

## MEDIA RELEASE

**9 March, 2018**

### **SwanCare Empowering Future Doctors**

Curtin Medical School has partnered with SwanCare Bentley to equip future medical practitioners with an understanding of healthy aging and the challenges senior Australians may face.

Curtin Medical School's Senior Citizen Partnership Program aims to improve student knowledge of the life of a senior citizen by pairing students with senior partners. The partnership between 2-3 medical students and a senior resident (in some cases couples) is maintained throughout the student's five year degree.

Students meet their senior partner throughout the year as part of the fieldwork component of the Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery course.

The partnerships provide the basis for the formation of long-term relationships, and allow students to develop an understanding of the senior experience of aging, factors that contribute to healthy aging and how they navigate the medical system.

SwanCare Chief Executive Officer Graham Francis said maintaining this partnership and supporting the next generation of doctors is important.

"With an increasing number of older people in our communities, it is paramount their needs are understood and met. Providing this interface between our community and the first year medical students offers the opportunity of conversation and understanding between generations. It is a great initiative and we are proud to be a part of it," he said.

Curtin Medical School Senior Lecturer Dr Ute Hauck said the partnership allows students to develop a deeper understanding of the lives of senior Australians.

"Student reflection indicates this has been an enriching experience. Some senior partners are healthy and active, while others are not, and in some cases students have witnessed their partner's change of circumstances," Dr Hauck said.

"Our aim is that students gain an understanding of how challenging life can be for seniors, for instance those with poor mobility or limited sight. For some even leaving the house or finding transport to an appointment is difficult. We hope this experience will build a foundation of knowledge that will make our Curtin Medical School students reflective and thoughtful practitioners," Dr Hauck said.

"For those students who have had no exposure to the senior population, this program will help prepare them for consultations with senior patients. The Senior Citizen Partnership Program provides the students with the opportunity to gain

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- Waminda Care Centre

better insight into the lives of senior citizen by asking appropriate questions and exploring the lives of senior citizens in our society from different angles. “

Applications are sought from SwanCare residents to join the program in 2018. The program will also equip students with specific life skills to benefit them in their future career – namely, communication skills, professionalism and above all, an understanding of the challenges faced by senior Australians within the health care system.

The program is not only rewarding for students, for seniors it offers a chance to learn from the younger generation.

SwanCare resident and former midwife Gillian Godsmark agrees. “It’s lovely to be involved in this program, the students learn from us but we also learn from them. They get to learn about our lives and how we see the world - and I think they learn that we are people just like them. Conversely, we get to learn about what it is like to be a young person. I feel that young people grow up very quickly these days,” Mrs Godsmark said.

As they are not qualified, students are not permitted to offer medical advice, but can accompany their partner to medical appointments if invited.

**ENDS**

#### **About SwanCare**

*SwanCare has been caring for seniors in Western Australia for over 56 years since the not-for-profit organisation was established in the early 1960’s as Swan Cottage Homes.*

*SwanCare operates WA’s largest retirement and aged care site, Bentley Park, with over 1,000 residents, three aged care facilities and the SwanCare At Home service.*

*SwanCare also operates the boutique Australind Rise retirement village in the South West.*

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