



## **A MESSAGE FROM JOS VAN DE VEN, CHAIR, MICARE LTD**

After 33 years of outstanding leadership and absolute commitment to MiCare's Elders, clients, employees, volunteers and Boards, it is with both sadness and gratitude that I advise of Petra Neeleman's retirement as Executive Director of MiCare effective Friday, 12 July 2024.

Commencing as a Board Member for the Holland Australian Retirement Foundation in 1986 and soon becoming Treasurer, Petra was appointed CEO in 1991 after the opening of what is now Overbeek Lodge. Petra worked hard to convince the Dutch community to merge three organisations to form DutchCare in 1996. Since then, Petra has served many thousands of people who came to DutchCare, and now MiCare, for care and support with distinction, compassion, and a true love of our organisation's mission and values, and what they can do for each individual we serve. Her commitment to the migrant and CALD communities has been the foundation for every decision she has made, and the backdrop to all the advocacy she has pursued with absolute resolute determination.

Petra has always taken a genuine interest in each individual's wellbeing, and in the earlier years knew every Elder and employee by name. As the organisation grew under Petra's leadership, this became more challenging, however she never lost the personalised approach to supporting our Elders and clients – even if the logistics of leading a large organisation with over 800 employees has meant the days of knowing everyone's names has passed. Petra does, however, continue to epitomise and live by the principles of Person Centred Care – whether you're an Elder, client, family member, employee or volunteer. Her interest in every individual is genuine and honest, and she always makes time to listen with real interest to whoever she is talking to. It's not surprising that Petra is a leader of the Eden Alternative Philosophy as it is ingrained in her daily life – at work and home.

Petra's achievements over her time leading MiCare are many. Some highlights I'm sure she would be most proud of include:

- