



Honorary Medical Officer Honoured...

Canberra's 100th Birthday on 12th March was an important day for many. For the QEII Family Centre it was especially significant as Dr Sue Packer, our Honorary Medical Officer, received one of the ACT's highest accolades.

As reported in *The Canberra Times* "Sue Packer has dedicated decades of her life to improving the lives of children who have been abused or neglected, and on Tuesday she was named the 2013 Canberra Citizen of the Year."

Dr Packer, a paediatrician, has been a central figure in children's welfare in the capital since moving to Canberra in 1980. ACT Chief Minister Katy Gallagher, referred to her as a "tireless advocate for our city's most vulnerable children" in presenting her the community's most distinguished award.

"She has turned countless lives around, and has made Canberra a better, safer and happier place for many children and their families," Ms Gallagher said."



Dr Packer is pictured above centre with Mary Kirk, QEII Family Centre Director of Nursing & Midwifery/Executive Officer and Jane Smyth, CMS President.

Long-serving staff member retires...



CMS Vice President, Viola Kalokerinos pictured presenting flowers to Robyn at her farewell.

In February 2013 the QEII Family Centre's Operations Manager, Robyn Steele, retired. At the 2012 CMS Annual General Meeting Robyn was the guest speaker. She was an ideal choice for the job.

Robyn had been a client in QEII Civic in the 1980s and later became a highly respected senior staff member.

QEII is a fully accredited hospital and as such, it is the work of the nursing and medical staff that, quite rightly, is generally the major focus when reviews are done and histories are written. But it is a short-sighted

review or history indeed that overlooks the experience and work done by the support, ancillary and administrative staff in the hospital. Without them QEII could not have operated and without them, the reputation of QEII as a 'home away from home' would not have been achieved.

From its earliest days in Civic, the support staff at QEII have had an integral role in the success of the service. When the service moved to Curtin in 1997 Robyn played an important role in smoothing the transition. Read her story inside.



Robyn pictured with her successor, Jacqui Larkham, Operations Manager

QEII 50TH ANNIVERSARY
Newsletter
MAY 2013

From kitchen to admin office:

Excerpts from Robyn Steele's speech at the 2012 CMS Annual General Meeting:

"Over 20 years ago whilst watching our daughters play basketball I happened to mention to Leighann Woon that I wanted to get back in the workforce. She said 'I work at QEII and they're looking for a diet aide, would you be interested?' Not long afterwards I had an interview with Mrs Larsson, the Director of Nursing, and I was offered 5 shifts a fortnight as a diet aide.



Pauline Kildare, another long-serving staff member, pictured baking the last batch of scones at QEII Civic.

I wore a lemon coloured dress as uniform with a check apron over the top, the ones that look the same back and front and tie up on each side. Mrs Larsson always called us Mrs so and so, never by our first names.

A cook and 2 diet aides worked the morning shifts. We would start at 7.15am and finish at 2.15pm. I really don't remember a whole heap about the duties of bed making and carbolising rooms, but I do remember setting the table for the mothers and clearing away. The mums had eggs for breakfast (boiled this morning, poached tomorrow, and my colleague Mrs Kildea who worked as a cook back then, reminded me that eggs and bacon were served on Wednesdays and Sundays!). There were scones for morning tea, and a hot cooked lunch with dessert. The afternoon shift looked after the evening meal.

After several months Mrs Larsson took me aside wanting to know what I had done prior to having my family. I said that I had undertaken secretarial work and after some discussion she offered me a day a week in the office with Bev Baker – **I didn't hesitate in accepting.** And so I did a day in the office and a shift or two as a diet aide each week. As I learnt the ropes of the admin office and, I guess, proved that I could do the job I eventually **hung up my lemon uniform and worked solely in the office."**

Up until the late 1980s, health facilities and programs in the ACT had been administered under Commonwealth control with advice from the local advisory Assembly. With self government in 1989 came local control and decision making, and the future of QEII sometimes must have seemed like a political football. There was much to-ing and fro-ing about whether it remained a free standing facility or whether it was to be absorbed into a larger facility at Woden or Calvary or Acton. Change was afoot at large and change was reflected at QEII following Mrs Larsson's retirement.

"From 1993 CMS and QEII started to go through great upheaval and tumultuous times. Mrs Larsson retired in early 1993 after 24 years of service, 15 as DON. Marie Bosman, a staff member, was appointed acting DON."

As often happens with a change of leadership, changes within the organisation started to occur with the appointment of Judy Jacobs as DON in August of 1993.

