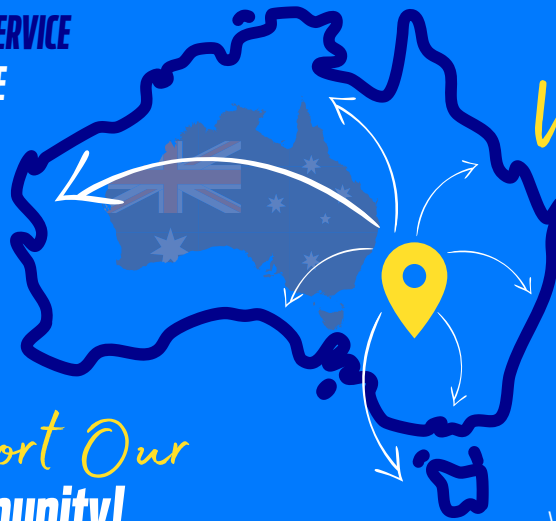


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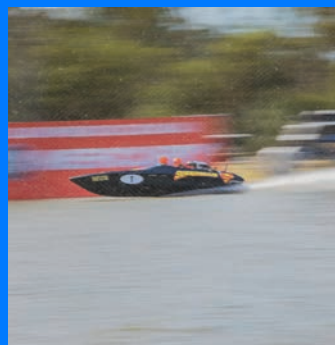


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LARRY PERKINS WITH THE
V8 SUPERCAR ENGINE
PHOTO V8 SUPERCARS.



**LARRY PERKINS HAS
SPENT THE MAJORITY
OF HIS LIFE TRAVELLING
IN THE FAST LANE**

By Phil Kettle

Destined from birth, motor legend Larry Perkins has spent a large part of his of his working life behind the steering wheel of a racing car. Larry Perkins, now retired from racing, continues to have a busy life but found time to discuss his journey to the top. Larry Clifton Perkins AM, was born on March 18, 1950. The son of Eddie Perkins, a former racing driver and V8 Supercar team owner, and the third of four sons, from birth Larry was destined to be a racing car driver.

Larry grew up on a farm in Cowangie, in the Mallee, where he developed a love for cars from a young age, along with a love of tinkering with farm machinery.

"I loved every moment of growing up in the Mallee. What I didn't really love that much was school," he said.

"My first school was Tutye Primary School, a small single room school with one teacher.

The school got closed after all the students were expelled. Some might say that I was the one that caused the disruption that led to us all being expelled!

"Following that, all the students were transferred to the school in Murrayville, where I finished my schooling at the age of 14.

"While I didn't like school, what I did really love was driving tractors and working."

At the age of 15, Larry moved to Nhill, where he had got a job with the State Rivers Water Board.

"I worked and played football in the under 16 side. I didn't waste my money on things that other young people were doing, like drinking," Larry said.

"I had a goal and that was to save enough money to buy my first race car, which is what I did. I left Nhill at 19 and headed for the big smoke."

In 1970, Larry was recruited as a mechanic-driver for Harry Firth's Holden Dealer Team. Although Larry didn't do much road racing for the team, he was able to race in Rallycross alongside team driver Peter Brock and was also involved with the development of the stillborn Holden LJ Torana GTR XU-1 V8 project, which was canned in mid-1972 by the 'Supercar scare'.

The Supercar scare was a national controversy that arose in Australia in 1972 in regard to the sale to the public of high performance 'homologation special'



LARRY PERKINS IN THE BUSH PHOTO PETER BLAKEMAN.

versions of Australian-built passenger cars...

"My life was becoming increasingly busy, I barely had a spare moment," Larry revealed.

"After winning the TAA Formula Ford 'Driver to Europe' Series in 1971 and the Australian Formula 2 Championship in 1972. I won both these in a Elfin 600 Perkins, I travelled to Europe where I won the 1975 European Formula Three Championship."

Larry also raced in Formula One during the 1974, 1976 and 1977 seasons. After failing to secure a permanent drive in Formula One he returned to Australia. On his return to Australia, Larry won the Rothmans International Series in 1979 in an Elfin MR8, for the Ansett Team Elfin factory team run by Elfin Sports Cars founder Garrie Cooper, and the 1979 Australian Rallycross Championship in a Volkswagen Beetle.

During 1982 and 1983, Larry worked with brother Garry on the construction of The Quiet Achiever Solar Car.

He was one of the drivers of the car during the transcontinental solar crossing of Australia, with the car using only a photovoltaic solar cell source. During these years, Larry met with success in Australian Touring Cars.

"In 1988 I returned to Europe to race at the Le Mans 24 Hour with Tom Walkinshaw Racing, finishing 4th, which now on reflection, I think was a great result," Larry said.

After returning home from Europe, Larry

made his Bathurst 1000 debut.

As is well documented, Larry went on to win Bathurst no fewer than six times- 1982, 1983, 1984 and then again in 1993, 1995 and 1997.

"I think my most memorable win was in the 1995 Tooheys 1000, in which I'd dropped back to last place after a pit stop at the end of the first lap to replace a flat tyre," a reflective Larry explained.

"I gained the lead with less than 10 laps remaining, that was after the Ford Falcon of Glenn Seton retired having dropped a valve in the engine.

"My co-driver Russell Ingall and I became only the second driving combination in the history of the race, to go from last to win." Amazingly, Larry didn't ever win an Australian Touring Car Championship, his best championship results being three, fourth places.

Larry retired from racing at when he was 53. In 2008, a very deserving Larry was inducted into the V8 Supercars Hall of Fame in 2008.

While many motor racing fans will only think of Larry as a very successful driver, it should always be remembered that in addition to his racing credentials as a driver, Larry is a very accomplished automotive engineer and engine-builder, having built many race cars for both his own team and for other racing teams.

On December 7, 2017, the 'Larry Perkins Trophy' was named in his honour. It is awarded to the driver who accumulates the most points across the four races at the Beaupaires Melbourne 400, the



THE 1984 BATHURST 1000 WINNING COMMODORE
DRIVEN BY PETER BROCK AND LARRY PERKINS.



1995 HOLDEN VR COMMODORE BATHURST WINNER.



THE THEN AUSTRALIAN GRAND PRIX CORPORATION CEO ANDREW WESTACOTT AND
FORMER F1 AND SUPERCARS DRIVER LARRY PERKINS PHOTO AUTOACTION.COM.AU.



LARRY IN THE MALLEE COUNTRY HE GREW UP IN PHOTO ABC.



GREGG HANSFORD AND LARRY PERKINS SHARE THE WINNERS PODIUM AT THE 1993 BATHURST 1000 PHOTO V8SLEUTH.COM.

Supercars event supporting the Australian Grand Prix.

Retirement, might for a lot of people mean slowing down - something they choose to do - but in the case of Larry Perkins, that certainly isn't the case, as he is still as busy and active as ever.

In 2018, Larry along with his brother Peter discovered the lost cache of equipment left behind in the Simpson Desert by explorers Henry Vere Barclay and Ronald MacPherson in 1904.

The explorers had been forced to abandon the load, which included camel tanks, tools, scientific equipment and personal belongings, in order to cross sandhills to get to a water source.

The Perkins' discovery was described as a "highly significant archaeological find".

In the 2021 Queen's Birthday

Honours, Larry was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for "significant service to motorsport as a touring car driver and team owner".

Larry was asked what makes a great race car driver? He was quick to answer.

"Belief in your skill and have an understanding of your car's limits," said.

Apart from watching son Jack Perkins, V8 Supercar race winner, his family and time shared on his farm at Cowangie, his homes in Mildura and Melbourne, Larry loves spending time tinkering with machinery.

When sitting and having a coffee with Larry, it's easy to understand why he is well known not only for his outgoing and humorous personality, but also his enthusiasm for life and all that is happening in the world.

Larry, we salute you. A Living Legend, an



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This story was written by the protagonist. A first-person account of a near-death experience that could have ended much differently if not for the skilled intervention of a large cast of health professionals, many of them from Mildura Base Public Hospital. The story, the author says, is his way of honouring and thanking those who saved his life.



MICHAEL IS STILL LIVING THE DREAM AFTER HIS DEATH DEFYING EXPERIENCE.

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

ONE MAN'S STORY OF SURVIVAL AND HEART-FELT GRATITUDE

My name is Michael Chambers. My family and I moved to Mildura 16 years ago from Darwin, and I am surrounded by five adult children and 11 grandchildren. I retired at 70 to concentrate on writing, and since then I have successfully published two historical novels about outback Aboriginal experiences of European settlement, one set in the Lake Mungo area and the other in Arnhem Land. And, I am about to finish my third book, a non-fiction. But, just a few months ago, a series of events occurred that dramatically changed not only my life, but also that of my family. In a nutshell, Victoria Ambulance Service paramedics, the doctors, nurses and staff of Mildura Base Hospital saved my life – not just once, but many times over. I spent nearly two months in various hospitals here and in Melbourne, all the while thinking of ways to repay and thank them. I decided the best option was to write about my experiences to share my story with others.

ONE Wednesday morning in July this year I complained to my wife Aileen about feeling slightly off-colour.

Usually a deep sleeper, I had woken in the early morning hours, cold with teeth chattering and shivering. I had to sit under a heater for an hour to get warm.

We decided it was a virus and I took two Panadol and spent much of the day lying down.

But, by late afternoon I was feeling really unwell. Bitterly cold and with a possible temperature, I phoned and made an appointment with my doctor the next day.

I didn't eat much that evening and was feeling so crook my wife Aileen had to dress me after my shower.

Shortly after, I fell down the steps to my living room.

Meanwhile, Aileen (who is also known as 'Brownie') had been discussing my condition with her sister all day and about eight o'clock they decided to call an ambulance.

Aileen explains what happened.

"I had seen the TV ads encouraging people to only ring the ambulance in an emergency. I was feeling a bit anxious by this time," she said.

"They gave me an alternate number on the TV, but I couldn't remember it, so I called my sister back and she told me to ring 000.

"Mike was lying back in his chair; his breathing was becoming erratic, and he was sweating.

"To my surprise, the two paramedics arrived within 10 minutes and started to examine Mike. He didn't seem too concerned and was chatting normally as they worked. They connected an ECG and observed his pulse and blood pressure, which they indicated to me was dangerously low."

Son Charlie takes up the story from here.

"I was going home along San Mateo Avenue at about 8.30 that night. As I passed my parent's street, I glanced at their house. I was amazed to see an ambulance outside, all lights on," Charlie said.

"I turned back and when I got there, I went into Dad's room to find him with two paramedics. They were attending him with many leads and a drip.

"I knew one of them quite well, and he told me Dad's blood pressure was something like 50 over 30.

"He shook his head slightly and raised his eyebrows."

This is not good, Charlie thought.

"Dad was shaking with cold, but his shirt was soaked with sweat. I asked where Mum was, and he pointed to the door. I found her down the alleyway at the side of the house, trying to unlock the gate leading to the road," he said.

"She had figured they weren't going to make it out through the house. She was struggling to open the gate in the dark, so I shone my phone light on the lock."

"Thanks," she said, not realising it was me.

"That's OK," I said, and she turned around in surprise, grinning!

"That when I knew everything was going to be alright."

There is a tremor to Charlie's voice now, but he continues.

"Shortly after I arrived, the paramedics had called on their Team Leader to come as back up. He arrived shortly after. They thought it best if he went back out to the ambulance to prepare an adrenalin injection. They got Dad onto the stretcher.

"He's a big bloke, too big to manoeuvre through the house, which involved two sets of stairs. I helped them navigate out through the back door, and down the side of the house.

"It was rough and a tight squeeze, and it took quite a while, but just as we got him into the ambulance, Dad had his first arrest – his heart stopped.

"Fortunately, the boss was there with the prepared adrenalin injection, which he administered while the other two paramedics administered CPR.

(According to the Victor Chang Institute, "A sudden cardiac arrest is an electrical problem in the heart and occurs when the heart suddenly stops pumping blood. If a sudden cardiac arrest is not treated properly and quickly, it will cause sudden death within 10 minutes.")

"After what seemed like an age, Dad recovered consciousness. But then he had another cardiac arrest.

"They closed the doors, and Mum and I watched from the grass verge as they worked on Dad so violently the whole ambulance was shaking. We were helpless and worried, but somehow, we felt he would pull through." (According to the US National Library of Medicine, "... analysis of those who had multiple episodes of CPR revealed that more than one event within a 24-hour period led to significantly higher in-hospital mortality rates. 94.7% versus 74.4%.")

That's a 5.3% chance of survival!

Michael takes up the story again.

As for myself, I didn't know all this at the time. Amazingly, for the rest of the night, I was awake and remembered quite a lot of the proceedings!

I remember both events, except for when I was unconscious. I felt no pain, only a considerable tiredness. I remember that on the drive to the hospital, I was still quite chatty, as though I did not understand the gravity of the situation.

They unloaded me, and I went straight to the Emergency Department. Lots of leads, drips, and people.

I can't remember what time it was when I had my next cardiac arrest, one of many. We had arrived about 10 o'clock, so it must have been late. I remember feeling a little dizzy – then nothing. When I regained consciousness, my bed was surrounded by all these people in my face, yelling and screaming at me.

"What's all the fuss about," I asked?

"You had another arrest. Look at the screen," and they pointed out what remained of a flat line.

It was then I realised – this was serious. They were right. This was the real thing!

"I'm exhausted. I needed sleep!" I responded.

So, I just nodded off and I dreamed.

To this day, I would love to remember what that dream was about!

They say you don't remember what you don't remember, and it's true. Some weeks later, I could listen as my kids recalled the events of that night. What surprised me most was that the heart arrests kept going all night until five in the morning!

