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welcome

After 25 years with Peninsula Health I will be leaving early in the New Year.
I would like to thank you, our community, for supporting Peninsula Health through these years. Without your support, feedback and contributions we would not be half the health service we are today. The organisation has aimed to grow and develop its services to meet the growing needs of the community. I hope that we have, substantially, achieved this goal within the parameters set for us. Having you involved in the planning of our services and receiving your feedback on the quality of our services has enabled us to respond, more appropriately, to community expectations.

A special “thank you” goes to our donors and supporters who have also played a big role in building our health service. Your ongoing generosity has enabled us to take great strides and we are thankful for all the support that you have given, over the years.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our staff and volunteers. You are the foundation of our organisation and your commitment to the wellbeing of our community knows no bounds. I am proud to have worked with dedicated and compassionate professionals and the commitment and support of our 830+ volunteers has been invaluable and much appreciated by staff and patients, alike.

Thank you all for being part of the Peninsula Health family.

Dr Sherene Devanesen
Chief Executive

Frankston’s first response

Frankston Hospital Emergency Department provides emergency care for people living in Frankston and the Mornington Peninsula.

It is one of the busiest Emergency Departments in Victoria receiving 60,000 attendances per year; and has the highest number of ambulance presentations in the entire State.

“We have a strong team of 77 doctors and 203 nurses who thrive in the fast paced environment of the Emergency Department. All staff are committed to ensuring that all patients receive the best care possible,’ said Sharon White, Operations Director; Emergency Services.

“There is a strong commitment to continuously improving our service and participating in training and research from all our medical, nursing and allied health staff. They are some of the best in the State and we take pride in the fact that we contribute to emergency medicine research and are accredited by the Australian College of Emergency Medicine for training specialists in the area of Emergency Medicine.”

Wait times can often be an issue for patients in the Emergency Department.

“We have recently implemented a new model of care within the Emergency Department, where a team of senior nurses and doctors see patients immediately after triage and order first line investigations and treatments,” said Sharon.

“Frankston Hospital Emergency Department, like most Emergency Departments in Australia, utilises a triage system that ensures that the sickest people are seen first regardless of whether they come in via ambulance.

“This can sometimes mean that other people whose condition is not as serious may have to wait longer,’ said Sharon.

Ambulance ramping is an issue that the Emergency Department staff have to work with on a daily basis.

“Ambulance ramping has always been a challenge for Frankston Emergency Department. We have a good relationship with the local Ambulance crews on the Peninsula and work closely with Ambulance Victoria to ensure that all patients are seen as soon as possible,’ said Sharon.

“We often experience peaks and troughs when it comes to ambulance presentations. Sometimes we have 10 ambulances arriving within an hour, in addition to patients presenting themselves to triage.

“Recently, we have put practices in place that assist with offloading ambulances as quickly as possible, ensuring they are available to respond quickly to the local community. We are looking forward to moving to the new Emergency Department in late 2014. The new facility will be three times the size of the current Emergency Department,” said Sharon.
Baby Pippa Nyssen had an unexpected hospital adventure when she had a fall and bumped her head in her Mount Eliza home.

Pippa’s mother Corinne was scared when she found that 14 month old Pippa had a large blue bump on the top of her head. After consoling a rather upset Pippa, Corinne and her husband realised she was starting to fall asleep. Concerned that she may be suffering from a concussion they immediately rang for an ambulance.

“I had done a first aid course when Pippa was three months old. While I was really worried that she might have seriously hurt herself, I remembered them saying that if you are unsure, call the ambulance. You can always cancel an ambulance but you can’t call one if it’s too late,” said Corinne.

The paramedics arrived promptly and examined Pippa. While they weren’t overly concerned, serious symptoms usually present within four hours so they decided to take her to the Frankston Hospital Emergency Department for a further examination and observation. They were seen straight away when they arrived at the hospital.

