

## *The Infants' Home at Home: staying connected with children and families*



*Educator Anne shared a story with children at home via an online video.*

While we have kept our centres open for children and families throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, in March and April attendances dropped significantly. Many families kept their children home to self-isolate or because they were working from home, while others reduced days or cancelled their enrolment due to economic hardship. For many children and families, as well as our staff, this was a particularly difficult time as they wrestled with disruptions to their routines and connections with others, while also experiencing anxiety in relation to their health, safety and financial security.

As a service that has supported families in need since 1874, we knew that we had to find innovative ways to keep our community connected and supported during this time, even when we couldn't be physically together, and so *The Infants' Home at Home* digital curriculum was conceived.

We know that in early childhood having a sense of belonging and a predictable routine is paramount to a child's feelings of safety and connection. Our integrated team of educators and allied health staff created a series of online resources to help children and their families

to continue to connect with our centres. The project included providing: information and guidance for creating resources and setting up play-based learning experiences at home; videos of staff presenting experiences such as reading stories, yoga and mindfulness activities; and support for parents and carers to manage change and anxiety related to the pandemic.

Using our digital communication platform for families, in conjunction with our website and Facebook page, resources were shared with families over a number of weeks.

Educators and children in our family day care services also embraced technology to connect with absent children and families via video calling. Families in self-isolation were also sent weekly newsletters and resource activity sheets to support their children's learning at home.

*The Infants' Home at Home* digital curriculum also played an important role in helping our educators and allied health staff to remain connected to their centre communities, and to feel empowered to use their professional skills as they continued to work virtually with children and families.

Although normality has begun to return to The Infants' Home, the future is by no means certain. We know that we may need to build upon *The Infants' Home at Home* digital curriculum, and we are already thinking about how we can meet our children's and families' needs in the future.

---

***“For a service that thrives on face-to-face interactions to develop relationships, the digital curriculum was an interesting opportunity to look at innovative ways we can support children and families... it was a new and definitely emerging approach to staying connected with them.” —***  
**Anne, Robinson House Educator**

---



## Keeping our focus during COVID-19

During the COVID-19 pandemic our focus has been on the safety and wellbeing of our children, families and staff. We know that a sense of belonging, connection and routine is important to helping children and families navigate the challenges created by the pandemic.

While taking the necessary steps to prevent the spread of illness, we continued to provide high quality education and care programs for children attending our services, and we developed a digital curriculum to help children and families at home stay engaged and connected. We have also turned to digital technology to deliver our postnatal services virtually, as well as our online parenting programs. Plans are in place to resume some of our community playgroups, with physical distancing and other safety measures in place.

We will continue to adapt our services and programs as necessary to safely promote positive outcomes for children and families, especially those in need.

Elizabeth Robinson  
Chief Executive Officer

*each child,  
every opportunity*

## Interview with Paul Sheehan, Corporate Volunteer

Paul Sheehan, who is the Head of Operations Services at MLC, began volunteering at The Infants' Home in 2011. Since then he has personally participated in over 28 corporate volunteering days with us. By partnering with The Infants' Home, the MLC Wealth team overall has also engaged in more than 350 volunteering days with us.

Paul has enjoyed the diverse volunteering tasks he has undertaken with us over the years, from shifting sand, soil and mulch, to landscaping gardens, mounting TVs and building furniture. His most memorable experience was when he was lucky enough to jump on the ride-on mower to spend a few hours mowing our back lawns!

*"It's great to see how corporate volunteering enables The Infants' Home to redirect its funds to invest in value-added activities and programs to benefit children, families and the broader community", says Paul.*

Paul believes that corporate volunteering is a fantastic way to support the community while also benefiting his work team, as the experience helps to foster a culture of teamwork and connectedness. He is proud to work for a company that prides itself on investing in the success of others. Being a corporate volunteer is also personally rewarding and, as the father of two young boys, Paul connects strongly with The Infants' Home's vision of giving each child every opportunity.

*"Every little bit you do makes a difference. Seeing the children with a smile on their face, knowing that you've helped in some way, makes it worthwhile."*



*Paul, pictured with his children, connects with The Infants' Home's legacy, history and philosophy.*

### **Our Corporate Volunteer Program is Resuming**

Following the temporary suspension of Corporate Volunteering due to COVID-19, we are planning to resume the program from August, with safety measures in place. If your organisation is interested in volunteering with us, please register your interest on our website, or call us on 9799 4844. We look forward to seeing returning and new corporate volunteers at The Infants' Home again in the future.

## Award win for our friends at HNF

Congratulations to our friends and long-time supporters at Herbalife Nutrition Foundation (HNF), who won the 'Giver Award' at the Direct Selling Australia Industry Awards in June. They were recognised for their entry for the annual HNF Bike Ride which raises funds to improve children's lives by helping provide nutrition programs to vulnerable children. HNF has funded The Infants' Home's 'Head Start on Health' nutrition program for children since 2007.