I thought it had only been a couple of hours, and I marvelled at the resilience and competence of the medical team!

I remember after the first episode in ICU, they asked if I felt the attack coming on.

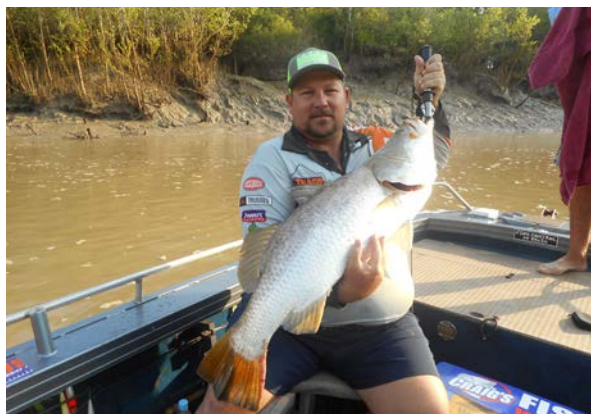
"Yes," I replied. "I start to feel strange and dizzy."

They told me to let them know beforehand by raising my hand, and that's what I did.

They had established early on that I had a severe infection, and my blood results soon came back as having a staphylococcus infection. They had been pumping antibiotics into me as well as adrenalin and I have a vague recollection of being on a pacing machine; the constant 'thump' 'thump' on my chest was like being punched. They changed the antibiotic in the early morning hours, and suddenly I became more responsive. That was now several months ago, and that was my last cardiac arrest!



MICHAEL WITH HIS WIFE AILEEN.



MICHAEL'S SON CHARLIE LANDS A BIG TERRITORY BARRAMUNDI.



MICHAEL SHARED THIS HAPPY SNAP OF HIS GRANDCHILDREN.

I don't know how many I had, but my family say many.

Soon afterwards, they decided to send me for a scan using a near-new CT scanner that had just been installed at the hospital. A young lady technician told me proudly that I was one of the first patients.

Possibly also the first life that would be saved by this beautiful, probably costly, machine.

Throughout the night, my wife, son, and two daughters Catherine and Nicole were there, first in the ER waiting room and then in a "Contemplation Room."

Catherine, Charlie's twin sister, continues: "My brother and sisters, my parents, all have a strong deep faith. It's something I have instilled into my own kids. It could have been a horrible, terrible night. Yet we were amazed at Dad's calmness on the few occasions we were allowed to see him. At one stage, he told us, 'I have no fear. It's all up to God now.' And that is how we all felt! "Despite the doctors telling us on several occasions that this was really critical, individually and as a group, we were all comforted by the conviction that Dad would pull through.

"My nursing experience taught me all about 'Code Blue'. It's an announcement over the PA system of heart failure or lack of breathing. The ultimate in seriousness. We sat in that room and listened to Code

Blue's all night. Knowing it was our dad in there!"

"At one point, they came out and told us Dad would be flown to Melbourne by the Air Ambulance. They had found him a bed at Box Hill Hospital. But they warned us if he had an arrest in the ambulance or on the plane, they wouldn't be able to resuscitate him.

"We were also warned there was a good chance he wouldn't survive the flight, but we consented for him to go.

"Charlie and Mum decided to drive to Melbourne and went home to pack. But then the doctors came out and told us they really needed to come back. Urgently! Because the attacks were coming closer together."

Michael takes up the story again.

Nearly three months later, my recollections of the remainder of that night are a bit foggy.

The Air Ambulance Team arrived with a crew of three -- a pilot, a doctor and a medic. I was told this was 'The A Team!' I got to know them quite well. Bits and pieces keep flooding back. It was only recently that I recalled in some detail how the family came in and prayed for me before the flight.

Then just as we were about to leave, one of the doctors came out and told Charlie: "The results of the scan are back. We have

also discovered cancer in the in the left lung. No doubt about it."

So, for me, here is the miracle. Without all the heart failures and near-death experiences, I would be facing a doctor in a few months, coughing blood and probably having a short time to live because of a cancer I knew nothing about!

The plane was brand new, and I was among the first patients to be transported in it. It must have cost a mint! On the flight, I had a wonderful conversation with the doctor until we arrived at Box Hill Hospital. He related his experiences growing up in Pakistan, qualifying as a doctor and emigrating to Australia. Turns out his whole family is involved in medicine!

After listening to his story, I asked: "Name another country that would look after an old man like this. Who would invest so much money and resources to give a few more years to a 76-year-old?"

We couldn't think of one.

I was in Box Hill Hospital for three weeks. My whole experience of this time is one of excellence and competence -- doctors, nurses and staff.

For the first few days I was in an ICU ward set aside for the infectious. Even my visitors had to gown up, and I had plenty.

My youngest daughter, Frances, drove from Gippsland to meet me when the air ambulance arrived, and Charlie and Aileen



MICHAEL SHOWS THE LAST OF 269 BAGS OF ANTIBIOTICS HE HAD BEEN INFUSED WITH AT THE ALFRED HOSPITAL.



MICHAEL CHAMBERS IS AN AUTHOR WHO HAS PUBLISHED TWO BOOKS AND ANOTHER IS SOON TO BE RELEASED.



AN AVID PHOTOGRAPHER OF WILDLIFE MICHAEL TOOK THIS PHOTO FROM A MOVING HOUSEBOAT WHICH PROVIDED THE PERFECT PLATFORM.

were only a few hours behind after a six-hour drive.

Then my brother Ian arrived from New Zealand! I thought that was pretty good, but then I had a Facetime call from my other Kiwi brother who called whilst on a camel ride through Outer Mongolia! Meanwhile, my daughter Michelle phoned regularly from Kempsey.

I was pumped full of antibiotics -- 400ml every four hours for six weeks. Day and night. Meanwhile a surgical procedure through my back to get a biopsy from the lung confirmed the cancer diagnosis.

Unfortunately, I have Von Willebrand Disease. It's a bleeding disorder, and I bled for several days into my lung cavity; some four litres were drained.

That's when I really started to feel unwell! After three weeks, for reasons I still don't understand, they sent me home. They said I needed a Pacemaker and a lung operation, but they couldn't do either until the course of antibiotics was finished and they gave me a flask to hang from my neck with the 24-hour antibiotic dose.

Charlie drove the 1200-kilometre round trip and picked up Brownie and me. She had spent time at a local motel within walking distance and visited me twice daily for three weeks.

I was only home for three days when I got a call from Box Hill Hospital.

"We are sending a plane to Mildura and transferring you to The Alfred Hospital. Urgently."

So off I went again.

I soon got used to the daily routine of drips, blood tests, X-rays, scans and specialists' visits while waiting for the antibiotic course to finish. That's 269 bags in total; I counted!

I had my lung operation, successfully removing the cancer, though I will be regularly monitored for a while. Then, I had a defibrillator inserted into my chest. Then Charlie and Aileen drove down again to bring me home...finally!

Four weeks later I was doing well and pain-free... and enjoying life.

Before all this happened, I was finishing my third book, a non-fiction prompted by my daughters asking me to write a worldview for the grandkids. 'THE LUCKIEST PLANET: WHERE WE'RE FROM. WHY WE'RE HERE' will be published early next year as a Kindle and Audiobook. I've written for the younger generation, relying on modern science, the Book of Genesis and much research. And, I have already outlined the final chapter on free will and eternal life.

My daughter Nicky summed up my recent near-death experiences nicely.

"Dad," she said, "Maybe God just wanted to give you a closer experience of your

subject matter before you write about it!"

I'm not sure about that, but the past few months have certainly enhanced my life experience and attitude.

And, I have been encouraged by the interest in this book, so I have promised 20 free copies of the Kindle edition to each of the three hospitals involved in my recovery. So, what did I get out of the whole experience? It was undoubtedly traumatic, but not in the way I expected. For my first few days at Box Hill I was on a course of Valium, and I sought counselling. The strange thing was the counselling was not about the trauma. My surprise, perhaps approaching shock, was a lack of fear during the whole experience. And for that, I have to thank God.

It also took me a while to process the reactions of a couple of ICU doctors in Mildura. They shook my hand and told me I was "... a tough bastard!" Didn't expect that.

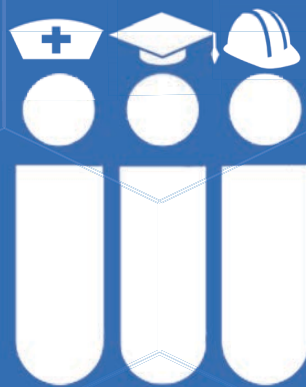
None of this could have happened without the skill and dedication of many health professionals. To the magnificent team of paramedics and ER staff at Mildura Base Hospital, I literally owe you my life... and many times over. It's a debt I can never repay, so I hope my story will contribute to the satisfaction you must feel after each day's work and each life saved.

Thank you.



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EVERY DAY A CHANCE TO LEARN SOMETHING NEW

KATRINA SETS AN EXAMPLE FOR YOUNG NURSES TO FOLLOW



MILDURA BASE PUBLIC HOSPITAL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CLINICAL
OPERATIONS CHIEF NURSING AND
MIDWIFERY OFFICER KATRINA ALLEN.

By Grant Maynard

THERE'S an oft heard maxim about each day being an opportunity to learn something new.

But few people have taken it heart with as much enthusiasm as Mildura Base Public Hospital's (MBPH) Katrina Allen.

She now has the lengthy title of Executive Director Clinical Operations and Chief Nursing & Midwifery Officer, but the real story of Katrina's impressive nursing career is how she got to where she is today.

Her path to her present role and its attendant responsibilities started like many others when, in 1989, she began Enrolled Nurse Training at what was then Mildura Base Hospital.

She graduated 12 months later to become a working Enrolled Nurse at Mildura Private Hospital.

"The opportunity arose so I took it," Katrina said.

That first job was to be the first step on a long career journey of hard work, determination to succeed and time-consuming study.

Born in 1970 and raised in Mildura, Katrina Morgan attended St Joseph's College until Year 11 and completed her Victorian Certificate of Education (Year 12) at what was then Mildura Technical College.

She was a single mum at 20, but that did not deter her from enrolling at Bendigo's La Trobe University to complete her Bachelor of Nursing. She has family connections to the historic gold mining town, so making the decision to move was made a lot easier. That was 1994.

As a single mum and university student, Katrina juggled her academic commitments and motherhood, graduating three years later in 1996, with an offer to complete an Honours degree. However, she chose to forgo more study, deciding instead to enter the Graduate Nurse Program – Perioperative Nursing at Bendigo's Mt Alvernia Mercy Hospital. Her long involvement with operating theatres in both Bendigo and Mildura had begun. Always interested in mental health, Katrina soon added another 'string to her bow' becoming a Registered Psychiatric Nurse in 1997 at the Bendigo Health Care Group (BHCG).

It was at this time that she met Steve Allen, a mechanic from Eaglehawk. The pair met through friends at Tysons Reef, one of Bendigo's well known watering holes.

"It was a bit rowdy, but a lot of fun," Katrina recalls.

She might have continued to explore her options in the mental health arena but the circumstances of available employment, and with a young son to consider, she chose another path.

By 1999 she was Clinical Nurse Specialist – Operating Suite, St John of God Health Care, Bendigo.

Fast forward a few years, and with a growing family and the encouragement of Steve who was now her husband, Katrina returned to Mildura in 2005 to take up the position of Registered Nurse – Operating Suite/Emergency Department Mildura Base Hospital and 12 months later Hospital Coordinator - Mildura Base Hospital.

The job of hospital co-ordinator is an onerous one, Katrina explaining that in a nutshell, the co-ordinator is responsible for the functioning of the hospital on every level outside the hours of the management team.

"The buck stops with the co-ordinator in every regard," Katrina said.

"From making sure a patient has a bed to medical staff calling in sick. Things nursing staff do not usually have oversight over."

"They have to stand in for everybody. The CEO, the Chief Nurse...everybody."

For Katrina that meant a lot of overnight and weekend work.

"It made me really value the weekends and nights I didn't have to work, and I could be at home," she says.

"It also makes me very supportive of the hospital's present co-ordinators because I have lived their life. I know exactly how big the job is.

"They are a very small group of very skilled nurses."

For both of her first 'back-to-Mildura' roles Katrina was working for a privatised hospital under Ramsay Health. She continued to work at Mildura Base Hospital for the next few years, and in 2012 became Perioperative Services Manager, overseeing the staff who admit and care for patients pre and post operation – 'the whole theatre journey' is how Katrina describes it.

All the while Katrina kept studying, completing her Graduate Certificate Nursing – Forensics at the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine and Monash University in 2009, and a Certificate in Infection Control and Sterilisation from Mayfield Education -- Victoria's leading private not-for-profit education and higher education provider for the health and

community services sector -- in 2011.

The study, she said, was hard work, exacerbated by necessitating travel to and from Melbourne on a regular basis with that, and the extra work studying entailed, putting pressure on her family and work-life balance.

"It meant a fair bit of juggling," Katrina says.

With that in mind, she is full of praise for the role her husband played in supporting her academic achievements.

"We have always worked as a team. Steve has been very supportive throughout my career and when I couldn't be home, he has made sure he could be especially when the kids were younger."

In 2015, with more study under her belt, Katrina attained her Professional Certificate in Health Systems Management from The University of Melbourne.

Two years later, and seeking a new challenge, Katrina made a momentous career decision to become general manager at BUPA Mildura. It was to be a monumental amount of work, but a fantastic learning experience and professionally very satisfying.

It wasn't long before Katrina was not just general manager and chief nurse at Mildura but was soon involved with BUPA's operations at Kyneton where she drew on her mental health training to sort through some issues they were having on-site.

