



Mercy Health's objective for each of their thirty residential aged care homes across four Australian states, is to cater for every aspect of a resident's emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing. The consistent provision of high-level care and compassion are inherent objectives.

Mercy Place homes provide the following -

- High level qualified and 24-hour care and compassion are inherent objectives
- All levels of care, depending on a resident's stage of life
- Permanent, respite, and palliative care, as well as specialised dementia care

## How ELDAC helped influence organisational change

Mercy Health Aged and Community Care employs a full time Palliative Care, Clinical Nurse Consultant (CNC) to oversee and coordinate palliative and end of life care for residents across the network of residential aged care homes spanning four states.

The role was developed in September 2020 to oversee and provide clinical leadership and expertise in the areas of pain management, palliative care and end of life care, including advance care planning, policy, and procedure development in relation to best practice.

This CNC has also been integral in the development and education of homes with regard to end of life care, consistent with the Catholic ethos and compassionate care for residents and their family.

The CNC role provides onsite and remote clinical support for all homes regarding real time pain and symptom management for residents experiencing palliative symptoms. This ensures timely support and reduction in potential symptoms causing unnecessary suffering to residents. For ongoing support, homes are then linked with their community providers, including their local community palliative care service.

As part of her role, the CNC coordinated the implementation of the ELDAC Linkages program across four Mercy Health homes. As well as providing valuable support and being the linkage person between ELDAC Linkage facilitators and the participating homes, participation in the ELDAC Linkages program helped with the development of this Palliative Care CNC role to ensure improvements in end of life care not only for the participating homes but for all Mercy Health

# Mercy Health



Residential Aged Care



Victoria

Mercy Place, Warrnambool  
Mercy Place, Colac  
Mercy Place, Parkville



Western Australia

Mercy Place, Mandurah

homes. This was chiefly through the following learnings:

- Strategies including embedding routine completion of ELDAC after-death audits help to identify gaps in service delivery
- What is best practice palliative care and strategies and tools required for implementation
- The framework for improvements are and have been transferable across to other Mercy Homes
- The importance of linkages with community services to help provide best practice palliative care within the home
- The importance of flexibility and understanding the individual needs of each home (one size does not fit all approach)
- Understanding that small improvements can make significant change to resident outcomes.
- Importance of involvement of the multidisciplinary team and establishing early who will champion the cause (not always clinical)
- Palliative care is everyone's business, including the resident and family

## Key improvements

- Improvements in after-death audit results for all homes demonstrating more responsive care at end of life for residents in these homes

- Evidence of improvements in advance care planning to ensure more residents/ families are involved in end of life decision making
- Improved access to palliative education with all homes accessing (palliative care focused training)

Palliative care needs rounds commenced and continued in all facilities through linkage with local palliative care services.

- Development of palliative care working parties in some homes
- Development of palliative care/advance care planning champions
- Transferability of all of the above initiatives to many other Mercy Health homes as a result of the ELDAC Linkages program and the learnings for the Palliative Care, CNC to adapt her role accordingly

Since completion of the ELDAC Linkages program Mercy Health has been concentrating on the introduction of palliative care needs rounds across all 30 Mercy Health homes, with a particular focus on people living with dementia and people with long term chronic pain. ELDAC Linkages program has taught the Palliative Care, CNC the value of such rounds not only relating to early identification of resident deterioration, but how these can be tailored to suit the individual needs of each home and bring about immediate change in spite of the significant challenges experienced in aged care.

*Fran Gore*

*Palliative Care, Clinical Nurse Consultant  
Mercy Health, Aged and Community Care*



## Testimonial from the four service sites

Participation in the ELDAC Linkages program provided us with the tools and resources needed to provide high quality, best practice palliative care. The expert ELDAC Linkage facilitators guided us through the process, helping to ensure that all necessary milestones were met. The post program reports not only provided us with evidence of improvements through participation in the program, but also provided us with “a way forward” ensuring sustainability for many years to come.

While our residents are living longer, for most as they age, their death within our home becomes an inevitability. In many instances, both the resident and their families are aware that their lives are coming to a close. The four Mercy Health homes participated in the ELDAC Linkages program because they wanted their health professionals to receive both the most advanced education and support that’s available to support the people they care for.

All Mercy Health homes acknowledge that their carers and Registered Nurses are extremely busy. Explaining that the caring and compassionate mindsets cannot be denied – at all times they strive to do their absolute best to support the resident and family members. While staff don’t want to be constrained or bound by bureaucracy or administrative guidelines, they do understand the need for process. That is sometimes a challenge that faces the homes.

