

# Media Release

18 August 2023

## Unique home for young people with acquired brain injury celebrates 13 years.

Today marks 13 years since the opening of Austin Street, a permanent residence for young people with a significant acquired brain injury (ABI).

Villa Maria Catholic Homes (VMCH) opened Austin Street on 18 August 2010 under the State Government's own Younger People in Residential Aged Care (YPIRAC) initiative, known as 'My future, my choice.'

Based in Alphington, the aim of the home was to keep young people with an ABI out of nursing homes and hospitals by providing intensive support for residents' complex health needs, including critical 24/7 Registered Nursing (RN) support.

At the time, the Hon Bill Shorten MP, as the Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services, was instrumental in the development of this home. Through his leadership and foresight, Austin Street was built and represented a new era; a support model that blended nursing care with rehabilitation and community inclusion.

It remains the only home of its kind in Victoria and was the first of only two residences in the nation.

The residence was developed as a 'step down, step up and slow stream rehabilitation service' that has enabled many young people to transition out of hospitals, move out of aged care, remain healthy and well enough to remain living and participating in the community and, in numerous instances, develop the skills necessary to move on from Austin Street to return to their own homes or into another community living option.

VMCH CEO Sonya Smart says

"We are so proud of Austin St and the unique service it provides to the Victorian community, supporting many families transition their loved ones out of hospital or aged care and return them to independent living or other community living options."

As of December 2021, there were still 3,440 younger people living in residential aged care across Australia.

Ms Smart pointed out "While this makes Austin Street all the more amazing, it is also a sobering statistic as it means thousands of young Australians still live in aged care homes, and no other options are open."

"Austin Street is designed to be an enriched, warm and dynamic environment where the residents are encouraged to make their own life choices and remain connected to family, friends and the community," she said.

VMCH looks forward to continuing this specialist service for Victoria's most vulnerable young people into the future, with support from the NDIA and the Victorian Government, for many more years to come.

## Media enquiries

### Susan Smith

Marketing and Communications Manager

M: 0425 866 324

E: [susan.smith@vmch.com.au](mailto:susan.smith@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.

