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MEDIA RELEASE

Choirmaster wins national healthcare award

A Southern Cross Care NSW & ACT (SCC) Leisure and Lifestyle Coordinator and choirmaster has been honoured with a Catholic Health Australia (CHA) Annual Award for innovative and outstanding efforts to enhance the pastoral care of older people.

Peter Stevenson, who works at SCC's Ozanam Residential Aged Care home at Garran, ACT, was presented the 'Excellence in Pastoral Care' award at the CHA Annual Conference in Sydney on Tuesday night.

One of Peter's key initiatives is the residents' choir he established and leads, blending music with spirituality. The choir, which includes several centenarians and individuals living with dementia, has become a means of expression, spiritual enrichment, shared purpose, and meaningful engagement for many residents, including those who are non-verbal.

Peter closed the awards night with renditions of 'My Way' and 'Sweet Caroline'. In accepting his award he said: "When I left my music career 16 years ago, I wasn't sure it was the right thing to do but I'm so glad I did because coming into aged care gave me a different perspective on life away from the spotlight and of being a singer and entertainer.

"To be doing this for other people and sharing the beauty, togetherness and spirituality of music has been incredible.

"I feel so privileged and so blessed to have gone from a career I really loved to a career I love even more."

Monique Reynolds, SCC NSW & ACT Chief Executive Officer, said: "Peter embodies our purpose at Southern Cross Care NSW & ACT of enabling older people to live life to the full. The engaging opportunities Peter facilitates reflect two pillars within our Strategic Plan: 'Purposeful Living and Vitality' and 'Building Community,' and are inspiring examples of our Model of Care and Engagement in action that is enhancing the quality of life and healthy ageing among residents."

Peter has touched the lives of many, including SCC Garran resident Eileen, 96: "I've known Peter for eight years ever since I came here. He's worked very hard here with us all. I know that if I have a problem I can always go to Peter. He's encouraged us with different activities. We've been having, each Monday, choir practice - he doesn't want to know if we can sing or not, everyone just goes, and the sound is quite amazing."

SCC Garran resident daughter, Kate Atkins MGL, said: "Peter is always very pastoral and spends time with each person and makes a connection. He's a big part of why Mum calls this place home.

“The choir itself, they come alive, and you get the biggest group in any activity that they do. You can also see, because he’s trained in music, that they’re improving, and they sound really good as well so they’re enjoying it but they’re learning more skills and growing. He’s just got this amazing capacity to bring out the best in each of the residents in whatever skill they have.

“There’s something special about Peter and his own spirituality that he brings.”

SCC Engagement and Purposeful Living Manager, Jacqueline Quirke, said: “At SCC NSW & ACT, we believe in the power of meaningful activities and social connections, knowing that personalised care is key to helping older people to live their best lives. A great example of this is the pastoral care approach at our Garran home led by Peter. With his deep Catholic faith and musical background, Peter brings spiritual insight, genuine compassion and a heartfelt approach to improving residents’ lives.”

SCC Head of Residential Care, Samantha Tosh, RN, said: “Peter has made a significant impact on the residents, who often start singing choir songs when they see him. Peter is always looking for new ways to engage residents, listening closely to their needs, tapping into their unique skills and interests, and using his humour and empathy to brighten their days.”

For further information, contact: communications@sccliving.org.au

Catholic Health Australia’s ‘Excellence in Pastoral Care’ Award

This award honours an individual, team or initiative that contributes in an innovative way to the integrity and effectiveness of the Catholic ministry of health and aged care through a particular project, program, strategy, or outstanding effort that enhances the pastoral care of patients and staff.

About Southern Cross Care NSW & ACT

Southern Cross Care NSW & ACT is a leading not-for-profit aged care provider that has been caring about people for more than 50 years. We deliver personalised, quality care and support services across our network of Retirement Villages, Home Care services and Residential Care homes in over 40 locations, including regional communities.

Every day Southern Cross Care supports thousands of people to live life with purpose and dignity so they can live life to the full. For more information, please visit sccliving.org.au or call 1800 632 314.