The Emergency Department staff gave Pippa a full assessment in the paediatric room and diagnosed her with a moderate head injury. Not long after she was moved to the short stay ward for further observation.

“The staff kept me informed the whole time I was there,” said Corinne.

“It was a real educational experience too. I learnt when to administer Panadol and they provided me with additional information on head injuries.

“The staff were just amazing, particularly Vera Roberts, a nurse who kept coming in to check on us. Not only was she worried about Pippa, but she cared about me. Someone even went and got me something to eat,” said Corinne.

Thankfully, Pippa made a speedy recovery after her fall.

When asked what advice she would give to other parents in a similar situation, Corinne said: “Ask questions when you are in the hospital. They will always be happy to answer you and often you will find out useful information. One of the questions I asked was what symptoms would I look for to identify if she was concussed? These questions also put your mind at ease. We have to remember our children have no voice, and we as their parents are their only advocate,” said Corinne.

“You can always cancel an ambulance but you can’t call one if it’s too late”
Nadine Williams has been through a lot over the past few years. She lost a baby, almost lost her life and has come through it all stronger and more determined than ever.

Nadine’s story began on a typical Saturday morning. Her partner Jarrod was about to leave for work when she convinced him to stay a little longer and go for a coffee. Shortly after, Nadine collapsed whilst they were out and Jarrod was quick on the case to call an ambulance to get her to hospital.

“I thought I was about six weeks pregnant at the time and guess I had a little bit of intuition that I needed Jarrod to stay around,” said Nadine.

“Afterwards, Jarrod told me that it looked like I was fitting, and I was slipping in and out of consciousness.

“When the ambulance arrived they tried to tell me I was having a fainting spell and that I didn’t need to go to hospital.

“But I insisted that I did because I knew I was pregnant and something just wasn’t right,” said Nadine.

Once she arrived at Frankston Hospital Emergency Department Nadine was rushed in and was diagnosed with a ruptured fallopian tube as the result of her pregnancy, which was ectopic.

“It turned out I was 12 weeks pregnant and the pregnancy was in the fallopian tube. The doctors and nurses who looked after me were absolutely amazing and without their quick and confident diagnosis I could have died,” said Nadine.

“They rushed me into emergency surgery where I had the ruptured tube removed. It all happened so quickly. But I know if it hadn’t, I wouldn’t have just lost my baby, I would have lost my life.

“I am so grateful to the people who cared for me whilst I was in the Emergency Department, particularly the doctor who saw me first and who was so quick on the case,” said Nadine.

Ten months after Nadine’s lifesaving surgery, she and Jarrod married in Fiji where Nadine became pregnant whilst on their honeymoon.

Baby Hudson was born in July this year and after the experience of their first pregnancy they couldn’t be happier to have a healthy, bouncing baby boy.

“I am so grateful to the people who cared for me whilst I was in the Emergency Department staff for treating me so well and finding out what was wrong so fast. If it wasn’t for them and Jarrod being there to get me to hospital it is possible that I wouldn’t be here today,” said Nadine.
Volunteering a helping hand in Emergency

ACE volunteer Jenni O’Sullivan has been on the job for eight years and is one of Peninsula Health’s hardest working volunteers.

Widely respected by staff and patients for her good humour and good rapport with staff, patients, families and other volunteers within Frankston and Rosebud Emergency Departments, Jenni has been the perfect tonic for many people in one of Peninsula Health’s most challenging environments.

“Jenni is a passionate advocate and actively promotes the 100 strong Assistance and Care in Emergency (ACE) volunteer program and is always on the lookout for new recruits. She is a leader amongst her peers, providing support and guidance to new and existing volunteers,” says Jan Child, Executive Director Community Participation.

In her role Jenni works tirelessly organising rosters, team meetings, training updates, guest speakers and coordinating communications among all volunteers.

“Jenni is the backbone of the program,” said Ms Child.

