**Sustainability Learnings from the NHS

Julia Trimboli**

Good morning, everyone, it’s nice to be here. I find it difficult to not talk through at least one slide, so I just want to show you something. I was just conscious of a couple of things as people were speaking this morning but one of them that came to mind was when Robert was talking about the built environment. It made me think about Mercy Hospital for Women, which was historically located at East Melbourne and it’s now moved ... it’s been in Heidelberg for at least 10 or 12 years now and my role is not – and you’ll learn a little bit about my role – it’s not directly involved with sustainability things per se but, every time I went to Heidelberg and listened to the women’s stories and the staff stories, they always talked about “oh, I miss the park across the road from the hospital because that made a difference to my health outcomes”. So, it just reminded me of that, Robert, when you were speaking – how we build places. So, I’ll just take you through this and I think someone will keep me on track because I’ve only got four minutes or so, so they’ll tell me if I’m going too over time but I just wanted to give you an overview of how Mercy Health thinks about this space of sustainability and I thought it might be helpful just to have a look at our structure in one sense and also to get a sense –

Mercy is spread across the country. We’re about 8000 employees, you can see, and we’re in aged care health services and home and community care. So, we’re kind of a big outfit but, I guess what I’m here today to do, is talk a little bit about what we’re doing in our two hospitals in Victoria, specifically, but I just wanted to start by mentioning, for us at Mercy Health, most of – you know when I was hearing Colleen say what does it, you know, it really mean to me, as I reflect on sustainability. For us, it’s all about relationships and how we collaborate and build together. So, because of that, I want to begin by acknowledging the work of Lisa Rasmussen, who’s in the audience, because she’s been pivotal in making this come to life and Caroline Becunis, who’s a Mercy Sister, who’s also been pivotal in the work that’s happening here.

So, some of you may have heard that, not so long ago, the Pope wrote this famous Encyclical or letter. Now, for us at Mercy Health, that motivated the board really to respond to what are we doing at Mercy because we weren’t doing enough and, I suppose, we can all say we’re never doing enough but we needed to do more and I just wanted to share two things from the Encyclical – that the Pope kind of encouraged Catholic organisations and others around the world to think about and he says “we call all human beings to respect, cherish and stop exploiting planet Earth, the home of all creation” and the other thing that’s a big part of the Encyclical is that he focused on the poor of the world and those excluded from reaching their full potential. Deterioration of the planet affects the most vulnerable people on the planet. So, we kind of know some of these things but it’s a good reminder to think, well, what do we do? So, that’s where I driver came from – the Encyclical helped the Board think about it. We’ve got the Mercy Sisters are our owners. So, whilst we report to the Department of Health etc, our owners are the Sisters of Mercy, so we report to them and, just in 2017, they have, I suppose, their equivalent of a strategic planning session, which goes for a long period of time and their chapter statement was totally focused on care of the Earth and one of the things that came out of their chapter station, that this is what they said: We’re disturbed by the despair and suffering of many people and the degradation of the Earth. We are impelled to reflective action for gospel justice. So, again, that helps our organisation focus its energy and, of course, the Board has to report to the sisters, who have to report to Rome. So, it’s kind of a big movement, I guess, if you describe it. Then, our own executive group, which is the corporate and operational executive, that’s where I sit, so then we are motivated to say so what do we do about this and

thankfully, what we did about it was we had Lisa, who worked in our ED Department, as a medical doctor, but also as an environmental scientist and I know she’s had a lot to do with Forbes and she, with a couple of other people, we worked together to develop our Mercy Health approach to care for our common home and there’s so much I want to say about that approach but one of the things that I would like to just highlight is that it really was around thinking about the connections across a big system and it operated in six key areas and, you know, building connections was one of them, raising organisational awareness was another thing, education, reflection on our practice and how we actually empowered or enabled the Encyclical in the organisation. So, that was a big part of the work we tried to think about.

The other advantage, in a way of me being involved in this work is that I work in five key areas and, I think David mentioned ethics is one of my areas but, what it allows me to do at the level I’m at is kind of pin ponged across the system. So, if there’s something happening over here, you’ve got capacity to influence. So, it’s a bit like – I always think it’s a bit like an octopus, so we’re kind of ping ponging and enabling people and suddenly when you do go around to our – we’ve got about 45 sites. People start to say I heard about something that was happening there, there and there and then they’re doing work already. So, that helps everyone shift in the direction that we want them to go in but, of course, you need practical, concrete people on the ground, doing things, and that’s not me. It’s other people and one of the people that we’ll be recruiting soon is a sustainability officer, just for our two big public hospitals and there’s other things happening in the aged care and home and community care but it’s probably important to know that our approach goes across the system and that frees someone like Lisa up to do the work in that yellow box on the side, which is around looking at divestment, superannuation, how our environmental committee functions across a big system. She’s managing some pilot waste projects in our aged care area etc etc. So, given that I’ve got one minute left, I think that is all I need to say except now that we have Caroline working as an environmental champion with Lisa as well.

So, thank you very much for your time.

[Applause]