“ELDAC (Linkages program) helped me in my role in pastoral care to be more aware of the needs of the family when a resident is at end of life and even staff as they also develop a relationship with the residents.”

*Mercy Place Mandurah pastoral care worker*



## Mercy Place Colac, Victoria

Mercy Place Colac, formerly known as Eventide, opened in 1952. A refurbished Mercy Place opened in 2005. The residence is designed so that people can stay in the same residence for as long as they need. If their needs change, we aim to provide necessary support, enabling a resident to live as well as possible with specialised and flexible care.

Colac is a small and attractive city in the Western District of Victoria – it’s located 150km south-west of Melbourne and less than half that distance from Victoria’s second biggest city, Geelong. Today, the region’s major industries remain agriculture such as dairying, beef and lamb production. The township is supported by many tourists who visit Colac on their way to the Otway Ranges Great Ocean Road, which includes the Twelve Apostles and Shipwreck Coast.

“We can’t speak highly enough of the ELDAC Linkages project program and the way the Mercy Place staff cared for Dad but it was our family, as well, who the staff looked out for. We were blessed.”

*Former Colac resident’s family member*

### Highlights from participation in ELDAC Linkages Program:

- Networking with external providers has helped find further connections and resources for palliative care in the local area
- Multidisciplinary approach to advance care planning
- Training and education from people who are experts in their field

One of Mercy Place Colac’s initiatives as part of the ELDAC Linkages program was to conduct an advance care planning information session for residents and families. This created plenty of discussion and become a major focus for the home, because in response, residents/families were proactively seeking staff to have the discussion and consider either commencing their own advance care planning or updating previous plans.

“Providing high quality end of life care for a resident is definitely a privilege and ELDAC helped me to do that better. I still have contact with some of the people I met from other homes at the EDLAC Linkages showcase and this provides me with a support network.”

*Mercy Place Colac Lifestyle Co-ordinator*

## Mercy Place Warrnambool, Victoria

Mercy Place Warrnambool was built on Sisters of Mercy owned land more than 14 years ago. Five years later, the facility was extended to establish the large and inviting, 120-bed aged care home that it is today. Working closely with the Warrnambool region's health care networks, the home provides residents with the specialised care they need, including Transitional Care Program providing subacute rehabilitation support, high quality palliative care, specialised dementia care in the home's Memory Support Unit, and overall holistic care for residents with various chronic health care needs.

Mercy Place Warrnambool is a warm, welcoming and energetic environment for the southwest of Victoria's vulnerable and elderly community.

### Highlights from participation in ELDAC Linkages Program:

- Being able to see residents passing away peacefully, and knowing how grateful and supported the families also are in the process
- The collaboration between key stakeholders has been paramount in ensuring that their service is providing excellence in palliative care

## Mercy Place Mandurah, Western Australia

Mercy Place Mandurah opened in 1980 and there are currently 83 residents living in the community. The home is located in the picturesque canal precinct of the city, adjacent to beautiful parklands. Family members often take their loved ones for coffee and cake to Halls Head Central, which is one of the many cafes along the Mandurah marina.

### Highlights of participation in the ELDAC Linkages Program:

- Training and education from people that are specialists in their field
- Ongoing support and processes such as needs rounds that will continue
- Greater accessibility to specialist palliative care staff
- Standardised tools and processes to ensure continuity for residents at end of life

"ELDAC Linkages program was an opportunity for all staff to upskill and cement palliative care foundations. Formal linkages with community palliative care and bereavement services enhanced palliative/ end of life care for our residents and their families and helped us realise that we are not on our own."

*Mercy Place Warrnambool Service Manager*



## Mercy Place Parkville, Victoria

The home is located in a vibrant inner north community, perched on the fringe of Melbourne's lush parks and gardens.

Our lifestyle program provides opportunities to connect with the community and indulge their passions, with excursions to the nearby Royal Melbourne Zoo, Botanical Gardens and Morning Melodies music programs. The home also offers a variety of cultural activities, including Italian coffee clubs, reflection groups and church services for people of any faith.

### Highlights from participation in ELDAC Linkages Program:

- Frequent involvement of specialist services has helped to upskill staff through role modelling
- Upskilling in advance care planning and commencing difficult conversations

Mercy Place Parkville focused on palliative care needs rounds as a way to help their dedicated but sometimes inexperienced staff to identify deterioration earlier. This was in order to reduce the number of unnecessary admissions to hospital from perceived 'acute illness'



"The ELDAC Linkages facilitator helped us to look at deterioration from a more holistic perspective."

*Care Manager, Mercy Place Parkville*