

MEDIA RELEASE

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CHA ANNUAL AWARDS 2011

Religious Sister Receives Lifetime Contribution Award

Sr Helen Monkivitch, RSM, AO has been recognised by Catholic Health Australia for her contribution to Catholic health and aged-care services as the second recipient of the Sr Maria Cunningham Lifetime Contribution Award.

Sr Helen's involvement with Catholic health care dates back to the early 1960s, when she trained as a nurse, later going on to study midwifery. She was part of the team that started maternity services at Mercy Hospital for Women, helping to deliver some of the first babies born at that hospital. Her leadership skills were evident early in her nursing life, working as charge sister and in other supervisory roles during her nursing career.

In the 1980s, she rose to the position of CEO and sister administrator at Mercy Hospital for Women, roles she filled for many years. She played an integral role in the establishment of Werribee Mercy Hospital, St Vincent & Mercy Private Hospital and Mercy Health & Aged Care.

Sr Helen has served on countless boards and advisory committees, including terms as the president of the Victorian branch of the Australian College of Health Services Executives and as chair of the board of the Australian Catholic Health Care Association, now known as Catholic Health Australia. She was a member of her religious order's congregational leadership team for seven years.

"All of that work was appropriately recognised with Sr Helen's appointment as an Officer of the General Division of the Order of Australia in 2006," CHA chief executive Martin Laverty said. "Five years on, she continues to play a major role in Catholic health care administration, including as Director of Leadership and Mission at Mercy Health & Aged Care.

"Those who know Sr Helen will agree with these sentiments, expressed in CHA's publication *Health Matters* soon after her Queen's Birthday Honour: 'Her energy, enthusiasm and decency are infectious and she is one of those special people who is universally respected by all with whom she comes into contact.'"

The Sr Maria Cunningham Lifetime Contribution Award was instituted earlier this year, with Sr Maria, RSC, named the inaugural winner.

"Like Sr Maria, Sr Helen emerged from the demands of primary health care provision into positions of leadership because of her skills as a health worker and as a person of great character," Mr Laverty said. "So many have been touched by her talents over the years and she is a fitting choice as the second winner of this prestigious award."