
SHORT HISTORY OF THE INTENSIVE CARE AUXILIARY

An exert from a speech made by Mrs Beth Benbow at the Intensive
Care Auxiliary 45th Anniversary.

19 March 2024

Established 20th March 1979 following Mrs Iris Benbow calling a public meeting at the Bendigo & Northern District Base Hospital. This meeting was the result of Iris spending some time in the, then, Intensive Care/Ward 6 Unit. Her statement to the Sister in Charge, Mary Mulvahill, was that it was a boring ward there being no pictures on the wall. Mary's prompt reply to Iris was to "do something about it", which she subsequently did.

Iris was elected President at this first meeting and remained so until her passing on 7th August, 2017.

This meeting was attended by around 80 people, many of whom became involved with the Auxiliary and took up honorary positions over many years, within the Auxiliary.

The first fund raising events held were very successful. The first tour interstate Iris organised, by phone and pen and paper, took 90 people in two buses, up to Queensland. Future tours to Queensland, New South Wales, Kangaroo Island, South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria were also very good fund raisers. Other ways funds were raised were by Bingo, Hospital Fair, Bake and Craft table, raffles, lunches, morning coffees, pokies trips over the border and any other way that was considered legal, but most of all fun.

A very important part of this Auxiliary was the friendship between the members, the support that was offered when life threw some difficult challenges in the way, and celebrating the good times.

At some time during the years Iris was President she suggested that perhaps the Auxiliary could assist in contributing funds towards Critical Care Nursing Scholarships, to date 43 Scholarships have been supported. Funds were also used to purchase equipment (much easier in those days as they were not so computerised) and items for patient comfort and care.

Sadly no track of the money raised has been kept but in today's money it would total into probably a couple of million dollars, perhaps more if we added the value gained with the gaining of qualifications by the nurses.

As we celebrate an amazing 45 years of fund raising for Intensive and Critical Care at Bendigo Health it is with great pride that current members acknowledge the contribution of previous members and thank them for establishing the Auxiliary. Their insight into what was required legally and best way to handle the finances has stood the Auxiliary in good stead.

Today the Auxiliary is still a very strong, financially sound fund raising group. Our current ways of raising funds have varied somewhat, but some are still the same. Our morning coffees have resumed, lunches at Bendigo Stadium, Craft and Bake Stalls at Bendigo Health and Strath Village, raffles, film night at the Star Cinema, amongst others.

Our funds are spent on contributing towards the above mentioned Scholarships and also further nursing training in conjunction with Melbourne University. We donate puzzle books, crocheted and patchwork quilts for patients, equipment, laundry bags during Covid which greatly helped the staff. We also look to Darcy to let us know what we can do to support the unit, patients and staff. Covid had a significant effect on our fund raising but fortunately we were able to continue on after the lockdowns, due to the loyalty of our members.

It is important to acknowledge the significant amount of baking and craft work that the Auxiliary members and supporters have contributed, mostly at their own cost. To the retailers and public who have donated items to us, thank you.

Having been involved with this outstanding Auxiliary for around 43 years I can only say how proud I am of my mother for establishing it, past and present members for their commitment and sincere thanks to the communities of this Region who support us.

I would also like to thank, on behalf of all members, the fantastic support of Bendigo Health and the Foundation and Fund Raising Team, all staff of Bendigo Health who look forward to the third Thursday of the month for their home baked morning tea and other items. Also warm thanks to the staff of Intensive and Critical Care for accepting our efforts on supporting them.

Beth Benbow

Secretary/Asst Treasurer

Intensive Care Auxiliary

Bendigo Health