Jenni’s hard work was recognised at the 2013 Minister for Health Volunteer Awards where she received an Outstanding Individual Achievement award in the Metropolitan Health Services category from Victoria’s Health Minister, The Hon David Davis.

The Minister for Health Volunteer Awards recognise and celebrate volunteers who have demonstrated outstanding dedication and commitment to public healthcare in Victoria.

Jenni admits that it was “very overwhelming and a bit of a shock when I heard my name called out.”

“It was such an honour and a privilege to be nominated in the first place, let alone win.”

“I’m very passionate about the ACE program. It’s a program which I believe does a lot of good, helps the patients, and allows staff to get on with what they do best. At the end of the day we’re the frontliners and we do our best to make patients and their relatives feel comfortable,” said Jenni.

Jenni O’Sullivan with Minister for Health David Davis

Volunteers dedicated to service

Jenni is a leading example of the work that our 800+ volunteers do on a daily basis.

Earlier this year Peninsula Health held its annual Volunteers Day Luncheon where the following people were recognised for long service.

Well done and thank you.

15 years:
Veronica Mulquiney
Carol Scollard
Bill Smeaton
Val Burton
Joy Rowler
Linda Walton
Margaret Penglis
Jan Drennan
Brian Hilton
Sue Phillips
Reg Bond

20 years:
Ann Crump
Julie Holmes
Annette Croad
Anthony Birchell
Mavis Wright

25 years:
Doreen Evans
Irene Farmer
Florence Sadler

30 years:
Mary Burns
Betty Raymond
Theima Wilmot
Dorothy Chisholm

45 years:
Shirley Wragge
Marathon runner Michael Stanfield has a lot to be thankful for after surviving a sudden cardiac arrest during his training for the Melbourne Marathon.

The 55 year old Cheltenham resident was going about his training on Beach Road in Mentone when he suddenly suffered the attack.

“I had absolutely no indication that I would have a heart attack. I had none of the symptoms, so it came as a total surprise,” said Michael.

“I’m reasonably fit, with a good diet and acceptable cholesterol levels. It really shows that you don’t have to be the typical heart attack sufferer, and an emergency like this can happen anywhere to anyone.”
Fortunately for Michael, several passing motorists, one of whom was Peninsula Health Cardiologist Dr Geoff Toogood, were able to come to his aid and perform CPR to revive him.

“I was so lucky I had decided to run up next to the road rather than my usual route down next to the beach,” said Michael.

Dr Toogood said that without the aid he received and the CPR, it was unlikely that Michael would have survived.

“The people who got to Michael before I arrived were just ordinary people with basic first aid training.

“Michael’s experience really shows how important it is for everyone to have a basic knowledge of CPR because you never know when you might need to use it,” said Dr Toogood.

Michael was then transported via ambulance to the Alfred Hospital where he required emergency procedures and later by-pass surgery. However, because he was not carrying any form of identification, he was treated as a John Doe and his family couldn’t be notified that he was in hospital.

“My wife was overseas at the time and when I didn’t return home my daughter called the police,” said Michael.

“After I was missing for 12 hours they ended up putting on a full scale search and rescue effort.

“This is something that could have been easily prevented by carrying some ID. It is funny how doing something so simple can make all of the difference.

“I really encourage anyone who exercises alone outside to carry some form of identification on them even if it’s just a business card or putting In Case of Emergency (ICE) next to numbers in your phone. It could save them from going through what my family went through,” said Michael.

After a brief stay in hospital Michael was discharged but won’t be able to run the marathon.

“I’m slowly getting back into running again, and now I always make sure I have some form of ID on me before I go,” said Michael.
New program helps break homelessness cycle for mentally ill

Have you ever had to question where you’re going to sleep at night? Where your next meal was coming from? If you will be warm enough to get through winter? This is the reality often faced by the estimated 775 homeless people living in the City of Frankston.
Supporting National Mental Health Reform between the Commonwealth and State Governments.

Although the program is still in its early days, it has already been able to start assisting a number of people.