Not only were finances tight in the early to mid 1990s there were pressures about the future of QEII that were to cause considerable angst and discussion for some time. Some of the pressures came from QEII and the CMS itself. The demand for services was ever increasing and for many years there had been plans afoot to move QEII to a site in Deakin. There were also problems with the building in Civic that staff needed to deal with regularly. Robyn Steele continues:

"The QEII building was showing its age, the trees on the block had discovered the broken clay pipes and were causing havoc with the plumbing, and by the time we left the Civic site the electric eel was being called in every 4 or 5 days. We even had a couple of sewage overflows. An article in the Canberra Times had a photo of the plumber helping a mum carry her pram with baby in it around the spillage.

continued...

There was asbestos in the ceiling but we were assured that it was contained and not a problem. As part of the 1993-94 Agreement between ACT Health and CMS, accreditation with ACHS was to be undertaken, but it was soon realised that QEII would fail because of the state of disrepair of the building. Mrs Mulvaney, President of CMS, had a meeting with Wayne Berry about relocation of QEII but he said that it would not be considered until 1996."

And it was indeed in 1996 that Kate Carnell the then Chief Minister announced that the move was on and a suitable building would be built in Carruthers Street, Curtin. Judy Jacobs resigned in October 1996 and staff member Rosemary Lee was appointed acting DON.

"June 1997 saw the closure of the old QEII and staff commencing work at the new Curtin site but not

before they had organised a great farewell lunch in a marquee in the grounds of the old building. There was a large turnout of former and current staff, paediatricians and others with QEII connections."

Mary Kirk was appointed the new Director of Nursing & Midwifery/Executive Officer in October 1997.

It was a new era in a new building in a new community and Mary and the staff set about establishing a program that was based on all the traditional underpinnings of QEII over the years suitably tailored to match the issues and concerns of families as the 21st Century approached.

In a *Canberra Times* article in 2003 when QEII was celebrating its 40th year Mary was quoted: "We used to fix the problems FOR families. Now we work WITH them. Our definition of family is very broad. We have had to help orphans and their aunts and uncles, or grandparents, who are suddenly faced with bringing up baby later in life. We also provide crucial help for families going through the living hell of heroin addiction, and trying to care for their

children. We support whoever is caring for the baby to be effective 'parents'. An important part of our charter is to keep children safe, and we work closely with the saddest of families to do that."

One of the most common problem new parents face is exhaustion. New parents often don't recognise that a baby is tired, so we teach them the signs. For example when they are tired, babies start to stare, pull their ears, get a bit stumbly or have jerking movements, and are often irritable. We teach parents how to get the baby to sleep properly, and what behaviour to realistically expect from their children.

We also treat feeding problems very seriously. If we hear a mother is having problems breastfeeding we get them in like a rocket especially if their baby is small, because we don't want a child not to thrive and breastfeeding to drop off. Most mothers breastfeed." In a recent quote, Mary said "as we move through the 2010's we still focus on these issues as well as the contemporary needs of families. Present and future families deserve nothing less."

Robyn's speech concluded with:

"As a new mum I personally experienced the services of day stay and the residential unit of old QEII; in more recent years my daughter was helped enormously by the staff at QEII, and it is my greatest hope that QEII will be around should my 3 granddaughters need it when their turns come to start a family."



Mary Kirk pictured with clinical, admin and support staff at QEII Curtin in 1997.

QEII reopens with new focus on families



Cathy and Mark Donohoe with infant daughter Laura at QEII: "They give you that extra bit of attention that you need." Picture: DEAN MURKOLL

Wednesday Knitting Group

Article by Lynne Johnson:

Before the Canberra bushfires in January 2003 the CMS Board had planned to launch an appeal for funds to start a Scholarship Scheme for the ongoing education of the nursing staff. After the fires the decision was quickly changed and instead of reaching

out for support that year we reached out to help.

We started knitting. Staff, Board Members, ex QEII clients and community members came together to knit hats, scarves and beanies for those who had lost so much in the fires. We held an exhibition of the items some of which had come from all over Australia when people heard what we were doing.

The items were much admired and many of the visitors **wanted to buy them. This hadn't been expected but we** undertook to continue knitting. We formed the Wednesday Knitting Group and we held our first stall at the Curtin shops just before Mother's Day. The group has continued ever since and we now hold two stalls a year – one in May and one in December. Other community groups help too. There is the Thursday Friendship Group from Addicted to Fabric in Phillip. They donate quilts for us to raffle and other quilts that are distributed in the community as needed.



This year the Wednesday Knitters have been meeting for 10 years and during that time have raised considerable funds for the Scholarship Fund which was later launched in 2004. In May we are planning some special days at the Strathnairn Woolshed, Holt to celebrate amidst many cups of tea, tea pots and tea cosies. You are welcome to come along, bring your knitting and join in.