Katrina found herself flying to Melbourne and driving up to Kyneton for a couple of days each week, while still working and overseeing operations in Mildura.

And her commitments did not end there. She was also the operations manager for a large BUPA region.

While working with BUPA Katrina undertook a Leadership and Management Masterclass through Macquarie University, passing with flying colours.

"As it turns out," Katrina told Heartbeat, "If I had not gone and worked with BUPA and all the experiences I had with them, I do not think I would be in the position I am today."

"It's like all the things I have done have led me along my career path. I look back and think 'Wow, if I hadn't done that I wouldn't be here'."

And, she says the work she did with the BUPA team has helped, and is helping, shape operations at the Mildura Base today. Katrina cites aspects of her BUPA job including human resource management and industrial relations as worthy examples.



KATRINA IN THEATRE WITH A COLLEAGUE.



KATRINA ALLEN HAD AN AMBITION TO BE A NURSE FROM A VERY YOUNG AGE.



HER GRADUATION WAS A PROUD DAY FOR KATRINA.



KATRINA ON THE WARD WITH MBPH REGISTERED NURSES MEGAN CAMPISI AND SARAH KNOTT.



KATRINA CENTRE BACK ROW IN A GROUP PHOTO WITH FELLOW ENROLLED NURSES IN TRAINING.

While with BUPA she gained valuable insights into how the aged care system works and has been able to share that with those she works with now. For most of them, she says, aged care is a relatively unknown sector of health care.

Katrina returned to what was once again a publicly owned Mildura Base in 2021 as Director Inpatient Services, spurred on once again by the need for a new challenge. During that same year she also became Manager Clinical Redesign & Model of Care.

She undertook both roles concurrently.

“That was about the time we were doing the Mildura Base Public Hospital Master Plan work, and once again it was a steep learning curve,” Katrina recalls.

“I had to learn a lot about project management and how big projects run.”

That was certainly a new frontier of knowledge for Katrina.

Her track record proves she is not afraid to learn new skills and she described the time she spent working on the master plan as a real eye-opener. She credits it with allowing her to gain a much better understanding of the inner workings of the hospital including the way the chain of command works, and the responsibilities of each position within that chain and how they relate to each other.

In 2022 Katrina became Redesign and Redevelopment Manager/Manager of Clinical Redesign and Model of Care

and in the same year, Executive Director Clinical Operations.

These positions gave her an even greater understanding and appreciation of just how a hospital works.

“It’s like you’re standing up on a balcony, looking at a building and determining how good design can assist work and flow... how people, both staff and the public, move through, and work in, the space, both inside and outside a hospital,” she says.

“There’s a lot of moving parts.”

That, it would seem to an outsider, to be something of an understatement.

The work required visits to several other hospitals, including Bendigo and the Gold Coast, to see how they have tackled these issues and added another layer of knowledge to Katrina’s already formidable portfolio.

“I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to have been a part of that work and the chance to learn so many new things.”

That brings us up to date, and as of last year Katrina has been the MBPH’s Executive Director Clinical Operations + Chief Nursing & Midwifery Officer (CNMO).

Katrina stood in for the incumbents in both roles at different times before taking them up herself.

“Having the two roles undertaken by the same person is sensible,” Katrina says.

“And it works really well.”

To explain the ins and outs of the dual role

would take some doing, but the Reader’s Digest version is that effectively Katrina oversees the hospital’s entire nursing staff and allied health team members in all areas of clinical operations throughout the hospital.

It’s another big job, but Katrina enjoys a challenge and is revelling in role.

She has now been working in the healthcare industry for almost 36 years and is keen to keep making her mark in the health sector.

Looking back over her career to date, Katrina says she can now see how each new role fulfilled or qualification gained was leading her towards where she is today.

She is passionate about delivering exceptional patient care and keeping the patient at “the centre of all that we do” while delivering health care in innovative and contemporary ways to achieve this.

Not surprisingly considering the example she has set, Katrina is mum to three high achieving adult children.

Her eldest son, who went away to university as a toddler with her, now has his own Degrees and family.

He is thriving despite of, or maybe because of, being dragged to the La Trobe University library on the weekends as a toddler, Katrina says.

Her two younger children are well on the way to forging their own paths thanks, Katrina happily acknowledges, to team parenting.



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TRAINING FACILITY DESIGNED TO ENRICH THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE AND PREPARE STUDENTS FOR REAL-WORLD CHALLENGES.

La Trobe University's new Dr. Deb Neal Wing is turning heads in Mildura. The impressive \$4.97 million facility doesn't just offer a modern space for learning—it's a profound commitment to the community's health and future.



OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE DR DEB NEAL WING VICE CHANCELLOR PROF. THEO FARRELL CUTS THE RIBBON WITH DR NEAL.



THE IMPRESSIVE \$4.97 MILLION FACILITY DOESN'T JUST OFFER A MODERN SPACE FOR LEARNING IT'S A PROFOUND COMMITMENT TO THE COMMUNITY'S HEALTH AND FUTURE.

By Rebecca Crossling

Unveiled in October, the wing is an expansion of Mildura's Brian Grogan Building and a lifeline for the healthcare workforce in the Sunraysia region. With cutting-edge clinical labs that can now train twice as many nursing and midwifery students, it's a local answer to a national problem: a projected shortage of over 79,000 nurses by 2035.

La Trobe Vice-Chancellor Professor Theo Farrell spoke at the opening, describing the labs as an immersive, hospital-like environment where students can refine their skills.

"This is about giving Mildura students the best possible start," he said.

The facility features two state-of-the-art simulation labs, each equipped with four beds, and dedicated teaching areas designed to enrich the learning experience and prepare students for real-world challenges.

Named after Dr. Deb Neal, a figure in the La Trobe Mildura story, the wing pays homage to the university's first employee at the campus, who began her journey in 1991 and later served as Head of Campus. For Dr. Neal, the dedication is deeply meaningful.

"It's humbling to know my name will forever be associated with a space that prepares students to make a difference in our community," she said.

But it's not just nursing students who'll benefit from the new wing. According to Sandy Connor, Head of La Trobe Mildura, students from other programs, like education and social work, will also use the new adjacent classroom and take advantage of the student lounge and workspaces.

"The facilities will benefit all La Trobe Mildura students, not just those in nursing. Our online students are encouraged to use the facilities -that is the benefit of studying online with La

Trobe in Mildura, they have a connection to campus community.

"Victorian based builders, Jointly, who have an office here in Mildura, have done an astounding job delivering the architect's vision. The Jointly team were amazing to work and knowing they use local trades was important to us. We could not be happier with the quality of work.

"We hope to engage with the wider Mildura community, partnering with local health services, like MBPH, schools, and community organisations to explore how the space can support broader health and education needs," Ms Connor said.

And the commitment to local healthcare doesn't stop with the new facility. La Trobe recently renewed its Memorandum of Understanding with the Mildura Base Public Hospital (MBPH), solidifying a partnership that's reinforces both organisations' commitment to healthcare education in the region.



THE FACILITY FEATURES TWO STATE-OF-THE-ART SIMULATION LABS PROVIDE A HOSPITAL-LIKE ENVIRONMENT WHERE STUDENTS CAN REFINE THEIR SKILLS..

This five-year agreement promises to expand clinical placements, advance rural health research, and increase Indigenous participation in health education, whilst together advocating for innovative educational opportunities that promote lifelong learning and academic collegiality. CEO of MBPH Terry Welch, couldn't be more excited.

"This partnership isn't just about training students; it's about fostering a sustainable, innovative health ecosystem right here in Northern Mallee," he said.

A significant achievement both organisations made happen in 2022, was the introduction of the Bachelor of Nursing/ Bachelor of Midwifery program for Mildura students. This four-year offering provides local students an undergraduate offering to study midwifery and an opportunity to undertake placements in Mildura.

Pyper Dalla Santa is one of those students and says La Trobe was her first preference to achieve her dream of becoming a midwife, as it had the convenience of being local, and is reputable in the healthcare sector.

"I've been absolutely loving it so far! Going on placement is always such a great experience, as I get to work in different areas with new people. I chose to study midwifery as I was extremely interested in women's health and wanted a career that was diverse and rewarding.

"I'm hoping to remain local and work as a midwife at Mildura Base Public Hospital. After a couple years of experience, I would then like to return to La Trobe to complete a postgraduate degree."



THE FACILITY ALSO FEATURES WELL RESOURCED DEDICATED TEACHING AREAS.



THE FACILITY FEATURES TWO STATE-OF-THE-ART SIMULATION LABS EACH EQUIPPED WITH FOUR BEDS.



ONTARIO MEDICAL CLINIC
GENERAL PRACTITIONER PHILIP
WEBSTER IS PREPARING FOR
SEMI-RETIREMENT.

AFTER A 44-YEAR-LONG COMMITMENT MEDICINE ISN'T WHAT HE DOES - IT'S WHO HE IS

A REFLECTION ON DR. PHILIP WEBSTER'S REMARKABLE GENERAL PRACTICE
CAREER DEDICATED TO SERVING THE MILDURA COMMUNITY

By GP Pharmacist Brooke Shelly

Dr. Philip Webster's retirement from general practice marks the end of an era. For more than four decades, he has been more than a doctor; he has been a constant fixture in the lives of the patients he has served in this region.

In a time, when continuity of care meant something deeply personal, Dr. Webster was at the heart of it. He built relationships, supported families across generations and became someone people trusted implicitly, knowing not just their medical history but their life stories too - celebrating milestones, guiding them through loss, and offering support in difficult times.

Medicine isn't what he does; it's who he

is. His work doesn't end when the clinic closes; his connection to our community is 24/7. He has had an approach to medicine that is the embodiment of selflessness, commitment and an unwavering belief in his role as the trusted GP.

And trust me when I say, it is incredibly hard not to be very fond of this man.

Calm, kind, and endlessly patient, his departure from general practice leaves a void that few, if any, could ever hope to fill. I can explain it to you, but I can't understand it for you

But what really sets Dr. Webster apart, is his forward-thinking approach to medicine. Long before it became commonplace, he recognized that true healthcare extended beyond the four walls of his own consult

room. He has been ahead of his time in being open and willing to work within a multidisciplinary team, recognising that a GP cannot do it all alone.

Dr. Webster champions the growth and expanded scope of allied health professionals and nurses, supporting their integral role in delivering holistic patient care. He championed the employment of Sunraysia's first GP Pharmacist at Ontario Medical Clinic and speaks passionately about the importance of multidisciplinary, team-based care. He knows that great health outcomes aren't achieved in isolation; they are the product of collaboration, not just with the medical team but with the patient, their family, and the whole community.

A testament to his humility and humor, Dr. Webster has a sign in his office that reads, "I can explain it to you, but I can't understand it for you." It's a reminder that even the most experienced doctors aren't all-knowing and that medicine is a shared responsibility between the medical team and the patient. It shows his understanding that doctors aren't infallible, and they can't do it all- a balance of knowledge, empathy, and humanity that has endeared him to so many. This belief extends beyond individual interactions to his overall philosophy on medicine itself, that healthcare can be just clinical if that's all you want it to be, but it is more- and it should be more.

More for his patients, more for his community, and more ways to make a meaningful impact.

Most of us get into healthcare to help people, to make a difference in the lives of the patients in front of us. But over time, some of us realize that there's more to it. The system has gaps, inequities, and challenges that need addressing. Dr. Webster has always sought more- more for his patients, more for his community, and more ways to make a meaningful impact.

He served as a Director of the Rural Workforce Agency Victoria for almost 13 years, seven of those as Chairman, committed nearly 20 years as a Director of the Mallee Division of General Practice, was a Community Advisory Board Member of the Mildura Base Hospital, and is currently a Medical Advisor for the Murray Primary Health Network (PHN). His engagement with Zoe Support Australia, a community-based organization helping young mothers re-engage with education and employment, underscores his belief that a healthy community requires comprehensive support systems that include education, social connection, and opportunities for empowerment.

Despite the tireless work of Dr. Webster and the colleagues he's shared his career with over the years, the rural health equity gap persists, and the rural health workforce remains in crisis- arguably worse now than in 1977 when he first arrived. He tells me he's witnessed every attempt to fix it over the past 40+ years, and now he's seeing it all again, just with a fancy new name. Despite the recurring challenges and the frustrations of grassroots advocates not being heard, I've never met someone quite like him, someone who never seems to run out of steam. He continues to advocate as

fiercely as ever; his unwavering dedication to pushing for sustainable solutions in rural health stands as a testament to his commitment to making a difference, not only to the patient in front of him but to the health system at large.

"Never trust a doctor that runs on time"

In his defining role as a GP, his attentiveness is well known and respected among patients and peers alike. He's been known to say, "never trust a doctor that runs on time," a reflection of his commitment to giving each patient the time they need, even if it means his day is completely thrown off schedule. It speaks to an era when time was taken to truly listen and connect, when you'd "pop in for a cuppa" without warning- something that's become increasingly rare as every moment in life is planned, organized, and accounted for, and the pace of life has accelerated.

Times have changed, and with it, so has the expectation of instant service in healthcare. For the vast proportion of time he spent as a GP, there was no GP available to you on an app on your phone. Telehealth was limited to the unpaid phone calls he made each night after a full day's work to ensure patients received their results and updates. He's leaving the profession at a crossroads, where the demands of modern medicine and the expectations of patients are reshaping what it means to be a family doctor.