Jacoline Meddings is a mother of two who has been suffering from long term mental health issues for most of her life and has been homeless with her husband and sons for the past three years.

“We pretty much couch surfed and lived where we could,” said Jacoline. “We stayed in some pretty rough places, which weren’t good for the kids.”

“By the end we were living in a tent at the back of a property,” Jacoline said.

It was after being admitted to the Frankston Hospital Mental Health Unit that Jacoline was introduced to the new program by Occupational Therapist Ingrid.

“The program has completely changed my life,” said Jacoline.

“They got us out of the tent and into a caravan straightaway so at least we had some warmth and a proper roof over our head.”

Jacoline says that it’s even the little things provided by the program that can make the biggest difference.

“Before I was introduced to the program and met my caseworker Barb I had really let my health go, both mentally and physically. It was like I was living with a constant heaviness. I really just thought what’s the point anymore?”

“Barb takes me to my appointments and has helped me get in touch with the services I need. Now I have my health back on track, and I’m finally on the right medications for the first time in probably 30 years.”

“She even bought me new shoes. I’ve never owned brand new shoes in my life,” said Jacoline.

The service has taken a hands-on approach to not only helping Jacoline but her two sons, who both have special needs, and her husband.

“A person’s mental illness can affect their whole family,” says Barb Wyatt, Jacoline’s Community Mental Health worker from Peninsula Support Services.

“It is important to support families as they are there for our clients when we can’t be. It is especially important when there are children involved as they may not understand what’s going on with mum or dad,” says Barb.

The program has now helped Jacoline and her family move into their first stable house in three years. They no longer live in cramped caravan conditions and are enjoying the simple pleasures of having a warm roof over their heads, food on their table, and a bit of space to call their own.

“I honestly feel so privileged to be in this program and don’t know what I would have done without it,” said Jacoline.

According to census data, the Frankston and Dandenong corridor has a higher rate of homelessness than that in the inner city, with four homeless people per 1000 residents.

A new program, Breaking the Cycle: reducing homelessness, run in partnership by Peninsula Health, Peninsula Support Services and Peninsula Youth and Family Service has recently launched. It is designed to provide mental health outreach support and care coordination for people experiencing entrenched homelessness as a result of mental illness and other conditions.

“Mental illness is strongly linked to homelessness. It often plays a role in people becoming homeless. It can also develop during homelessness which can lead to individuals entering into long-term homelessness,” said Dr Sean Jespersen, Clinical Director of Mental Health at Peninsula Health.

The program, which began in February, has been funded $624,000 a year for three years and was recently awarded additional funding of $614,000 for a fourth year by the Department of Health under the National Partnership Agreement.
Will Hilleard with gym instructor Trent Crockett at Monash University’s gym on the Peninsula Campus at Frankston.
Walking their way back: circuit training keeps stroke survivors mobile

Each week more than 1,000 Australians suffer a stroke, often with serious physical consequences that require long periods of rehabilitation.

A ground breaking group exercise program run by Peninsula Health in partnership with local gyms is helping stroke survivors to improve their physical health after rehabilitation, rebuild their confidence, and get back into the community.

The Stroke Circuit Training program is a ‘next step’ option after stroke rehabilitation for men and women of any age. Each participant is treated as an individual and exercises at their own pace in a friendly, welcoming atmosphere.

“Stroke Circuit Training helps stroke survivors get their lives back on track”, said Iain Edwards, Peninsula Health’s Director of Chronic Disease and Aged Services.

“It is designed to improve muscle strength, fitness, walking, balance and independence. For most people however, it’s much more than exercise and many enjoy the opportunity to socialise after their workout.”

Will Hilleard has been in the Stroke Circuit Training group at Monash University’s gym in Frankston for five months. Since having a stroke two years ago while on holiday interstate, the 88 year old Frankston resident has been working to regain strength and movement in his right hand side.

