

# Media Release

12 July 2021

## VMCH's O'Neill House open for end-of-life services

VMCH's O'Neill House, an end-of-life comfort care centre in Prahran, opens its doors this week. The service will provide 22 beds for people to experience the best available support at their end of life.

Sonya Smart, VMCH CEO says the concept of 'comfort care' is important to the organisation, as is excellence in end-of-life care.

"O'Neill House provides palliative support for people in their last months of life, and ensures family and friends can maintain their caring role in this comfortable home, in conjunction with our care teams.

"This new service offers people options at this important time of their life, so they can be supported in a home-like environment. We are then able to care for their physical and spiritual wellbeing, as well as ensuring their family and loved ones can spend valuable, quality time together.

Ms Smart said in 2017, Palliative Care Victoria estimated that 1 in 4 Victorians who die each year (approximately 10,000 people), died without adequate access to palliative care.

"We also know that people are entering aged care much later in life, and at this stage, many of our residents are already palliative. The admission process into mainstream aged care can be very stressful for the older person and their family.

"At VMCH we have taken this information and plan to continue to build on our palliative expertise and quality care, not just at O'Neill House, but across all our residences and, where appropriate, in our other services too.

"Our aim is to ease the burden for our people and their families. We also want to reduce the need for emergency department presentations and deaths during transfers to and from services."

Ms Smart says O'Neill was designed following extensive research, recognising the importance of the physical environment.

"The surrounds and feelings of comfort has an enormous bearing on the person dying as well as on their family, friends and carers," she says.

"All spaces are designed to be relaxed and welcoming. It is well lit, especially through natural light. The bedrooms are designed to enable families and friends to stay overnight, either within the resident's room or in a dedicated family apartment.

“The environment provides for privacy as well as areas to support intimate family interactions, larger gatherings and the sharing of meals.

“This building is a sanctuary for the person dying and their families and friends.”

To access O’Neill House, prospective residents must qualify for an aged care assessment and income testing, or provide a full fee for service. For further information about O’Neill House, you can visit <https://vmch.com.au/services/palliative-care/oneill-house-prahran/> or contact Sally on 0419 147 380.

*Image: Sonya Smart (CEO) and Bridget O’Shannassy (GM Mission) welcome Therese Rush and Deslee Mortensen from Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne.*

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## **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 not for profit 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. We stay 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. We provide 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.