



From left, KDHS board member Nicole Ryan, trustee Davydd Shaw, board member Judy Greer, trustees Stuart Lower and Don Tonkin and board members Mike Sweeney and Adam Basile.

Peg's 200k hospital gift

By Patrick Phillips

Community icon Peg Billings is still supporting Kyabram 21 years after her death.

Kyabram District Health Service is the lucky beneficiary of a \$200 000 donation from the estate of Margaret Sophie Billings and will use the money for a significant upgrade and refurbishment of the hospital's palliative care wing.

Trustees of Peg's estate Don Tonkin, Stuart Lowe and Davydd Shaw handed over the cheque at a small ceremony last Thursday, with KDHS chief executive Peter Abraham calling the donation a fantastic opportunity for the health service.

At the time of her death on Christmas Day, 1994, Peg left considerable funds from her estate to be distributed to suitable charitable causes across Kyabram.

Mr Shaw said the plans for the palliative care unit at the hospital fitted the bill perfectly and that the trustees had deemed it a suitable project to support.

Peg, who lived her 90 years in Kyabram, was also the daughter of Dr Jon Cam Wight, Kyabram's second doctor, who came to the town in 1894 and stayed until his death in 1928.

The house he built on Allan St, Oakdene, was Peg's residence for her entire life.

Funds from the sale of the house after her death were also donated to KDHS to

build a second operating theatre.

KDHS board member, and long-time friend of Peg, Judy Greer said she was delighted with the donation.

"Having spent some very enjoyable afternoons with Peg and my friends and the family it is just exciting to know that Peg's name will be associated with something I know she would have been really, really proud of," she said.

"She was definitely a local identity and was somebody who was always interested in people and always interested in knowing what you were doing and what was happening. I think to know that she is going to be remembered and acknowledged for her contribution to the town in this way is fantastic."

With palliative care becoming more of a focus in rural communities due to an ageing population, Mr Abraham said the money would go a long way toward providing new and vital services at KDHS.

Upgrades to the palliative care wing will include: a dedicated palliative care room with easy access family room (including new bed, carpet, paint job, television and hospital equipment such as a track lifting device and room for infusion pumps), a separate family waiting room (including kitchen facilities), a new administrative and staff office, an outdoor courtyard and a new, dis-

crete entrance via a path from the KDHS carpark.

"The whole point is to make it feel like you are not in a hospital, to make it family friendly, which is particularly important for palliative care," Mr Abraham said.

"It's also giving the opportunity to create better daily living for longer term stayers and patients who are transitioning."

Mr Abraham also said the new palliative care wing would allow the hospital to apply for ongoing funding from the Victorian Government, which would hopefully allow the hospital greater scope for expansion in the future.

"We don't get funding for palliative care, we provide palliative care in a hospital bed, a basic, acute-care hospital bed," he said.

"There is a real opportunity we are going to pursue now with the Department of Health on a palliative care funded bed and that is because of this donation, so it'll be a great benefit in the future. It's an ongoing financial support, recurrent money to support palliative care services around the patients.

"At the moment we provide our own support through Loretta's (Lilford) role and others that we have out in the community and our general nurses. But having a palliative care speciality allows us to bring in a palliative care consultant out of Bendigo or somewhere else and have those services."