“The care I received at Peninsula Health’s Golf Links Road Rehabilitation Centre was wonderful and now, the Stroke Circuit Training program keeps me active and independent. There’s a real sense of camaraderie because you’re with people who have similar problems.

“It’s been a long journey, but I’m proud to say that I’ve progressed from wheelchair to walker to walking stick – and now I’m walking independently”, said Will. “There’s been a huge improvement in my ability to carry out my daily activities and I’m back to gardening and helping with the housework. Most of all, I really enjoy the sense of purpose it gives me to come to the gym twice a week and the fact that I’m doing something positive for myself.

“My advice to stroke survivors who have completed their rehab is to give the Stroke Circuit Training program a try…and keep it up. It’s well worth it!”

The program, accredited by national health and fitness association Fitness Australia, is held at community gyms in Frankston, Hastings, Somerville, Mornington and Rosebud.

Fitness Services Officer Trent Crockett works with Peninsula Health’s Stroke Circuit Training program at the Monash Gym in Frankston. “It can be very frustrating for stroke survivors when they first start using the equipment, and some may have difficulty remembering the exercises”, he said. “But even after the first session they walk out feeling a lot better about themselves.

“We tailor the program individually for each participant, and work together on the areas that need improvement. For most, it’s about getting their muscle strength back, improving their mobility and balance, and rebuilding their confidence – all those everyday things most of us take for granted.”
It’s a family affair for Mike Fox, his mother Alaina and his nanna Gloria, who have all worked at Frankston Hospital.

Mike, one of Peninsula Health’s current Graduate Nurses, is following in the footsteps of his mother, Alaina, who has been an Enrolled Nurse and Ward Clerk at Frankston Hospital for 24 years.

Mary Wooldridge MP, Minister for Mental Health, Women’s Affairs and Community Service and Disability Services and Reform, is the only one of its kind in Frankston and on the Mornington Peninsula.

The Adult PARC caters for people with mental illness who are too unwell to be at home but not in need of hospital care.

Early intervention is provided for people who are becoming unwell and for those in the early stages of recovery from an acute episode of mental illness. People are expected to stay at the 10 bed inpatient facility for a minimum of two weeks or up to 28 days depending on their needs.

The service complements the Peninsula Youth PARC which was opened in 2012 and provides the same style of care for young people aged between the 16 and 25.

The Adult PARC is run in partnership by Peninsula Health and the Mental Illness Fellowship and is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week by a team of trained clinicians and mental health recovery workers.

“The building has been designed as a large domestic house, so people can receive their care in a ‘home-like’ setting. This design is based on feedback from Victorians with mental illness, their families, carers and professionals who work with them,” said Jan Child, Executive Director of Mental Health Services at Peninsula Health.

“Frankston and the Mornington Peninsula have a relatively high population of people with mental health problems. The Adult PARC is an opportunity to intervene early with people to optimise their chances of recovery.

“The Adult PARC is a great initiative and will give people who have a condition which does not need to be managed in a hospital, a chance to receive care and connect with help in a friendly and safe environment,” said Ms Child.
For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Victoria’s Mornington Peninsula and surrounding areas, the annual BayMob Health and Education Expo is always a great way to find out about the many health, education and wellbeing opportunities on offer in the region – and to catch up with community.

This year, despite heavy rain and wind, the BayMob Health and Education Expo broke all records, attracting over 500 people to Monash University’s Peninsula campus in Frankston.

Karan Kent, Peninsula Health’s Koori Services Team Leader, explains why the Expo is so important for community.

“The BayMob Health and Education Expo is a partnership between Peninsula Health and Monash University,” she said. “It was created in response to community needs, ideas and suggestions. It is an occasion for embracing our culture, pride and identity – and for sharing knowledge and wisdom to build our mob’s capacity to take control of our own destiny by making informed choices about health and education.”

Highlight of the Expo in October was a performance by children from four Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) playgroups.

