



From Cleaner to Companion: A Tree Change That Became Family

Shared by a Mansfield District Hospital Volunteer – Janet Downing.

After years of suburban life, my husband and I set our sights on Mansfield for a tree change. I reached out to Mansfield District Hospital, hoping to join the team—but had to wait for a vacancy. In the meantime, I signed up as a volunteer.

It wasn't long before I was offered a role as a cleaner—a small cog in a big machine, but never made to feel anything less than valued. My first placement was at Bindaree, followed by Buckland House and eventually the Hospital itself. Each area offered something different, and I found the work deeply fulfilling. I saw first hand the dedication of the nursing staff—across shifts, across wards—working tirelessly to care for patients and families. It opened my eyes.

Before retiring, I was encouraged to take on a new role as Activity Assistant. I'd been content as a cleaner, but this opportunity lit me up. I worked closely with residents, families and staff at Bindaree and Buckland House. It was a natural extension of my volunteer work—and an absolute joy.

When it came time to find care for my mother, there was no hesitation. I knew exactly where she'd be safe, happy and well cared for. She first came to Bindaree for respite, but quietly asked staff if she could stay. When I found out, I was overwhelmed with joy. She often says, **"I couldn't be better looked after if I was royalty."**

After years of working, volunteering, and now seeing my mum thrive at Bindaree, I can honestly say: Mansfield District Hospital becomes family. Even the staff I'm only just meeting feel familiar. This place its people, its care, its heart—is a ***crown jewel in our community. And every staff member, seen and unseen, is a gem within it.***

CONSUMER VOICE
Your Words, Your Voice

COMMUNITY HEALTH



I am a 74 year old living in Tolmie with my husband. He has had a brain tumour removed and now has some cognition deficits. He gets anxious and finds some activities of daily living difficult. This year both Greg and I have been assessed under My Aged Care and are now receiving services from Support at Home.

We started with home care 60mins a fortnight and then 120mins of respite for Greg where one of the girls takes him down for a coffee, lunch and a shop or any appointments.

Since then I have had my own health issues, cerebral venous sinus thrombosis and stroke and can no longer drive so since then the girls have provided transport to appointments and continued to support us in so many simple ways. Very grateful for this service.

The support at home team have gone out of their way to assist Greg and myself. *Helping us out far beyond our expectations* so that we can *stay in our own home*. We are so very grateful at this trying time.
Greg and Rhonda Johnstone

MATERNITY



Following our excellent experience at MDH with my second baby, I was very keen, & very lucky, to be planning to birth my third bub at MDH.

Our antenatal care with the midwife team was fantastic. Always thorough and supportive, and I felt well informed and included as part of a decision-making team planning my care. Communication was excellent, any questions or concerns were always addressed with friendly discussion, follow up phone calls and professional, evidence-based advice from the very knowledgeable team.

Come labour day I felt confident & calm under the care of the wonderful midwives and my doctor. They gave me autonomy & control where possible whilst closely monitoring progress and supporting me to have a very positive birthing experience.

Our stay on the ward was a great experience. Despite being my third bub, I benefitted from the guidance, skills & patience of the midwifery team to begin breastfeeding, problem solve feeding issues on Day 1 and feel ready to head home to the rest of the family! I have no doubt this short admission & support set us up for a successful transition home. All staff, including admin, catering & domestic staff were always so attentive, friendly and professional.

Fast forward 2 weeks & the household had covid. Late one night I was concerned about a hot bub who wasn't feeding well. Nurse on call gave limited advice so I called the MDH midwife on-call number. The Midwife answered my call & was super supportive to calm my increasing anxiety. We re-presented with bub to the urgent care for resp assessment, were fully assessed and given a clear plan to monitor bub at home.

After the experience of 'feeling like a number' in a large health network in the city, we are so grateful to have the opportunity to birth at our local hospital in Mansfield with such a dedicated team of midwives, doctors and hospital staff providing high quality, individualised care.
Thankyou team!!

URGENT CARE

My family and I were holidaying at Mt Buller, first snow trip...yeah! But disaster struck when we all ended up getting gastro, now normally gastro is ok but my daughter has a rare endocrine disease called Addison's Disease which gastro can create lots of complications and actually in some cases fatal without medical intervention. So we called an ambulance, the ambulance staff were phenomenal, they got to the hospital, it was in the middle of the night, they'd work a really long shift but they were just so helpful and so wonderful but we got to the hospital and the second that you walked in you could just tell that people just cared, there was this level of feeling of warmth and you know when we were being ushered into the room nothing was too much, whatever I needed just ask for it, can I help, how can I make you comfortable, so you can make your daughter comfortable. How can we make her more comfortable like it was *it was really beautiful holistic and personalised approach...* The nurse, oh my gosh, she was really beautiful, she was really helpful in such a hard time. She was overwhelmingly kind and she'll always have my thanks and gratitude for the level of care, she treated us like people, like humans we weren't just a condition to treat or a patient to serve, she treated us like you know human beings....let me help them, she's obviously found her calling in life just phenomenal and the Doctor I'd never...I've spent a lot time in a number of different hospitals I have never come across a Doctor who has been so invested in making sure that her personalised experience of Addison's Disease was considered.

I find that there seems to be this text book, like here's the disease this is what you do and these are the outcomes when you put this medication and that'll do, but he was so in tune with making sure that the presentation in the patient was considered and that is huge, he listened to us again treated us like humans and took in the fact that I had done a huge amount research on it and so he was talking to me about what I knew and checking to make sure what was happening I was comfortable with and that what was happening was accurate in previous experiences, it was just beautiful to be included in the care because I've/we've got all the experience from all previously and on her personalised condition so it was just really appreciated that he took the time to treat us like a human and treat us like that everything does present differently in different people and he took the time to listen....

he took the time to listen, I can't express how much of a difference that made and honestly the management should be extremely proud of their staff and the culture that they have been creating in that hospital because honestly I've never come across anything quite as beautiful as that and they will always have my gratitude because from what was a horrible experience from a holiday has actually left a lasting positive impact in my memories like forever, I'm going to remember that hospital and those staff with a positive feeling from that holiday for the rest of my life and I have them to thank for that.

- Urgent Care Patient

