

Media Release

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New approach to dementia care improves lives

Those close to someone living with dementia understand the importance of time. Time you've had creating precious memories before diagnosis, and the time after, before the disease takes complete hold.

In between, ensuring the person living with dementia lives their best life possible, with dignity and respect, is paramount.

Jenny Tadic believes the time her mum, Mary, has spent at VMCH's award-winning specialist dementia unit, Lady Lourdes House, has not only improved her wellbeing, but slowed the progression of her disease.

September 19-25 is Dementia Action Week. The 2022 theme, '[A little support makes a big difference](#)', demonstrates that many people living with dementia can continue to live well for years after their diagnosis.

Lady Lourdes is part of VMCH's [St Bernadette's Aged Care Residence](#) in Sunshine North and funded by the Australian Government's [Specialist Dementia Care Program](#) (SDCP). The home is purpose-designed for its eight residents, who experience very severe symptoms of dementia, and offers up to 12 months' intensive, supportive care to help them manage their symptoms so they can transition into mainstream aged care.

Lady Lourdes is one of only three SDCP's in Victoria, and only 10 in the country.

Jenny is grateful to have found Lady Lourdes, following a series of traumatic events for her mum. Staff at Mary's previous aged care home were unable to deal with her escalating, and sometimes aggressive, behaviour. As a result, the 75-year-old was removed forcibly from the home by police, and subsequently lived at Sunshine Hospital for three months.

"Then we found Lady Lourdes and within six weeks of moving in, we could see a huge difference in Mum," Jenny says. "She was calmer, and the staff treated her with dignity and respect."

So comfortable is the family with Mary's care, Jenny and her sister were both recently able to enjoy family holidays for the first time in years.

"The home is not only beautiful and homely, but staff feel like family. You can tell it's not just a job to them."

VMCH Dementia Services Specialist Elizabeth Baxter says Lady Lourdes staff are specially trained, with the built environment also geared towards positive outcomes, designed under [Dementia Enabling Environmental Principles](#).

"Our multidisciplinary approach to care reflects the future of dementia support; an end to an outdated 'one-size-fits-all' approach," Elizabeth says.

"The program recognises the needs of people with advanced dementia who cannot be appropriately supported in a mainstream memory support setting. We provide intensive clinical support and review, aimed to stabilise symptoms causing distress or challenges for the person or their family. We look forward to applying for more SDCP funding for our other aged care residences in the future."

Mary will soon become the fourth Lady Lourdes resident to transition to a mainstream setting since it opened in November 2020.

"If people were able to get into places like this at an earlier stage, I honestly think they could delay the (dementia) progression," Jenny says.

"It's been a fabulous experience, and I don't understand why there's not more units like this."

If you would like to learn more about VMCH dementia support, call 1300 698 624.

Media enquiries

Cassie Zlonzak

Communications Adviser

M: 0402 422 852

E: cassie.zlonzak@vmch.com.au

About VMCH

Here at VMCH, our services are as diverse as the people we support.

Our values underpin the work we do. As a Catholic, for-purpose organisation, compassion, respect and inclusion aren't just words to us, they guide us in everything we do.

While we've been around for over a century, we're always moving forward. Always staying true to who we are by supporting people and families to live their best lives; providing a place to call home and spaces to learn and grow.

Our professional and compassionate teams are with you on your life journey; helping you with a wide range of support from early learning and therapy, specialist education, disability services, affordable homes, residential aged care, retirement living and at-home aged care.

