

SILVER CHAIN NURSING

Silver Chain

Before the Silver Chain and Ambulance services were set up in the early '70s, the nearest emergency health care was in Kondinin. But former nurse, Mrs Joy Radbourne, wife and mother, had served the district unofficially for decades.

with Sharon Seymour

Recognition for a life of care



A LAKE Carmody woman who has spent her life helping others and her community has received an Order of Australia medal.

Joy Radbourne was presented with the medal at a ceremony at Government House yesterday.

A former nurse and midwife in Adelaide, Mrs Radbourne married in 1945 and came to live on a property 56km east of Hyden called the Radbourne Farm.

During her early married years when there were no telephones or medical care and the roads were rough and lonely, Mrs Radbourne took up the mantle for the sparsely populated rural area.

She was instrumental in the area achieving immunisation needles and on Sunday Holt Rock tennis days she would give injections and treat the sick.

In 1976 the Varley medical centre opened and Mrs Radbourne travelled more than 100km a day to help out.

She continued to do this until the Department of Community Services insisted she retire at age 65.

— MARGARET SULLIVAN

Mrs Radbourne (left), with Wyn Lamont, Holt Rock.

Ray Herring and Russell Mouritz of the HPA Medical sub-committee pushed for the locally funded Silver Chain building on land donated by Ina and Peter Lynch from '68, opened in April '71. It included a treatment room and two bedroom living quarters. It was set up as a First Aid post for limited emergency care, and to filter patients for visits by or to the Kondinin Doctor.

The original staffer was Nurse Pat Reilly (later Healy, married into the district) supplied and paid for through the Silver Chain HQ in Perth. They provided support, oversight and training to its network of centres. The Nurse lives on-site, effectively on-call even when off-duty, and the job can be demanding and stressful.

Professional and Patient Confidentiality means there are no photographs of the many District Nurses who served 2-4 year contracts over the last 50 years, or their patients. The basic building has changed little over time. A trailer was added for SES work in '95, the site was improved by the Lions in '02, air conditioning added in '03, a Respite Centre was added in '08, and a renovation done in '13. The emergency load on the Centre was eased by the opening of the Patient Transfer Station (a Lions project) at the Airport in '14.



In mid-'94, a touring rescue trailer with emergency lighting plant, ladder, blankets, and "Jaws of Life" was purchased. The Jaws are held by the then current Nursing Sister, Rosalie Jones.

Silver Chain celebrated 25 years of service in '96, from the April '71 opening. Lunch was taken, the Hyden Choir sang, service badges and awards were handed out, and a history and memorabilia displayed. This included a booklet on its history. Longest serving Silver Chain members Agnes Brown and Prue Smith nee Radbourne (34 years) cut the cake, and Cliff Radbourne inspected the plaque honouring his mother, Joyce Radbourne OAM, 1915-86.