SUPER COSY! We have been collecting old tea cosies and knitting new ones many of which are being cobbled together to make Super Cosy, a commemorative installation that will be in the Woolshed. After the event Super Cosy will be dismantled and the cosies will be returned to their owners, sold, or become beanies for those needing them this winter.

Come along and join in. We're at Strathnairn with Gabariella Hegyes, Community Artist as part of the Mapping Strathnairn Land Art Event. It's on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from May 11th to 26th and Wednesday 15th May 10.00am-4.00pm

You can find out more about the Wednesday Knitting Group and SuperCosy by phoning Lynne Johnson on 02 6281 6771 or by email to lynnejohnson@grapevine.com.au



Share your story...

Gala Dinner guests will be given the opportunity to share their personal QEII / Canberra Mothercraft Society recollections, impressions and experiences in 'scrapbooks' that will be available on the night. Photographs are also sought. Please bring any photos that you can share.

Di Fernando, Robyn Steele and Robina Johnston (pictured right), hard at work

tracing ex-staff members by going through the records, albums and mailing lists to ensure as many people as possible get information about QEII's 50th Anniversary.

If you know someone connected with QEII in the last 50 years who might be interested in getting our Newsletters could you let us know or suggest they ring Dorothy-Jane 'DJ' Gosper, Project Officer on 02 6205-2322.



Auction, Raffles, Prizes...

So many wonderful vouchers and items have been donated. We now have an abundance of items that are sure to generate great interest at the Gala Dinner.



Some of them are pictured here including a limited edition print of "The Fenceline" by Margaret Hadfield, a hand-made rain cape with hood from Addicted To Fabric, an assortment of quality hair products from Benson's of Curtin and a hand-made quilt from the Thursday Friendship Group.

Other items include \$1,000 voucher from Maria Slater Travel, gym memberships from Club Lime and Alive! Narrabundah and Hair products and services from Cataldo's Salon.

A big thank you to those who have made cash donations. All the donations will go towards a much needed upgrade of the children's play area at the QEII Family Centre.

Cash donations are still welcome and all contributors will be acknowledged at the Gala Dinner, on the CMS website, in the CMS 2012-13 Annual Report and in selected media opportunities. Please get in touch if you can make a donation or know of any individual or business that may be able to help.

Entertainment...

the Stilettos



We are thrilled to have "The Stilettos" vocal trio performing at the Gala Dinner. Tina, Sally and Janey are gorgeous and talented musicians.

They recently performed their Andrew Sisters Tribute Show at the 2013 Australian War Memorial Open Day.

With their perfect blend of three part harmony, choreography and personality plus, we look forward to hearing their renditions of great songs from the past 50 years.

Check out the Stilettos' website: www.thestilettos.com.au

QEII's own Dorothy-Jane "DJ" Gosper, an award-winning singer/songwriter/harmonica player, also looks forward to teaming up with the girls for a song or 3.

50th Anniversary Gala Dinner...



Saturday 25th May

Tickets are selling fast but there is still time to book your seat/table.

GALA DINNER, SATURDAY 25TH MAY 2013

Hellenic Club, Matilda St, Woden ACT

Reception: 6:30pm; Dinner & Program: 7:00-10:30pm

Dinner: 3 courses **Drinks:** 6:30pm - 9:30pm **Tickets:** \$100pp **Entertainment:** 'The Stilettos'

Dress: Choose a decade 60's, 70's, 80's, 90's, 2000's. Fashion Awards!

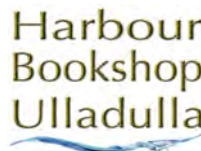
Fundraising: Raffles and a silent auction will be held to raise funds to refurbish the children's play area at the Centre.

Bookings: PHONE THE HELLENIC CLUB ON 02 6281-0899

Please purchase tickets by 20th May

THE HELLENIC CLUB IS A MAJOR SPONSOR OF THIS EVENT

MANY THANKS TO DONORS:



Donations in kind also received from:

Nickharos Kalokerinos, Thursday Friendship Group at Addicted to Fabric, Scott French, Debbie Tibbles, Mary Kirk, Keron Beath, Jane Smyth, I Want Sprinkles, Canberra Mothercraft Society Knitters Group, Wendy and Mike Saclier, Louise Allison, Lynne Johnson, Brendon and Fiona Timoney, Margaret McKinnon, Nurse's History Group, Dorothy-Jane Gosper and Sally Atkins.

Donations in cash also received from:

Philip & Mary Constable, David & Sue Chessell, Betty Miller and Dr Sue Packer