Today's medical graduates and evolving expectations

Today's medical graduates are looking for more than just a career- they seek balance, growth, and sustainability. The world has shifted significantly from the days when choosing medicine or law was the pinnacle of professional aspiration. Now, young people want to pursue portfolio careers that allow them to shift and change, pivot at a moment's notice. The days of receiving a watch after a lifetime of commitment to a single workplace are long past. In an age driven by instant gratification, rapid change, and evolving expectations, today's medical graduates are redefining what it means to be a GP. They are integrating new technology, prioritizing work-life balance, and seeking opportunities for continuous learning and career growth to maintain long-term engagement in the field.

A Teacher at Heart: Championing the Growth of Our Rural Workforce

Ontario Medical Clinic's role as a teaching practice has been pivotal in growing our own rural workforce here in Sunraysia,

and Dr. Webster has been at the heart of training and mentoring countless GPs over the years. Many of those doctors have stayed on, becoming his colleagues and carrying forward the principles he instilled in them: that good medicine starts with seeing patients as people.

But as he steps back from general practice, we must consider the changing landscape and what we as a community can do to support the next generation of healthcare providers. It's incumbent on all of us; patients, communities, and colleagues to support these evolving expectations. This means ensuring that new GPs feel connected to the region by being afforded the time to embrace everything Mildura has to offer, from local sporting clubs and the river to the multicultural community and food and wine scene. When healthcare professionals engage with the community beyond their work and are welcomed with open arms, they are more likely to stay- with any luck, maybe even as long as Dr. Webster has.

We can also do more to inspire local teens to see healthcare as a fulfilling career path. Supporting educational programs that allow them to study health sciences locally from start to finish is key. This kind of end-to-end opportunity helps create a pipeline of health professionals who are already invested in their community. Advocacy for more local training programs isn't just beneficial; Dr. Webster will tell you that it's essential for keeping the heartbeat of regional healthcare strong.

A pivot of his own

And while Dr. Webster is stepping back from general practice, he's not hanging up his stethoscope entirely. In fact, he's now focusing his remarkable skills on the Residential Aged Care sector for the next little while. After years of service to the broader community, he's narrowing his focus on a patient group that could really use a calm, kind, and endlessly patient doctor. One that will pop in for a cuppa, without warning.

For the rest of us, the lesson he's taught about truly seeing patients as people will continue to shape how we practice healthcare. Medicine has changed, and so has the world, but his teachings- about compassion, connectedness, and community- will inspire for years to come.

And if we see a large spike of familiar names on the local aged care wait list... well, we'll know exactly why.



DR PHILIP WEBSTER GRADUATION.



DR PHILIP WEBSTER WITH ONTARIO MEDICAL CLINIC PRACTICE MANAGER KELLYANN WILTON AND GP PHARMACIST BROOKE SHELLEY.



ONTARIO MEDICAL CLINIC GP DR PHILIP WEBSTER WITH GENERAL PRACTICE AND CONSULTANT PHARMACIST BROOKE SHELLEY.



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MILDURA SPORTING PRECINCT CONTINUES TO PROVE ITS WORTH

THE WELL-WORN PHRASE 'IF YOU BUILT IT THEY WILL COME'
HAS CERTAINLY RUNG TRUE

By Jason Shields

WHEN this season's WNBL fixture was released, Bendigo Spirit's players quickly put a circle around their "home" game at the Mildura Sporting Precinct.

It has fast become one of their season's highlights, where they get to play at a venue they rate as "world class" in front of fans who bring an atmosphere as good as anywhere in the country.

"If you talk to any of the girls, we have been blown away by the environment every time we have played in Mildura," explains

Bendigo Spirit's captain Kelsey Griffin.

"I remember thinking in the game last year that this is a very hostile environment for the Sydney Flames because of the passion of the fans and the noise.

"It really does feel like a second home for us, the way the town and the people have just jumped in behind us so whole-heartedly has been incredible. We love it."

The Spirit will return to the MSP for a third successive year on Sunday, 12 January for their Round 11 WNBL game against the Sydney Flames.

The star-studded Bendigo outfit has

aligned with partners like the Mildura Rural City Council to ensure a top-tier league like the WNBL is accessible for as many regional fans as possible. And a big reason for the success is that the game day experience goes beyond the game. It's also intimate.

After the final siren, the Spirit players remain on the court to sign autographs, chat to fans or jump in photographs. The club is building a connection with the Mildura community that is genuine, as evidenced by the amount of Spirit merchandise now being worn by local fans, young and old.

“Making it accessible for us as players to connect with people is the most important part of our job,” says Griffin.

“For me, personally, that is such a privilege that I don’t take for granted.

“It is great perspective for me. As you get older and play more games you do realise there is more to what we do than just wins and losses, it is the lives you are able to impact. You can inspire and it is authentic.” Griffin, who wears the number 23 and is affectionally nicknamed KG23, has long been one of the superstars of the WNBL since crossing from America. Her basketball CV includes a dominant US College career, All-American selection and third overall selection in the 2010 WNBA draft.

She says she is excited about the roster Bendigo has put together for the 2024/25 season, which includes Olympic bronze medal winning Opals players Sami Whitcombe and Marianna Tolo.

“It’s amazing that we can bring such high-level talent to country regions,” Griffin says.

“When Bendigo Spirit was formed, the vision was to allow for regional kids to be able to stay and play in a regional city, but also to show country kids that there is a pathway. The Mildura kids and their parents get to see that first hand when we come and play and that is an important message for regional kids.”

While sceptics may have initially questioned the size and cost of the Mildura Sporting Precinct project, few could question its value to the community now.

The well-worn phrase ‘if you build it they will come’ has certainly rung true.

In the past few months alone, the MSP has hosted a string of major events including SFNL finals, the Victorian Police Expo, badminton and netball tournaments, a Cricket Victoria training camp, presentation dinners, the NMLLEN Expo, the Sunray Warriors and an A-League soccer clinic and A-League men’s and women’s matches, hosted by the Mildura Base Public Hospital Foundation.

Those events have attracted more than 20,000 people to the facility on top of its regular users and come on the back of the Victorian Under 14 state basketball titles in April that attracted 5000 visitors to the region and injected more than \$1 million into the local economy.

“We recognise the importance these events bring to the region and our economy,”



Mildura Council’s Economic Development and Tourism manager Leesa Merrett explains.

“With events like the junior basketball titles, when you are talking more than 800 competitors, the balloon impact with siblings and families who come here and stay for at least three or four nights is that the cafes and restaurants are full, accommodation is booked out, the list goes on.

“And we are starting to see the MSP gaining traction nationally. We are now having national sporting organisations coming to us to host events at MSP because the facilities are world class and its reputation is growing.”

While the MSP is proving a drawcard for marquee events, the facility is also delivering on its core function, which is to drive community participation.

Consider these numbers.

Since moving to MSP, Mildura Badminton’s membership has grown by 185 per cent. Mildura Basketball Association has increased its number of teams from 230 to 303, Sunraysia Volleyball’s participation rate has climbed by 91 per cent and Mildura Squash’s membership is up 25 per cent.

The outdoor tenants have also boomed since the move.

The South Mildura Sporting Club is now the number one ranked club for junior registrations locally, while Mildura East Cricket Club has just completed its first full season playing on both ovals and using the eight-lane practice nets for training. This season the club has five senior men’s teams, the most of any in the Sunraysia association, as well as a women’s team and an additional junior team taking the field. Ms Merrett says the enormity of the MSP project always meant it would develop in stages and take time to grow into its potential.

“But already we are seeing what it can deliver at a local, state and national level,” she explains.

“It showcases our region to the nation that we can host and deliver national sporting events. It puts us on the map.”

Griffin agrees.

“The fact that Mildura has invested into building such an amazing facility (the MSP) that is of national and international standard shows it is serious about not only attracting events like the WNBL, but helping the game grow,” she says. “We can’t wait to get up there.”



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Child and Youth Mental Health Service (CYMHS) is based at Mildura Base Public Hospital. It is the public mental health service that manages crises for the community. For mental health support, contact: 03 5022 3500 or 1300 366 375.

headspace - helping young people struggling with general life issues and mental health issues such as anxiety, depression. Contact: (03) 5021 2400.

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- **Kids Help Line:** 1800 55 1800
- **QLife** (anonymous and free LGBTIQ+ peer support and referral): 1300 555 727
- **Eating Disorders Victoria:** 1300 550 236 and the **Butterfly Foundation:** 1800 33 4673 - supporting people with eating disorders and body image issues



ICU NURSE CALLING TIME ON A STELLAR CAREER

It's more than 40 years since registered nurse trainee, Greg Plummer, commenced working in the wards of the then, Mildura Base Hospital, in Thirteenth Street. This would be the beginning of a rewarding career, which would see him dedicate his life to serving in his community's hospital and now he is calling it a day – well almost!

WHEN you meet Greg Plummer, you are immediately impressed by his calmness and his empathetic personality. He is clearly someone who is methodical and precise in everything he does in his professional role as the Mildura Base Public Hospital's (MBPH) ICU Critical Care Clinical Nurse Consultant.

The intensive care ward in a hospital deals with a multitude of critical health emergencies from road trauma, burns, heart attacks, strokes, kidney failure, acute respiratory conditions, premature births and the list goes on.

Greg is a highly experienced critical care nurse who has probably seen it all during his long career.

Heartbeat sat down with Greg on the eve of his last day at the MBPH to see what plans he has for the future and to have him recount some memorable moments from his stellar career.

"I started a transition to retirement about four years ago, because after almost 42 years working as a nurse, I had accumulated quite a lot of long service and annual leave and decided to start using it," Greg said.

"Now seemed like the time to retire. Our son and daughter both have partners and live in Adelaide. We have two grandchildren and so it will be nice for my wife Kay and I to have a bit more time to travel over there and back rather than finish work on Friday afternoon and drive over and come back Sunday afternoon and then start work the next morning.

"During my transition, my number of days at work have reduced year on year. I reduced to four days a week for one year, then three days for two years and this year it has been two days a week.

"This has been fully-funded from my long service and annual leave and so it has been a great way to wind down and now that my leave has been exhausted, it's time to reduce it to no days and retire."

Greg did however point out that he has been asked to continue to do casual shifts in ICU, when staff are on leave, something he has agreed to.

"The MBPH has asked me if I would fill-in on some casual shifts to cover annual leave here and there and so I will probably do that," he said.

Greg explained how he trained as a nurse through the hospital system, which allowed him to qualify as a nurse without having

to do a science-based tertiary subject. "I left school in 1978, during year 12 and worked in the Commercial Bank of Australia for a few of years and also did some clerical work for a couple of years after that," he said.

"I had been involved in a motor bike accident and hurt my neck and the surgeon in Ballarat said to me "you can't have a desk job and sit with your head down all the time – you need to find something else" which to me meant something that kept me active and moving around.

"My wife was living with a nurse at the time and she said: "why don't you try nursing?" - something I hadn't ever thought about.

"Back then, you went and had a chat to the Matron and so I made an appointment to meet with her.

"When we met, she asked me what subjects did I do in year 12, to which I responded maths, English, economics, data management, legal studies and accounting. "So, no science", matron queried.

"No was the answer."

Greg said that left him with two choices. He could attend night school and do a biology or another science related course or start his 'division two' training, which was the equivalent to the SEN training and if he did well in that, matron would recommend him to be able to undertake the general nursing training.

"I decided to take the division two training, which was a year-long course which I commenced in 1983 and completed the following year. I was fortunate enough to win the top award during my course. After a short break, I commenced my general nurse training at the old hospital," Greg said.

"In those days you also had to travel to Bendigo for 'blocks' – which meant you spent a couple of weeks or months in the classroom down there and then you would return to Mildura for lectures as well as work in a variety of wards to gain broad experience, then that rotation would continue." I was fortunate enough to win the gold medal for my class and therefore invited to work in ICU permanently in 1988. Greg would also complete his Critical Care Nursing at Royal Adelaide Hospital ICU, in 1990.

Eventually, he would become the nurse in charge of ICU at the Mildura Base Hospital in 1992.

In the year 2000, the Mildura Base Hospital

was relocated to a newly built facility in Ontario Avenue, at which point, it opened under private administration with Ramsay Health Care at the helm.

"I transitioned to the new hospital, which was then under private management and I became the nurse unit manager of ICU in the new hospital until 2003," Greg said.

Greg assumed a number of roles after that and also spent five years as ADON, or Associate Director of Nursing in the critical care areas, including over-seeing the ICU, theatre, ED, Dialysis and Pre-admission up until 2008. After that, Greg would go onto to assume the role of Critical Care Clinical Nurse Consultant and teach the critical care course for number of years.

"Because I had been around for some time and worked across a number of areas, I was keen to be involved in projects that were aimed at fixing things - improving health outcomes for our patients," he said.

More about Greg's other project achievements shortly.

If we fast forward a bit, along came two other major occurrences which impacted, not just Greg's work situation, but that of all the hospital's staff.

In the first quarter of 2020, The COVID 19 pandemic descended on the world and not long after, it would impact the health system and hospitals in Victoria - and Mildura was not immune.

The other occurrence that would affect the base hospital, was the change back to public ownership, which was undertaken by the state government and became effective in late September, 2020.

Greg, recounted some of the experiences he and his fellow team members at the hospital lived through during the peak of the pandemic alert.

"When COVID came along, the Medical Director of ICU, myself and some other key colleagues, formed a project team, because a lot of things needed to happen quickly," he said.

"Given what was happening in the USA, where they were ventilating two people at a time from the one life support machine and people were dying at an alarming rate, we knew we had to be prepared for a possible onslaught here.

"The concern then, was that because we are isolated from Melbourne and their system may be 'full of it', as may Bendigo, Ballarat and everywhere else, we needed to be prepared for the worst-case scenario."



