

Media Release

19 October 2023

Pastoral care: a vocation with heart

“Our residents are all different; some more challenging to live with, some living with constant pain, others with grief – a microcosm of our broader society. We try to be there for all of them.” - Peter Vear, Pastoral Care Practitioner.

October 22-28 is Pastoral Care Week, a time to acknowledge the important work of pastoral caregivers.

The theme for 2023 is ‘Chaplaincy and Mental Health: It’s Healthy to Get Help’, highlighting the importance of chaplains, pastoral counselors and other spiritual caregivers working closely with mental health colleagues.

For-purpose Catholic organisation VMCH has 24 Pastoral Care Practitioners (PCPs) who support residents, clients and their families across aged care, palliative care, affordable homes and disability services.

Pastoral care is an integral part of VMCH’s Mission, with PCPs there to support people in times of pain, loss, triumph and joy, through prayer, meaningful activities, social visits, grief support and hospitality.

PCP Peter Vear works at VMCH’s newest affordable homes development, Trinity Lane, which offers safe and secure accommodation to people aged over 55 who are on low incomes, and people with disability.

Visiting residents is a large part of Peter’s role, listening to any concerns they may have, and helping them to build a community.

“Seeing the residents thinking of ways that they can build up their community themselves – gathering to help teach those residents who are learning English, offering yoga sessions to anyone interested, running the monthly BBQ, conversing with each other, has been particularly rewarding.”

Relatively new to the role, the former administration officer says pastoral care work is something he’s always wanted to do.

“I love learning about people’s lives; what they’ve been through and offering them support.”

VMCH Chief Mission Officer Bridget O’Shannassy says the organisation prioritises investing in its pastoral carers, recognising the positive impact their ministry of offering emotional and spiritual support can make.

“The past year has been very busy for our team as they’ve built on their knowledge and training around grief support, helping aged care residents to foster a greater understanding around cultural diversity, and offering opportunities for residents to relax through mindfulness/meditation sessions,” Bridget says.

The volume of their work is also astounding. During the first six months of this year alone, VMCH PCPs supported people through 15,036 one-on-one visits, 1,123 pastoral activities, 535 Masses, and 144 deaths.

“Pastoral care is a vocation; true heart work that can be draining at times,” Bridget says. “Self-care is important for pastoral care practitioners – we need to nourish ourselves, so we are able to continue to share and give to others.”

VMCH would like to thank Peter, Bridget, and all PCPs across Australia for the incredibly important work they do each and every day.

Media enquiries

Cassie Zlonzak

Communications Manager

M: 0402 422 852

E: cassie.zlonzak@vmch.com.au

About VMCH

Here at VMCH, our services are as diverse as the people we support.

Our values underpin the work we do. As a Catholic, for-purpose organisation, compassion, respect and inclusion aren't just words to us, they guide us in everything we do.

While we've been around for over a century, we're always moving forward. Always staying true to who we are by supporting people and families to live their best lives; providing a place to call home and spaces to learn and grow.

Our professional and compassionate teams are with you on your life journey; helping you with a wide range of support from early learning and therapy, specialist education, disability services, affordable homes, residential aged care, retirement living and at-home aged care.