Following a Welcome to Country from Boon wurrung Elder Aunty Caroline Briggs, the little ones from the VACCA playgroups danced and sang in language, supported by their parents. It didn’t take them long to lose their nerves and captivate everyone in the audience.

Aunty Fay Muir from the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages in Melbourne works with VACCA playgroups along the Mornington Peninsula teaching Boon wurrung language to children, parents, carers and teachers. “This is a great time to introduce language to young children as they pick it up very quickly, especially in a fun-filled learning environment,” she said.

Professor Leon Piterman, Monash University’s Pro Vice Chancellor Peninsula and Berwick Campuses, reinforced the value of education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and outlined the variety of pathways to higher education for Indigenous students offered by Monash University.

“There is no better passport for success in life than education,” he said. “We will continue to do all we can to enable Indigenous students to benefit from Monash’s world class education.”

The BayMob Health and Education Expo plays an important role in Peninsula Health’s commitment to address Aboriginal health using a holistic perspective with an aim to Close the Gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
Emergency Department honours fallen police officer

On 4 September, The Victoria Police Blue Ribbon Foundation dedicated a life-saving facility at Frankston Hospital in memory of a police officer who died in the line of duty. Over half a century later, it’s the perfect gift for the fallen member’s two children.

During the dedication ceremony a three-bed emergency resuscitation unit was named at the Frankston Hospital in memory of First Constable Edward Simmons who was killed in the line of duty at Frankston on 24 December, 1957.

Thirty three year-old Constable Simmons was on motor cycle patrol in the Frankston area when his machine ran off the Nepean Highway at Oliver’s Hill and struck a fence, killing him instantly.

The dedication was made possible through a donation of $100,000 from the Victoria Police Blue Ribbon Foundation and its Peninsula Branch.

“The Victoria Police Blue Ribbon Foundation perpetuates the memory of members of the Victoria Police killed in the line of duty through the support of worthwhile community projects within Victoria,” said Mr Bill Noonan, Chairman of the Blue Ribbon Foundation.

“This dedication is a permanent reminder of the work and sacrifice of our police members and in particular, First Constable Edward Simmons. It also reminds us of the great work done in our community by organisations like the Blue Ribbon Foundation,” said Peninsula Health Board of Directors Chair, Ms Nancy Hogan.

“The funds donated by the Blue Ribbon Foundation have been used to purchase three state-of-the-art glidescopes for our emergency departments. The glidescopes will further enhance the fantastic work of our Emergency Department staff by providing a consistently clear, real-time view of the airway and tube placement, enabling quick intubation,” said Ms Hogan.

The Blue Ribbon Foundation Peninsula Branch, led by Rhon and Darryl Nation, has been fundraising for over a year to reach the goal of $100,000 for Peninsula Health’s Emergency Departments at Frankston Hospital and Rosebud Hospital.

“We’re proud to see the naming of this facility in Frankston Hospital’s emergency department,” said Darryl Nation, President of the Foundation’s Peninsula Branch.

“Symbolically it puts First Constable Simmons back on duty and serving his local community”, he said.

The commitment to Peninsula Health includes a further $50,000 to dedicate a similar, smaller unit at Rosebud Hospital to be named in honour of another police member.

Nancy Hogan with Constable Simmons’ son Andrew Simmons
LIONS LEND A HAND FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Dromana Lions Club is looking after their local community with a donation for important new equipment at Rosebud Hospital.

Members of Dromana’s Lion’s Club have been working hard and have managed to raise $4,214.50, which has been used to purchase two new vital signs monitors.

“Since the money is raised locally, we try to look after the local community as a priority, and in our eyes, Rosebud Hospital is a necessity for the Peninsula,” said Ron Elleray, Treasurer of the Dromana Lions Club.

The new equipment is now being used to help look after patients in Rosebud Hospital’s Hillview Rehabilitation Unit.

“The new vital signs monitors have electronic capabilities to accurately assess our patients in a timely manner,” said Jodi Foley, Principal Nurse, Rosebud Hospital.