GREG WITH HIS WIFE KAY AND THEIR GOLDEN RETRIEVER.



A YOUNG GREG PLUMMER AT WORK ON THE WARDS AT THE OLD BASE HOSPITAL.



MBPH ICU NURSE UNIT MANAGER ANDREA BOCK CRITICAL CARE CLINICAL NURSE CONSULTANT GREG PLUMMER WITH ICU REGISTERED NURSE SUE HALE.

Greg said that the team worked to model scenarios that may occur with the gamut of admissions they may receive unrelated to COVID that would need to be dealt with, while keeping those people with COVID isolated in the ICU ward.

"Therefore, we needed to be fortified and ready to cope with what may confront us," he said.

Fortunately, the worst-case scenario didn't occur at the MBPH, but the exercise to be prepared and the government's rapid supply of medical equipment to hospitals like Mildura, meant there was almost a veiled silver-lining associated with the pandemic response - Greg explains.

"Our project worked on installation of additional medical air and gases into Operating Suite area to deal with overflow and planning how to deal with cardiac arrest situations or emergency situations in a world where isolation to prevent the spread of infection was paramount," he said.

"We had to rethink the way we did things? - so that the staff are protected Everyone was in gowns, masks, goggles, gloves and the whole protective thing.

"Would we have enough personal protective gear?

"And so, a lot of procedural protocols needed to be reviewed to keep the staff safe."

Greg said that the outcome was not as bad as it was first thought it may have been.

"We were fortunate when you look at other countries. And I while I think all governments are carrying a lot of debt as a result of the economic measures that needed to be taken during the pandemic, we received a lot of new equipment during that period which has equipped us to provide excellent care now and into the future, which we may otherwise not have acquired," he said.

"I wouldn't call it a silver-lining, but we do have brand new life support machines

and plenty of them, intravenous infusion pumps, kidney dialysis machines and other equipment which was delivered in preparation for COVID.

Greg listed some of clinical projects aimed at improving patient safety and providing better clinical outcomes that he was closely involved with.

"One was Tracheostomy Services, which included developing resources and providing advice and education for patients and staff to safely manage a tracheostomy," he said.

"This is a permanent or temporary surgical hole made in the front of the neck directly into the airway to assist with breathing.

"I was also the clinical lead of the team of fantastic nurses from all clinical areas that undertook the development and implementation of a major healthcare standard - 'Recognising and responding to clinical deterioration, or Standard 8'."

Greg said this includes all of the patient observation charts that are used to



NORTHERN DISTRICT SCHOOL OF NURSING PTS 104 GROUP 1 1984.



GREG AND FELLOW GRADUATE NURSE JACQUELINE SMYTHE RECEIVING GOLD MEDALS FOR THEIR CLASS RESULTS AT THE GRADUATION BALL PHOTO SUNRAYSIA DAILY.



MORE MEMORIES OF GREG WORKING ON THE WARDS.



GREG WAS PRESENTED WITH A BEAUTIFUL PICTURE AT HIS TRIBUTE DINNER.

record a patient's vital signs. For example, temperature, breathing, pulse, blood pressure and oxygen levels.

"When anything is abnormal, there is an escalation process to ensure that abnormalities are reported to a senior nurse or doctor in the first instance," he said.

"If the vital signs are very abnormal, then a MET (Medical Emergency Team) or Code Blue emergency team response is initiated.

"The implementation of high-flow air and oxygen equipment and resources for both paediatric and adult was another project. "Application of this resource involves special tubing being placed into the patient's nose and use of a machine to deliver oxygen and air at a high-flow rate to make breathing easier for them."

Perhaps one of Greg's proudest initiatives, was the development and implementation of the Vascular Access Service in 2015.

"This practice involves the placement of

specialised drips into veins and arteries using ultrasound," he said.

"We receive referrals from medical and nursing staff to place drips in patients who are considered difficult to cannulate or who require special lines inserted into the arm and threaded around near the heart for long-term intravenous access, taking blood or administration of medications that cannot be given into small veins in the hand or ar

"We were very fortunate to receive a substantial donation from Heartbeat Sunraysia and the Almond Board of Australia in 2020, to purchase an ultrasound probe specifically for use on babies and small children. We also received further support from Heartbeat Sunraysia to buy a second adult ultrasound probe – these are expensive, around \$8000 each. "Our goal is to insert the right type of drip on the first attempt, aiming for the drip to last for the entire hospital admission."

"I have enjoyed the technical aspects of the

role, but also the opportunity to meet, talk to and work with some amazing people for more than 40 years," he said.

"I have loved working in ICU for more than 35 years and couldn't imagine having worked in any other environment. I will miss my colleagues, this hospital and being able to serve patients who I have been proud to support over the years.

"Given that I spend so much time inside at work, I really enjoy outdoor activities such as walking the dog Louie, gardening, camping with family and friends, motorcycle riding and kayaking and I will look forward to more of that."

In retirement, Greg and his wife Kay, are looking forward to doing more overseas travel, as well as towing their caravan to various places and more visits to Adelaide to see their son Dale and daughter Rachael, their partners and of course the grandchildren.

Heartbeat wishes them both well for the future.



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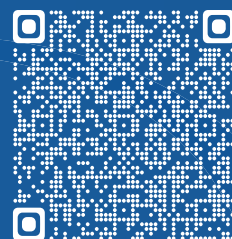
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A NIGHT OF EMOTION BLENDED WITH GLITZ AND GLAMOUR IN SUPPORT OF A WONDERFUL CAUSE

By Heath Kendall

This year's MBPH Foundation Gala Ball at Willow and Ivie was a resounding success, raising more than \$30,000 to support Lucas's Legacy. This vital initiative assists families with sick children who must travel to major cities for essential medical treatment.

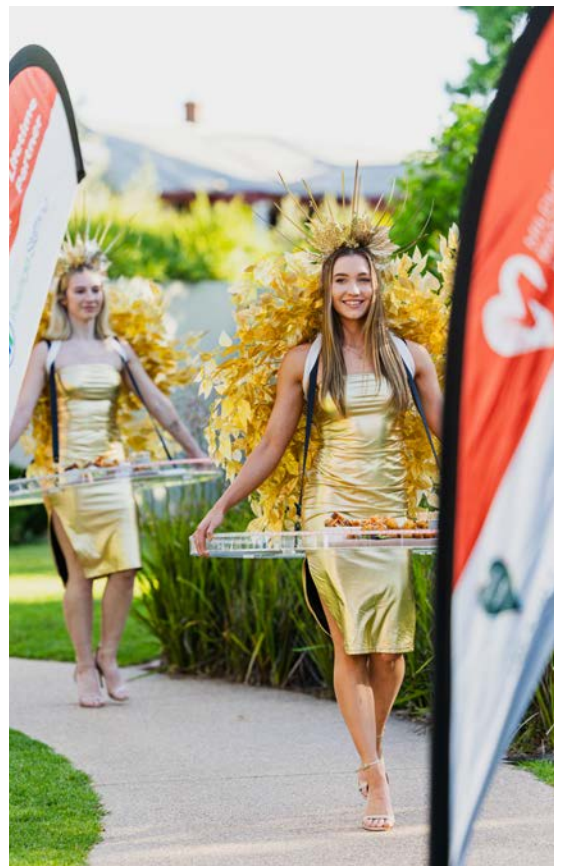
The evening's highlight was undoubtedly an emotional and heartfelt speech delivered by Lucas Whitelegg (pictured), the namesake of the Lucas Foundation. Lucas shared his personal journey, recounting the early years of his life spent in Melbourne undergoing treatment after being diagnosed with a serious medical condition at birth. His candid reflections drew tears and applause from the audience, highlighting the challenges faced by many families in similar circumstances.

Lucas spoke movingly about the

unwavering support he received from his parents, Andrew and Bree Whitelegg. Their love and dedication were palpable as he recounted the extended periods spent away from home and the impact of separation from loved ones during his treatment. His story not only highlighted the importance of the Foundation's work but also served as a reminder of the strength of familial bonds in times of adversity.

The Gala Ball has evolved into one of the region's premier events, known for its glitz and glamour. The 2024 edition lived up to this reputation, featuring an array of stunning attire. Attendees came together not just to celebrate, but to reaffirm their commitment to supporting families in need. The funds raised from the evening will undoubtedly make a significant difference in the lives of many families facing the daunting challenges of illness and the necessary travel for treatment.







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HATS OFF TO SUNITAFE'S TEACHERS

By Samantha Leersen

Technical education teachers have been a crucial part of Australia's development since the early nineteenth century when the first Mechanics Institutes were established.

Known today as TAFE teachers, these experienced professionals perform a similar role in passing on their own practical skills in diverse fields like healthcare, trades, and business to the next generation.

On 25 October this year, Australia celebrated World Teachers' Day. The yearly campaign, 'Hats Off to Teachers,' aims to express respect, admiration, and offer

congratulations to teachers.

Amongst those celebrated were SuniTAFE's dedicated educators who are changing lives right here in the Mallee.

SuniTAFE Chief Executive Officer Brett Millington feels privileged to lead an organisation comprised of passionate and highly skilled educators.

"Without teachers, we don't have a business," he said.

"The quality of their efforts and their ability to connect with students is reflective of the student output that comes from that.

"Often a student will say that there was 'that one teacher' who helped them and played a

big role in their life. This is often true of our TAFE teachers because it is their role to pass on their passion to students."

SuniTAFE employs more than 100 teachers across wide-ranging areas of expertise. The work of these teachers can be felt in Mildura, Swan Hill, and surrounds.

"Being a TAFE teacher can be an underappreciated job, but they make a big impact," Mr Millington said.

"TAFE training presents an alignment between training needs and employment opportunities. There is also then alignment between employment opportunities and what those jobs do for the economic regions.

“The role of TAFEs is about providing the skills that the region requires and that is what we deliver on at SuniTAFE.

“This means that our teachers have the crucial responsibility of understanding how skills needs are delivered on the ground, and how to then work with students to train them and change their lives.”

In acknowledgement of World Teachers’ Day, educators shared their experiences of being a TAFE teacher, and how it is both a personally rewarding occupation and a positive career move.

Chris McGinty is a teacher of the Victorian Certificate of Education Vocational Major (VCE VM) and Victorian Pathways Certificate (VPC) programs.

Both programs offer students an alternative schooling environment to complete their year 12 education.

Having taught at SuniTAFE for seven years, Chris has seen many students finish their schooling as different people than when they first arrived.

“The best part about teaching is seeing the growth of young people’s confidence, knowledge, and skills through their education and self-discovery journey,” Chris said.

“I feel as if I am making a difference for those that needed a change of outlook to succeed.”

Mat Ablett is a Building Studies teacher who has been a part of SuniTAFE for the past six years. The choice to become a teacher was an easy one.

“I became a TAFE teacher because I wanted a change in career, but I liked the idea that it still allowed me to work in the same industry that I had put so much time and effort into,” he said.

“I still enjoy teaching after six years, it can be challenging, but the rewards outweigh the challenges.”

Barb Griffiths is an Individual Support and Allied Health teacher at SuniTAFE’s Swan Hill campus. Prior to being a teacher, she was a nurse for 50 years. With half a century of experience, Barb felt that it was her duty to pass on all she has learnt to her students.

“Becoming a teacher allowed me the opportunity to give back and teach the next generation of students the importance of caring for a person and that it’s not just about rocking up, doing the task, and walking out again,” she said.

“My role is all about teaching the students how to interact and how to build a rapport



STUDENTS UNDERTAKING NURSE TRAINING.



CHRIS MCGINTY WITH CEO BRETT MILLINGTON.



JAYKE WILSON IS ONE OF THE NEWER TEACHERS AT SUNITAFE.

and that’s what I feel I’ve done over the last three years.

“The feedback I’ve received from students has been really positive and so that makes me glad I made the decision to become a teacher.”

Finally, Jayke Wilson is one of SuniTAFE’s newer teachers. He commenced his role after being the inaugural recipient of the Victorian Automotive Forum Certificate IV in Training and Assessment scholarship.

For Jayke, being a TAFE teacher was something he always intended to do.

“Becoming a teacher at SuniTAFE was always a goal, it’s a rewarding and challenging experience and a way to help the industry continue to move forward,” he said.

“I thoroughly enjoyed all the teachers that I had, and I thought how cool it would be if I could provide the same help that I received all those years ago.”

HOW DO YOU BECOME A TAFE TEACHER?

Unlike becoming a school teacher or university lecturer, the pathway to becoming a TAFE teacher is more

concerned with practical work experience than formal education.

TAFE educators are required to have qualifications and industry experience in their chosen field to ensure they can pass on job-ready practical skills to their students. Additionally, the minimum qualification required to teach within a TAFE is Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAE40122), which only takes a year to complete.

This means that professionals who have been working in their chosen industry for several years can make a seamless transition into becoming a TAFE teacher after just one year of additional study.

Many TAFE teachers see this transition as their opportunity to continue a legacy and give back to the industry that they love, making education a rewarding next career step.

New teaching opportunities become available at SuniTAFE periodically throughout the year.

If you’re interested in giving back to your profession, you can visit <https://www.sunitafe.edu.au/about/jobs-at-sunitafe/current-positions/> to see current vacancies.



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FOUNDATION'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE COMMUNITY TRAVELLING WELL

By John Dooley

The Mildura Base Public Hospital (MBPH) officially launched their new Patient Transport Vehicle in mid-October, which has been 100% funded by the hospital's Foundation. The new transport vehicle will serve the communities of the Northern Mallee, including Ouyen, Robinvale, and Wentworth.