## HMAS Sydney V commissioned

We congratulate our friends at HMAS Sydney V, which was commissioned at sea off the coast of NSW on 18 May. The ceremony marked the moment the 147-metre long Air Warfare Destroyer became one of Her Majesty's Australian Ships. This was the first commissioning of an Australian warship at sea since the Second World War. The Infants' Home is proud of our long relationship with HMAS Sydney, having been their adopted charity since 1965. Through this long association we have received many visits from the ship's able crew to assist us with maintaining our extensive playgrounds, gardens and buildings, and to provide support for our events and fundraising activities. Our best wishes to HMAS Sydney V and her crew.



*Last year our children welcomed a visit from HMAS Sydney V crew members.*

### History Volunteer Wanted

The Infants' Home's historical records comprise thousands of records of children and mothers who spent time in our residential facilities from 1874 to the mid-1970s. We are currently digitising these records and require a volunteer to index these to improve accessibility. We are looking for someone for one to two days per week who has some experience in data entry, a passion for history and an understanding of privacy principles. If you are interested in volunteering for this role, please contact Sarah Brand, Project Officer by email to [sbrand@theinfantshome.org.au](mailto:sbrand@theinfantshome.org.au).

## A rapid response: delivering our postnatal services virtually

Our free postnatal home visiting service is for families of infants from birth to 18 months who require support with issues such as feeding, sleeping, settling, adjusting to parenthood, and postnatal physical and mental wellbeing. When we suspended our home visiting service in March due to COVID-19, we recognised that many new parents would still need this support, and that the pandemic and associated lockdown could potentially create additional challenges for many families.

A rapid and practical response was needed. Our Child and Family Health Nurses turned to digital technology to provide assistance to families virtually, in their own homes, via video consultations. This new service offering meant that our nurses needed to revise their face-to-face consultation procedures to ensure they could still effectively identify parents' needs and provide the appropriate support virtually.

All home visits include the administration of The Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS) as part of a psychosocial assessment. Due to the sensitive nature of some of the EPDS questions, and the difficulty for the nurses in knowing whether there are people present other than the client during virtual consultations, additional procedures were developed to help ensure clients' privacy and safety.

As with regular home visits, telehealth consultations are parent-led, family-focused and child-centred, and our nurses use the same clinical judgment, assessment and care planning processes as they do for face-to-face consultations. For all consultations the nurses arrange any follow up appointments needed and provide referrals to GPs, Tresillian or any other services that may assist the client.

We have now resumed our home visiting program, however telehealth consultations were well received and these are still available to clients if they prefer. They can choose this either for their initial consultation or for follow up consultations after a first face-to-face home visit, providing greater service flexibility for new parents.

Our postnatal services are kindly supported by Johnson & Johnson and the NSW Government.





Suzanne Clutterbuck, c. 1948



Suzanne (front right) and Harriet (back right) visited Murray House in 2017, pictured with Centre Director Vin Christanto and Eden.

## In memory of our friend Suzanne Clutterbuck

Suzanne Clutterbuck (1921–2020) was a long-time friend and supporter of The Infants’ Home. Her passing in February marked the end of a wonderful life. Suzanne was involved with us for over six decades, including volunteering weekly during the 60s to help look after the children when we operated as an orphanage. Suzanne’s daughter Harriet also remembers accompanying her mother to The Infants’ Home to help out while she was a teenager on school holidays. During a visit in 2017, Suzanne and Harriet recalled playing with the children on Johnson House’s veranda during the 60s, and the delicious aroma of the meat and vegetable stew being served for the children’s lunch. Suzanne was also a generous donor in support of our programs for children and families. Harriet says that she and her mother were greatly impressed when they visited us in 2017, not only by our modern facilities for young children, but also by the inclusive ideals we uphold for all children and families. Suzanne’s valuable support of our organisation for over six decades will not be forgotten, and we extend our sincere condolences to her family and friends.

## Our history



'Sun time' for The Infants' Home's babies during the 1930s.

At The Infants’ Home’s 1934 Annual General Meeting, Harvey Sutton, Chair of the University of Sydney School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, spoke of The Infants' Home's ongoing work to minimise child mortality for those in its care. Mr Sutton informed the audience that the then mortality rate was 2.1%, which was the lowest in the world at that time for institutional care. The Infants' Home was a leader for low child mortality throughout its formative years. For example, during 1897, The Infants' Home's child mortality rate was 32%, which was significantly lower than other similar institutions in Australia, New York and London, where mortality was anywhere between 60% and 95%.



### ✂ Yes, I would like to support children and families at The Infants’ Home.

- I would like to make a donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ today
- I would like to become a regular giver, please debit \$ \_\_\_\_\_ monthly from my credit card.

My donation will be made by:  cheque (made payable to The Infants’ Home Ashfield), OR by  credit card (Mastercard / Visa)

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Name on card \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

#### My contact details:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this form in the enclosed reply paid envelope, call 02 9799 4844 or email to fundraising@theinfantshome.org.au.

Privacy Statement: The Infants’ Home uses data collected for fundraising purposes and to keep you informed about activities, events and programs that may be of interest to you. By providing your contact details you are agreeing that The Infants’ Home may keep you informed about future fundraising activities and events. You can opt out at any time by contacting The Infants’ Home. For more information on how we handle your personal information, see our website theinfantshome.org.au

