



MARONITE EPARCHY OF AUSTRALIA NEW ZEALAND AND OCEANIA

MEDIA RELEASE

Our Lady Mercy Place blessed and opened by the Maronite Patriarch during historic visit

Harris Park, Australia, 18 September 2023 – The Maronite Patriarch, His Beatitude and Eminence, Mar Bechara Boutros Cardinal Rai, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East today blessed and officially opened the new Our Lady Mercy Place Harris Park aged care home.

The event is one of several public engagements for the Maronite Patriarch who is here on an historic visit from Lebanon, to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the Maronite Eparchy with the community, and lead the Solemn Mass on Sunday 24 September for up to 10,000 faithful at Ken Rosewall Arena (Sydney Olympic Park). Additionally, His Beatitude will preside over the 6th Congress of Maronite Bishops of Eparchies outside the Patriarchal Territory and General Superiors of Maronite Religious Orders hosted in Sydney this month.

The new aged care home, which was first announced in 2013 in response to the Maronite community's growing need to provide culturally focused care for the elderly, will run in line with the pastoral priorities of the Maronite Church in Australia – the provision of quality care for the elderly which also encompasses their spiritual, social and wellbeing needs. This long-held vision has been made possible by the Our Lady Aged Care Centre (OLACC), recently joined by Mercy Health who will operate the home.

“His Beatitude’s visit is an important juncture in the history of the Maronites in Australia, providing a momentous occasion to come together with our Patriarch and Shepherd, the symbol of our unity,” said Bishop Antoine Charbel Tarabay, Maronite Bishop of Australia, New

Zealand and Oceania. “So it is fitting that His Beatitude also blesses Our Lady Mercy Place, which realises a key priority from the 2014-2020 Pastoral Plan.”.

Barry Barakat, Chair of Our Lady Aged Care Centre said “there is a significant population of first and second generation Maronite elderly who are seeking quality aged care close to their community. This facility addresses those needs and allows residents to easily integrate with the Our Lady of Lebanon Parish precinct.”

The centre was blessed by His Beatitude and opened in the presence of His Excellency Antoine-Charbel Tarabay, Maronite Bishop of Australia, New Zealand and Oceania, Most Reverent Bishop Paul-Nabil El-Sayyah, Monsignor Marcelino Youssef, Vicar General, The Hon Stephen Kamper, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism and Minister for Sport; Dr Andrew Charlton, Federal Member for Parramatta; and Ms Donna Davis, State Member for Parramatta. Mr Barry Barakat, Chair of Our Lady Aged Care Centre, Ms Virginia Bourke, Chair of Mercy Health, Other government delegates, Mercy Health, Parramatta City past and present councillors, clergy and community representatives were also present to witness this milestone.

The Our Lady Mercy Place aged care home was made possible via grant funding from both the Federal Government, the NSW State Government, the support of the Maronite Eparchy of Australia, and the wider community who contributed both financially and in-kind, to help deliver this much needed service for the growing population of older people in the local area.

The opening of the aged care home is an important milestone, recognising the contribution that the elderly provide, for the betterment of our society. The home is expected to welcome its first residents in October 2023.

The blessing was followed by a cocktail event on the centre rooftop.

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