This initiative will provide a more cost-effective and efficient way of transporting patients from the hospital to their residence or primary place of care. Importantly, this vehicle will help alleviate the burden on local ambulance services and ensure that more patients can be transferred safely and promptly without long wait times.



MBPH CEO Terry Welch said projects like this highlight the crucial role of the MBPH Foundation and the invaluable contributions it makes to improving healthcare in our region. "The patient transport vehicle is just one of the many great projects the Foundation supports," Mr Welch said.

"It will focus on taking people from Mildura Base Public Hospital to Robinvale District Health Service, to Mallee Track Health and Community Service and of course, when we have to go over the border to New South Wales, to Wentworth Hospital.

"This is all off-the-back of the generosity of sponsors and support of people donating time, money and commitment to the Foundation, so that we can improve health outcomes for this region."

The \$180,000 project has seen the patient transport vehicle fitted out with the latest equipment, equivalent to what you would see in a fully resourced ambulance.

"Our intention is that in the near future, we will have two of these vehicles on the road servicing the northern Mallee community," Mr Welch added.

"Today, is step one of what is a bigger picture. We work so beautifully with Robinvale and Mallee Track, particularly with the virtual ward model allowing people to be cared for closer to home and so this is a really historic day for our partnership."

Mallee Track Community Health

Service board chair and MBPH board member, Mary Rydberg, described the commissioning of the vehicle as crucial link between the health service.

"This wonderful patient transport vehicle provides us with the opportunity to quickly and seamlessly transport people from Mildura back down to Ouyen to Mallee Track," Mrs Rydberg said.

"We have a new 'virtual ward' where we have inpatients now and this has simplified the transporting of those patients and Robinvale is in the same situation.

"The board of Mallee Track Health and Community Service has been delighted that the Foundation has been able to offer this opportunity and partnership, which is a great outcome."

Robinvale District Health Service board chair, Jessica Curran, also expressed her organisation's appreciation of Foundation's commissioning of the patient transport vehicle.

"RDHS acknowledges the enormous commitment of the MBPH foundation in funding and supporting the patient transport vehicle," Ms Curran said.

"For the Robinvale community, being able to be transported back to our facility in a timely and safe fashion is essential. "RDHS works strongly with MBPH and surrounding healthcare services for better patient outcomes and this vehicle is a terrific example of this collaboration within our region."

MBPH Board Chair and Foundation committee member, Frank Piscioneri, reiterated the importance of the partnership between the region's health services and work the Foundation undertakes to provide better health care outcomes across the region. "This patient transport vehicle is the result of what good partnerships can deliver," Mr Piscioneri said. "It is a collaboration between the Foundation, Robinvale and Mallee Track and the Mildura Base Public Hospital, which has seen a great outcome for the community, which is the Foundation's mission."

Another exciting Foundation project is the Skin Cancer Screening Vehicle, which is about to enter its construction phase. This mobile unit will travel to communities across the region, providing essential skin cancer screenings to residents who might otherwise have limited access to these services.

Mr Welch said with skin cancer rates high in rural areas, especially under the harsh Mallee sun, the truck will play a critical role in early detection and treatment, potentially saving lives. "As I often say, while government funding enables us to provide great care, it is the generosity of our community and sponsors, through the Foundation, that allows us to deliver exceptional care and offer services beyond the standard funding we receive from the government."



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MILDURA LECTURER WINS DR ADELE CALLAGHAN AWARD FOR HEALTHCARE SIMULATION

By Tania Ewing

Lecturer and simulation lab coordinator, Kristy Allen, has been named the 2024 recipient of the Dr Adele Callaghan Award for Healthcare Simulation. Awarded by the Loddon Mallee Hume Simulation Alliance, the award recognises excellence in simulation-based clinical education in Victoria's Loddon Mallee and Hume regions.

Kristy has taught clinical skills to medical students in Mildura for over ten years. During this time, she established a dedicated space for students to practice their clinical skills, and appointment slots for one-on-one feedback, resulting in significant improvements in student competency.

"A real highlight was feedback from Associate Professor Anne Powell from the Monash Central Clinical School working at the Alfred Hospital credentialing staff and students in cannulation (a process of placing a cannula inside a vein), who shared some amazing competency levels she found in students taught through our

program in particular," reflected Kristy.

For Kristy, seeing the growing confidence of her students is both a personal and professional highlight.

"Honestly nothing beats the students coming back from their clinical placements in the hospital and sharing their stories of being involved in a patient's care. I feel extremely passionate about preparing every student with the confidence and competence they need to contribute to their patients' care in a positive way."

Kristy's innovative approach to healthcare simulation also benefits the Mildura health workforce. Mildura Base Public Hospital and Ambulance Victoria both regularly use the clinical simulation facilities at Monash Rural Health Mildura, with Kristy helping facilitate sessions. These allow health professionals to practice new skills or run through realistic scenarios in a safe environment, as part of their ongoing professional education.

The Dr Adele Callaghan Award for Healthcare Simulation is awarded annually in memory of Dr Adele Callaghan, a pioneer in healthcare simulation, who

passed away in 2019. Adele made substantial contributions to the National Health Education and Training in Simulation (NHET-Sim) program and was instrumental in its uptake in the Loddon Mallee and Hume regions. In 2020, Adele was awarded her PhD posthumously for a thesis exploring the skills junior doctors require for recognising and managing deteriorating patients.

Kristy feels extremely grateful to receive the award, for doing a job she loves.

"Adele is remembered so fondly by us all here in Mildura and we continue to use her PhD work in the recognition and management of deteriorating patients for the development and delivery of our simulation teaching program."

The award will provide Kristy with a sponsored place to complete a short course in simulation education, furthering her expertise in this area and benefiting future generations of Monash medical students and local health practitioners in Mildura.

"I am really looking forward to putting this award towards further study and a Masters in Clinical Simulation in the future."



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GIVING SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLORE HEALTH CARE SKILLS AND FUTURE CAREER PATHWAYS

By **Tania Ewing**

It's been more than a decade since Monash Rural Health Mildura began its Mini Medicine Academy Days (MMAD) across the Mildura region. The aim is to encourage local high school students to consider a career in healthcare.

Run by MRH's Year 3-5 medical students, the three-hour sessions involve the medical students show the high school students hands-on skills like suturing and plastering. This year (2024), year 9 to 12 students from Chaffey Secondary College, Irymple Secondary College, St Joseph's College and Clontarf Academy all attended the days in September.

According to Monash Rural Health project coordinator, Louise Hodgetts,

the secondary school students explore health care skills and discovered future career pathways in health care. "Visiting students were able to develop skills in CPR, plastering and radiology and interact with simulated dummy patients which display symptoms and signs for students to respond to with treatment," she said.

"Current medical students provided insights into what it is like to be a medicine student and shared information about their own journey to enter into the medicine course. Being so far from major cities, careers in healthcare can often seem out of reach for students in Mildura. The MMAD days allow students to be more aware of the numerous pathways open to them to become a healthcare professional." David Byrnes, Monash Rural Health's

Aboriginal Communities Engagement Lead, believes it is particularly important to have Indigenous students from the Clontarf and STARS Academies hear from current Monash medical students about what it's like to study for a career in healthcare.

"Having health care professionals from First Nations backgrounds is key to creating culturally safe care for local communities - so getting students to consider potential careers in health is an important first step," he said.

"This year it was fantastic to welcome the Mildura Clontarf Academy students - and see many of them excited about the idea of working in health care careers in the future."

The Mini Medicine Academy days with Clontarf Academy, and also visits by MRH staff and students to schools in the Robinvale area are all an extension of MRH's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Framework, launched last year. Aimed at strengthening relationships between MRH and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations across Monash Rural Health's teaching sites in Mildura, Bendigo and Gippsland, the Framework ensures that the next generation of healthcare workers have a greater understanding of local Indigenous communities and healthcare needs.

One of the Framework's initiatives is the holding of truth telling sessions during orientation, in addition to new students being sent an email prior to arriving with an introduction to the Indigenous history and Traditional Owner group of the area they will be studying, living and working in.

According to Professor Karen Adams, Director of Monash University's Gukwonderuk - the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences' Indigenous engagement unit and Wiradjuri Woman, a co-designer of the Framework, work with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to increase student placements is core. "It's important that we work with these groups so that the students placed there do what the organisations need, whether it's health assessments by final year students or helping with workforce strategies," she said.

"It's also important that we work with local Aboriginal communities so that our students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, learn about local history and truth telling, so that it reinforces the way they work with patients in the future."



MONASH MEDICAL STUDENT, ISABEL LEE, WAS THE FIRST STUDENT TO COMPLETE A NEW INDIGENOUS HEALTH-FOCUSED SPECIALITY ELECTIVE AS PART OF HER STUDIES.

MEDICAL STUDENT PLACEMENT WITH ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY CONTROLLED HEALTH ORGANISATION GIVES AN UNDERSTANDING OF CULTURAL HOLISTIC CARE

Isabel has a long-standing interest in social issues, especially their intersections with medicine, and how general practice plays a role in public health. Believing that the best learning is done on the ground from lived experience, she jumped at the opportunity to be placed at Coomealla Health Aboriginal Corporation (CHAC). Originally from Adelaide, Isabel found she learnt things about Aboriginal health that generally aren't covered in the classroom, such as developing confidence in navigating difficult conversations with Indigenous patients, and an understanding of the role of Aboriginal Liaison Officers in the hospital system.

Throughout her placement, Isabel says she felt the passion of the GPs in the service, who are motivated by the impact they are able to have on the health of the community. This is achieved through holistic management of patients' entire health, connecting them to allied health supports, learning about their family and life, and identifying public health prevention strategies to support



A HIGHLIGHT OF ISABEL'S INDIGENOUS HEALTH ROTATION WAS EXPERIENCING NAIDOC WEEK IN MILDURA.

their health.

"This made each consultation feel important, and I left each day feeling accomplished that I had done something to impact even one patient's health for the better."

Monash Rural Health Aboriginal Community Engagement Lead, David Byrnes, who facilitated organisation of the

placement with CHAC, hopes that this will be the first of many placements with them.

"We appreciate the outstanding work being done by CHAC in supporting the local Aboriginal community, and are excited about working more closely with them in the future to give our students knowledge and understanding of their culturally sensitive approach."



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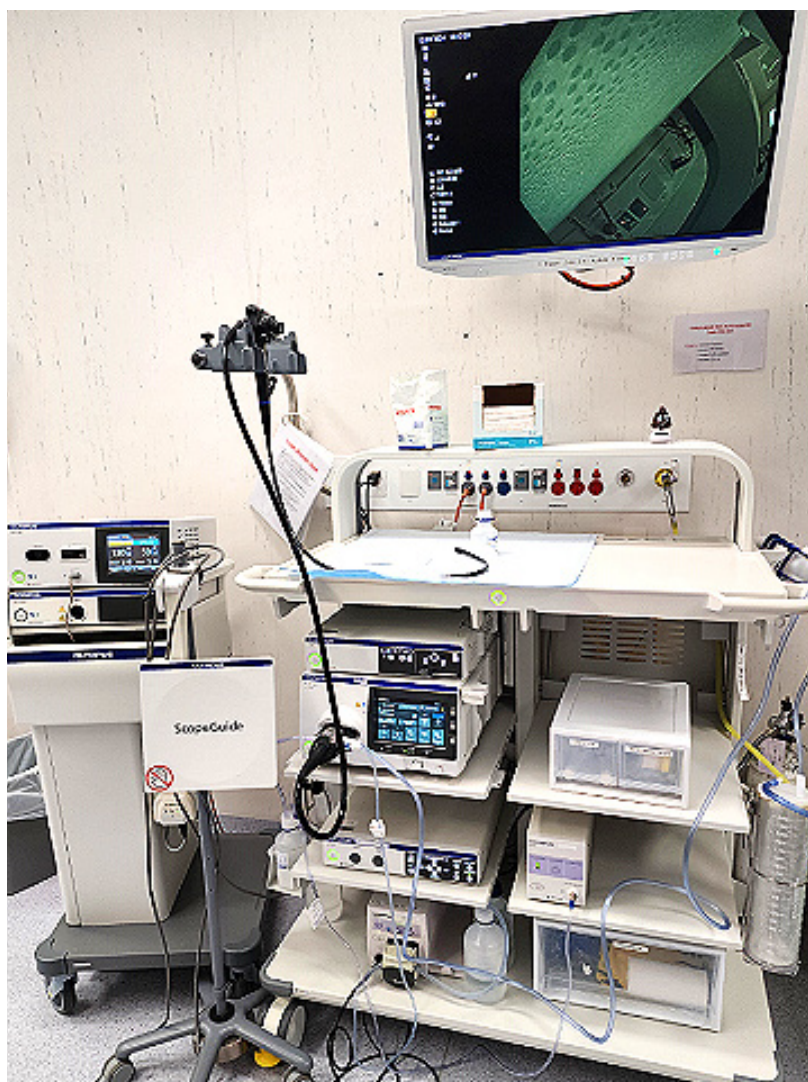
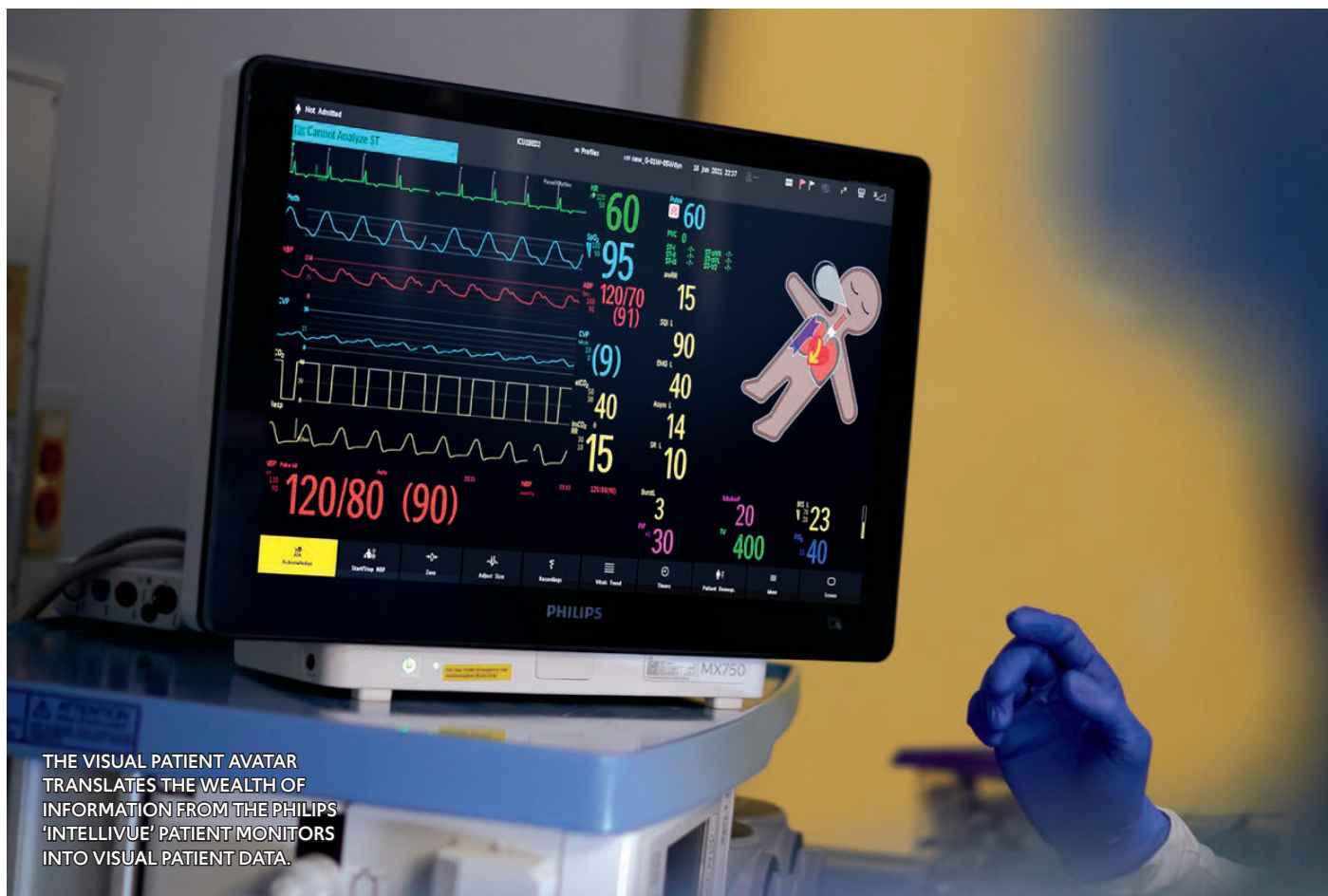
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VISUAL PATIENT AVATAR