“These vital signs monitors are extremely important, as they allow staff to monitor a patient’s temperature, blood pressure, pulse and respiratory rate.

“The availability of the equipment will enhance the nurses’ ability to provide greater patient care,” said Jodi.

The Lions Club raised the money through their popular Opportunity Shop in Dromana, which has 25 dedicated volunteers.

The Dromana Lions Opportunity Shop is located at 25 Pier Street Dromana. It is open 10am to 4pm Monday to Friday and 9:30am to 12:30pm on Saturday.

Dromana Lions Club members visiting Rosebud Hospital to view the vital signs monitors. (Left to right - President Mick Henderson, Op Shop Manager Lorraine Wright, Secretary Graeme Wilson and Treasurer Ron Elleray).

Thank you

We are grateful to those in the community who choose to support the work of Peninsula Health

DONATE NOW

I WOULD LIKE TO HELP BUILD A HEALTHY COMMUNITY

MAIL TO: Peninsula Health, Fundraising, PO Box 192, Mt Eliza 3930

CONTACT: P 9788 1502 E fundraising@phcn.vic.gov.au

Names/s ___________________________ Contact number ___________________________

Address ___________________________ Email ___________________________ D.O.B (optional) ___________________________

I enclose a gift of $50 $100 $200 $ ____________ (gift of your choice)

Debited from my Visa Mastercard OR I have enclosed a cheque/money order (Payable to Peninsula Health).

Card No. ____________ ____________ ____________ ____________ CCV No. ____________ ____________ Expiry date ____________ ____________

Name on card ___________________________ Signature ___________________________

☐ Please send me more information about leaving a lasting gift to my community in my Will

☐ Please send me more information about supporting my community with a regular monthly gift

Thank you for your support.

Peninsula Health respects your privacy and observes the provisions of the Privacy Act 2001. Your details remain confidential. All donations over $2 are tax deductible. ABN 52 892 860 159

☐ Tick here if you do not wish to receive any further information from Peninsula Health
Voices were hushed as Senior Theatre Nurse Gay Ellis was escorted into Frankston Hospital for the unveiling of a secret project that has been in the works for the past 12 months.

Gay’s friends, family and colleagues all gathered to witness the unveiling of a newly renovated theatre courtyard built in honour of Gay’s late husband Gary, who performed one of the most generous acts that the hospital has ever experienced.

In 1987 Gary, a local concreter and friend of Peninsula Health, took it upon himself to get together with a few of his friends and colleagues and replace what was then a grass helipad with a new concrete one.

Gay has been with the hospital for over 25 years and was the one who first complained to him about getting patients in trolleys across the grass helipad at the hospital.

Since then Gary’s original helipad has been uprooted to make way for the new 568 space multi-storey car park and helipad, but his legacy has not been forgotten.

The courtyard’s central feature is a sculpture with a piece of the original helipad and a replica helicopter with a plaque honouring Gary and his generous donation.

The replica helicopter was kindly donated by the Frankston Men’s Shed who spent six months hand carving the helicopter out of a piece of driftwood which washed up in Westernport Bay.

In addition to the Men’s Shed’s efforts, all materials were also generously donated by local suppliers. Bunnings Frankston donated $250 worth of vouchers and artificial grass to the value of $540, Somerville Garden Supplies donated pebbles and sandstone to the value of $140. Special mentions also go to Theatre Technician Jason Walker and his theatre team for putting in their own time to build the courtyard.

The whole project was kept a secret from Gay up until the point of the unveiling on 20 May.

“I had absolutely no idea that this was happening,” said Gay.

“I was taken by complete surprise and am so honoured that the hospital has chosen to remember Gary this way,” said Gay.

Frankston Hospital Executive Director Brendon Gardner said: “The beauty of the theatre courtyard project is that it came about exactly the same way as Gary’s original project, the community helping the community.”

“Gay and Gary’s dedication to our community is a credit to Peninsula Health,” said Brendon.