THE FIRST OF ITS KIND IN VICTORIA

By John Dooley

Mildura Base Public Hospital (MBPH) has taken delivery of new GE anaesthetic machines with Philips monitoring which soon be operational in the hospital's theatres. The MBPH is the first hospital in Victoria to have this technology and one of only two hospitals in Australia to acquire the equipment.

One of the features of the new Philips monitoring, is the 'Visual Patient Avatar'. Used in conjunction with conventional patient monitoring, it is designed to help the Anaesthetic team gain a fast, visual understanding of a patient's condition.

The Visual Patient Avatar translates the wealth of information from the Philips 'IntelliVue' patient monitors into visual patient data using an avatar that displays colour, shape and animation.

This innovative approach to monitoring

aims to improve the situational awareness. Information overload from multiple displays may make it difficult to get a quick situation overview of the patient.

The system offers a simple, functional design that has been shown to help users recall vital sign information significantly faster.

The technology was developed to overcome 'alarm' fatigue and provides a visual representation of the patient intraoperatively, prior to alarm parameters becoming triggered to indicate a change in patient vital signs.

Importantly, it doesn't replace observing the patient and monitoring numerical data, but rather, it is an enhancement of the patient's safety whilst under an anaesthetic.

This further enhancement to the MBPH patient care, follows recent renovations to the hospital's Endoscopy suite, that has

seen the addition of the latest, Olympus Gastrosopes and Colonoscopes technology, the 'EVIS XI', which is one of the most advanced Endoscopy systems available.

This Endoscopy system is a computer-aided detection application, that uses AI to suggest the potential presence of lesions such as colonic polyps, malignant neoplasms and adenomas. This advanced optical technology is proven to provide a reliable optical diagnosis of all major indications in the gastrointestinal tract.

The endoscopy scopes are cleaned in the latest reprocessing equipment – Steris Medivators and drying cabinets.

The new suite complies with the Gastroenterological Nurses College of Australia (GENCA) and infection control standards, while maintaining high standards of patient safety and care during a procedure.



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A CENTURY OF CROATIAN MIGRANT CONTRIBUTIONS COMMITTED TO FILM

SUNRAYSIA'S CROATIAN COMMUNITY HAS BEGUN GEARING UP TO MARK THE CENTENARY OF ITS NOT INSIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO OUR REGION'S HISTORY.



CLUB PRESIDENT AND FILM PRODUCER DIRECTOR VESNA ZVONAR SPEAKING AT THE LUNCH.

By Grant Maynard

The official commemoration date for the arrival of the first Croatian settlers here is not until May 2027 but already a film has been produced to mark the occasion.

The 55-minute 'Immigration Story of Croatians in the Mildura Region' had its first screening at Irymple's Croatian Senior Citizens Club monthly lunch on Saturday, November 2, to much acclaim. Club president, Vesna Zvonar, described the special lunch entertainment as a "very unique occasion".

"Mildura has a rich and diverse ethnic and cultural heritage, as testified by all of us, and others who live here with ancestral links to very many countries from all continents," she told the assembly.

"The Croatian community has been a proud part of the wider Mildura community for nearly 100 years, affirmed by the monument* on Deakin Avenue that commemorates the arrival of first Croatian settlers to Mildura in May 1927." Behind the legacy of 100 years of

Croatian settlement in Mildura, Vesna told Heartbeat, there are many individual stories about extraordinary courage, the heartbreak of family separation, risk-taking, inventiveness, endurance and commercial spirit that guided those pioneering Croatians to not only build a new life here, but also to thrive and prosper in a new land.

"It is with this desire to preserve for future generations and historians an accurate portrait of who we are, to show why in our hearts there is a lot of love for both countries, Croatia, and Australia, that we decided to ask our members to share with us their stories in their own words, with their own voices, and with their own understanding of what happened and why," she said.

The video contains personal stories of 16 Croatian community members and details why and how they left the 'old country' for Australia, and highlights the experiences of their arrival, subsequent struggles and achievements in their "new home".

This oral history project was produced with a grant from the Mildura Rural City Council.

"For that our Club is immensely grateful," Vesna said.

The grant was secured in early November 2023 and filming started soon after.

"We also extend our deepest gratitude to Robert Klarich, the video producer, whose great expertise made this video a moving testimony of Croatian presence here.

"We also wish to thank all those who assisted us in different ways to create this video that we intend to present to a wider Mildura community."

The film was shot during 10 filming sessions, taking accounts from 16 people – four speaking as individuals and 12 in pairs.

Filming produced about 10 hours of material by the end of June 2024, that was subsequently edited down to 55 minutes. Vesna explained that to better understand the context of the Croatian immigration story, readers needed a few facts at their fingertips.



CLUB TREASURER BILL DOLENCE PRESIDENT VESNA ZVONAR
MRCC GM HEALTHY COMMUNITY MARK JENKINS & MEMBER
FOR MALLEE DR ANNE WEBSTER.



MONUMENT TO THE FIRST SETTLERS IN
MILDURA OF CROATIAN BACKGROUND.



NATIONAL FOLK SONG AND DANCING WERE A POPULAR FORM
OF ENTERTAINMENT IN CROATIAN CLUB CIRCA EARLY 1950S.



EXCITEMENT AND TREPIDATION AS YUGOSLAV
MIGRANTS BOARD A SHIP BOUND FOR AUSTRALIA.



MEMBERS OF THE YUGOSLAV BAND WHO PLAYED IN THE CROATIAN CLUB ONCE CALLED EITHER MATIJA GUBEC OR THE YUGOSLAV CLUB.

"While the video story is about Croatian people, the participants in the video refer to Yugoslavia as their 'old homeland'. That's because in their time Croatia was part of Yugoslavia. It is now, of course an independent country and is part of the European Union.

"A great number of Croatian immigrants to Sunraysia and most of our Club members came from Me imurje, more specifically from three villages there - Donji Vidovec, Donja Dubrava and Kotoriba.

"Me imurje is a region in the north of Croatia, between Hungary, Slovenia, and Austria.

Like Sunraysia, Me imurje is predominantly flat, agricultural country, and like Sunraysia which has the Murray and Darling Rivers, Me imurje has the Drava and Mura.

It is little wonder than, Vesna says, that people from Me imurje referred to Sunraysia as 'Little Me imurje' and have established strong bonds with their new country.

"There are 15,305 kilometres between Me imurje and Mildura and while, these days, we are accustomed to travel long distance in planes (a flight from Croatia to Australia takes 21 hours and 15 minutes), only one participant in our video arrived in Australia on a plane – that was in 1966 and she landed at Essendon, as Tullamarine had not been built at that time.

The remainder, of course, came by ship. The boarding port was Genoa in Northern Italy, Vesna explained, two days travel on a bus and train from people's homes in Croatia.

The boat journey took an additional 10 weeks.

A great number of early settlers travelled alone – and they were very young, Vesna revealed.

"Often just 17 years old, but some were as young as 14 and one was just 9 years old and none of them spoke English.

Some of first settlers were cabinet makers or tailors in the 'old country', but upon arrival to Australia they became labourers.

'Immigration Story of Croatians in the Mildura Region' has nine chapters to help tell the story. They are Immigration to Australia; Born in Australia to Croatian parents; Not an easy life; First impressions of Mildura; The English language; Croatian Clubs; Being a migrant; The Croatian community nowadays and Looking back.

And so, what was the motivation for making a long and what at times must have been an intimidating journey?

"People migrated to Australia because they were looking for a 'better life'," Vesna said.

"Back in their old country there were big families and not much land, so there was nothing else for them to do.

"The idea was to earn some money in Australia and then bring the family here, but The Great Depression and then World War 2 changed many of their plans.

"In the early 20th century people from Medjimurje went to the USA, but then America closed the border, and they decided to come to Australia, even though they didn't know anything about the country.

"People often came in groups from the same village and those who arrived in Australia would often sponsor members of their immediate family or relatives to follow them."

Following World War 2 it became increasingly difficult or nigh on impossible for Croatians to leave 'the old country' because their government at the time wanted them to stay and help rebuild their shattered country.

Early Croatian immigrants gravitated towards Renmark and the Riverland area because there was work there – they could pick grapes or oranges and prune when the season was right and then, when there was no work, they could still fish and catch rabbits to eat.

"Single people lived in groups to help each other, as only families were allowed to rent houses," Vesna explained.

"When they were able to save some money, they wanted to purchase properties but were not allowed to do so in SA as they were not naturalised.

"That is the reason they started to move to Victoria and Mildura specifically.

With the passage of time, those pioneers became farmers growing sultanas and grapes as well as citrus on their own properties.

"Croatians are hardworking, friendly, and generous people who enjoy socializing when they have time and to that end, they often met on Saturdays in private homes to socialise and play music in those early days.

"The need for a social club became more obvious as time passed, and the first Croatian social club was opened here in 1939.

"It still exists today on Deakin Avenue and is known as Medjimurski Club.

"Apart from Croatians (or Yugoslavs as

they were known at the time) patrons included German, Polish, Italian and Dutch settlers.

While there are two Croatian Clubs in Sunraysia, there is, Vesna says, just one Croatian community.

"Many people are members of both clubs," she explained.

"Altogether, there are around 60 members across our two clubs.

"Many Croatians found it is hard to be a migrant. To uproot oneself and get on the road, not knowing where you will put your head down, under the stars or elsewhere is no small feat.

"Migration is a big, serious thing, and like the kangaroo and emu in Australia's Coat of Arms, migrants always must move forward, not backwards.

"The Croatian community is no longer as strong as it once was with the now third generation of Croatians became 'Australianised'.

"Eventually the Croatian language and practices will die out here," Vesna predicts a little wistfully.

"All those interviewed for the film have family members in Croatia and they keep in touch with them via email and zoom.

"And while all enjoy visiting Croatia, the reality is, no-one probably envisages returning there permanently.

"Another thing they all agree upon is that what their parents did to establish themselves in a new country was truly remarkable."

It certainly was.

* The monument is in the Deakin Avenue centre plantation opposite the Medjimurski Club between 14th and 15th Street and opposite Mildura Central.

Special acknowledgement: Club president Vesna Zvonar, on behalf of all those who attended the film launch luncheon, wished to thank Trentham Estate for their generous support of the event.

LUNCHEON PHOTOS:
ROBERT KLARICH

To view 'Immigration Story of Croatians in the Mildura Region' visit this YouTube link: <https://tinyurl.com/4mj9e7y8> or scan the QR code.





MILDURA MEMBERS OF THE CROATIAN COMMUNITY
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A GATHERING OF FORMER NURSES WHO TRAINED TOGETHER AT THE 'OLD BASE'

A reunion of Mildura Base Hospital past trainees met in Mildura recently, eight of the original twelve members of 'School 70' came together to celebrate and renew old friendships.

The reunion very conveniently coincided with the Robinvale Centenary and some of the group attended those celebrations. Six of the group originally came from Robinvale, before commencing their training in 1967, which finished in 1970.

Members travelled from Melbourne, the Mornington Peninsula and Queensland, several others in the group remain in Sunraysia and have worked in healthcare locally.

It was a worthwhile happy get together, activities included a tour of the Mildura Base Public Hospital, hosted by Katrina Allen, which was very interesting and greatly appreciated.

After the hospital tour, a lunch was



enjoyed at the Mildura Arts Centre, where the mural that was once situated on the front of the old MBH Nurses Home before demolition, has been reconstructed in their foyer.

Dinners and time spent together over two days at local restaurants provided a great opportunity to for the ladies to catch up on everyone's news. It was a time for lots of reminiscing and story-telling, remembering

the fun times they had together, living as "family" during their training days.

All of those who attended agreed to stay in closer touch and to meet regularly.

It's hoped that those who were unable to make the occasion this time, will do so in the future.

Heartbeat thanks former MBH nurse Gail Mottram for her contribution in providing this summary of the reunion.

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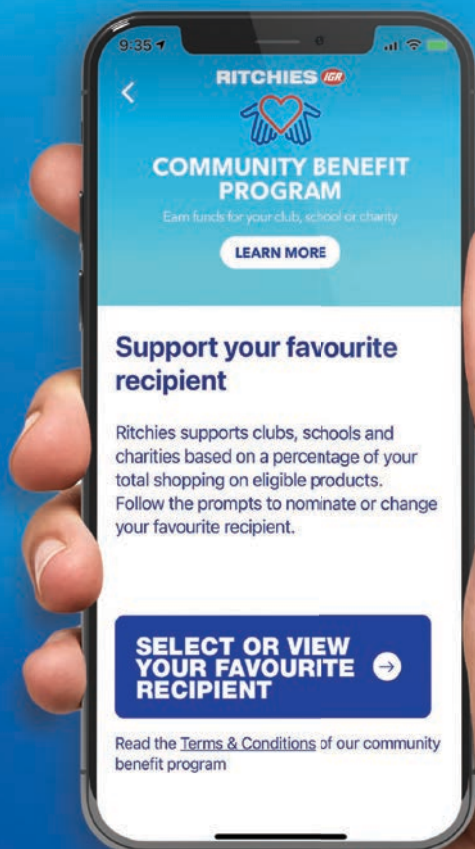
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MILDURA RADIOGRAPHER DAMIEN
ARGIRO REVIEWS AN X-RAY HE HAD
TAKEN AT THE OUYEN HOSPITAL.



RESUMPTION OF X-RAY SERVICES AT OUYEN HOSPITAL A WIN FOR THE COMMUNITY

By John Dooley

For Walpeup farmer Harold Ferguson, the resumption of radiology services at the Ouyen Hospital is a welcome development and another example of Mallee Track Health and Community Service delivering care closer to home. Mr Ferguson was one of the first patients in line to have his x-ray taken at Ouyen recently.

The resumption of the x-ray service after a decade, means that patients who would otherwise have to travel or be transported to Mildura Base Public Hospital for their x-ray, can now have their images taken locally.

If a more complex x-ray, a CT-scan or an MRI is required, then the journey to Mildura will still have to be undertaken. A scheduled fortnightly radiology service will be free for Mallee Track community

members for non-urgent tests. Mallee Track will be offering an emergency radiology service by the end of November. Mr Ferguson said the option to now have an x-ray done locally, was a godsend.

"Today, I had to come to the hospital early this morning for a blood test and after that I was able to go home and do some work on the farm before returning to Ouyen for my x-ray this afternoon," he said.

"Previously, I would have to go to Mildura and back, which would've taken up the best part of the day and so it's a godsend to have the service resume in Ouyen again."

Mallee Track Health and Community Service, Executive Director of Nursing and Midwifery, Rosey Cattannach explained the significance of having the x-ray service back in Ouyen.

"Many of our aged care residents prefer

not to leave the site and so we endeavour to provide as many medical services as we can in Ouyen. Now for them to be able to have a basic x-ray here, will be ground breaking for them, as it will be for the wider community," she said.

"While the trip to Mildura is undertaken with the best of care, our residents like to be surrounded by the staff that they know and who know them, in the place that they know." Ms Cattannach said the first step taken ahead of recommencing the service, was to have the existing equipment examined and certified.

"This was carried out and given full approval and then we sought to employ a radiographer to provide a regular service for the community," she said. "In addition to this, we will be able to offer urgent radiology services when the certification for the registered nurses is complete, next month."



MALLEE TRACK HEALTH & COMMUNITY SERVICES ENTRANCE TO OUYEN HOSPITAL



MILDURA RADIOGRAPHER DAMIEN ARGIRO VISITS THE OUYEN HOSPITAL ONCE A FORTNIGHT TO TAKE X-RAYS OF LOCAL PATIENTS.



MILDURA RADIOGRAPHER DAMIEN ARGIRO TAKING AN X-RAY OF WALPEUP FARMER HAROLD FERGUSON AT THE OUYEN HOSPITAL

“Mallee Track will be able to offer community members the opportunity to have an urgent issue investigated locally, by the end of November. This could be a Saturday afternoon football injury or one of our aged care residents may be experiencing a pain and require an x-ray.” “We are fortunate to have engaged the services of Damien Argiro, who is visiting Ouyen once a fortnight.”

Mr Argiro said for residents in Ouyen and surrounds being able to have an x-ray preformed close to home removed the necessity to travel to Mildura which he described as “a big plus”.

“I think it’s great. It saves a lot of unnecessary travelling up that highway, which can be dangerous stretch of road at times – especially for the elderly,” he said.

“It gives people the option to stay close to home to have some of their imaging done locally. There will still be some things that will need to be done in Mildura but it is

really good to bring something back to locals here in Ouyen.”

Once Mr Argiro has taken the x-ray and examined it, the scans are sent through to a reporting service engaged by Mallee Track, where the x-rays are medically assessed and then they are sent back to be further reviewed by the patient’s doctor.

Ms Cattanaach highlighted that Mallee Track Health and Community Service covers a wide footprint across the region. “We go all the way out to Murrayville and down the Calder Highway as far as Culgoa. Mallee Track has a campus at Sea Lake” she said.

“The Mallee Track Foundation is currently fundraising to purchase the necessary equipment to provide a radiology service in for the communities of Sea Lake and surrounds as well.”

The return of x-ray services, further

demonstrates the enhancement of healthcare accessibility for people in the Mallee Track foot print and follows on from the Northern Mallee Health Connect project which saw the launch earlier this year of the Virtual Patient Care model, which enables patients to stay in their local hospital while receiving specialist care.

Recently Robinvale District Health Service has joined Mallee Track Health and Community Service in using the virtual care model. Working in partnership with Mildura Base Public Hospital, Robinvale follows MTHCS as the second hospital in our region to adopt this model, which allows for the provision of patient care closer to home. This initiative, part of the Northern Mallee Integrated Partnership formed in November 2021, leverages virtual care platforms to improve healthcare accessibility across the Northern Mallee.

SAVING HUNDREDS OF KILOMETRES FOR MUMS TO BE

By John Dooley

It was back in April this year, when Mallee Track Health and Community Service announced the opening of their antenatal clinic at the Ouyen Hospital, one of a number of initiatives being undertaken by the organisation to advance health care delivery in their region.

Since then, the uptake of pregnant women in the region utilising the close-to-home service has exceeded expectations.

The clinic, which is effectively a satellite clinic of the Mildura Base Public Hospital (MBPH) Specialist Clinic's Antenatal Clinic, provides a midwife from MBPH, who visits Ouyen hospital once a month to conduct the clinic. The benefit to pregnant women in the Ouyen region is immense, saving them a lot of long-distance travel to attend antenatal appointments in Mildura.

The uptake in the number of women attending the Ouyen clinic has snowballed since the service opened its doors.

The clinic is staffed by MBPH Associate Nurse Unit Manager and Midwife, Brie Crook (pictured), who travels from Mildura to conduct the antenatal clinic sessions.

"I have been amazed by the uptake since the clinic opened earlier this year," Brie said.

"Initially, I started with only three women on the books but the numbers have grown significantly and now I have 13 or more who I am seeing currently.

"I like to see as many women as I can during each visit and I am able to see up to 10 patients in a day.

"I have had a lot of positive feedback from the women in regard to them being able to have access to essential care so close, rather than having to travel far for an appointment. "Just last week, a lady I booked in for her sessions was really happy, because as she said, she would otherwise have had to travel to Mildura, to have a 10-minute appointment and then she would drive back to Ouyen."

As Brie explained, she receives referrals in regard to the women she is going to consult and educate in her antenatal sessions both in Mildura and Ouyen.



"Initially, I will receive the referral through to the MBPH Specialist Clinic and then I filter that list, identifying those women who have an Ouyen address," she said.

"Their doctor will then review the referral, to ensure that it is suitable for me to be seeing those women in Ouyen. Once that is signed-off, I will arrange to conduct a booking-in session, which is usually a one-hour consultation, where I ensure I have all of the person's medical history and discuss their current and previous pregnancies and from there move forward to organise the rest of their pregnancy care."

Brie said that the other aspect of the service offered in Ouyen, is the relaxed atmosphere of the clinic.

"I feel that I can spend more time with the people I see to give them the education and guidance that they need," she said.

"My role is to educate them through their entire pregnancy on a range of subjects including diet and exercise, foetal movements, labour and birth, while also ensuring the necessary tests are ordered, reviewed and actioned."

"And also understanding that as the due date gets closer, there will be a necessity to visit Mildura for appointments and eventually of course, to give birth."

Giving thought to how that is to be managed is an important consideration for all of Brie's

mothers-to-be. While the Ouyen clinic is an obvious benefit to pregnant women in this region of the Mallee, as the term of the pregnancy progresses toward giving, some of their appointments will still need to be attended in Mildura as Brie explained.

"As the required appointments become closer together, I will need to see them in the clinic at the MBPH in Mildura, so that I can continue that continuity of care," Brie said.

"I also ensure that they are aware I am guided by their doctor in regard to their monitoring and they will also need to have some appointments with them as well.

"Therefore, I will also try to cluster their care in Mildura, so that they can for example, have a scan and a consultation on the same day."

Brie very much enjoys her role and said part of that comes from getting to know the women she sees.

"I really enjoy meeting and getting to know the mothers-to-be that I conduct the session with," she said.

"I particularly like the continuity of care that I am able to provide to them at the Ouyen clinic and that I don't have to reintroduce myself the next time I see them."

Brie expressed the positivity of connecting with the women she consults which she said is a rewarding part of her role.

"I feel that we have already developed a good rapport in our first meeting and we can pick-up from where we left off. I think that they trust who I am and are happy to open-up to me and feel comfortable to discuss things and I find that really rewarding."

Brie is still of course attached to the MBPH Maternity Ward, which she is dedicated to.

"I have also work in the maternity ward at MBPH and recently I have seen quite a few of my 'Ouyen girls' come in and birth and so that is nice and completes the care," she said.

"I started at the MBPH in 2011 and undertook my graduate year as a nurse and the following year I did my postgraduate in midwifery and so I have been a midwife since 2012. "It's a role I really love and find rewarding every day that I am on the job."



VIRTUAL PATIENT CARE ROLL OUT
RDHS CEO RO ENEVER (CENTRE)
WAS JOINED BY MBPH CEO TERRY
WELCH AND EXECUTIVE STAFF
FROM BOTH HOSPITALS.

VIRTUAL CARE LETS PATIENTS RECEIVE THEIR TREATMENT CLOSER TO HOME

By John Dooley

In early October, Robinvale District Health Services (RDHS) has joined Mallee Track Health & Community Services in using the virtual care model to facilitate the admission of patients back into their hospital.

Working in partnership with Mildura Base Public Hospital (MBPH), Robinvale follows MTHCS as the second hospital in our region to adopt this model, which allows to provide patient care closer to home.

This initiative, part of the Northern Mallee Integrated Partnership (NMIP) formed in November 2021, leverages virtual care platforms to improve healthcare accessibility across the Northern Mallee.

The Northern Mallee Health Connect project aims to address the challenges rural communities face in accessing timely

healthcare, particularly due to workforce shortages and logistical barriers.

With Robinvale now able to offer remote admissions for acute patients, the project is expanding the reach and quality of care available to our communities.

RDHS chief executive Ro Enever described the virtual care as a “great enhancement for the hospital and the wider Robinvale community”.

“We are delighted the service has commenced and we are looking forward to having it as another pathway for us to enable our patients to receive their care closer to home, while still having specialist oversight,” she said.

“Patient outcomes are positively impacted when they are able to access care closer to home.”

MBPH chief executive Terry Welch, together with some of the hospital’s

executive staff, travelled to Robinvale for the roll-out.

“This is a real game-changer for patients and represents a significant step towards enhancing health-care accessibility across the region,” Mr Welch said.

“By utilising the potential of virtual care platforms and optimising patient transfer processes, we aim to ensure that every individual in our community receives timely and comprehensive health care services, wherever they live.

“While it takes technology to provide this service, importantly it is the people and their commitment, that makes it a workable reality.

“This is just one pillar in a range of enhancements planned for RDHS, which will support them to provide an excellence in care beyond what they already deliver so well.”

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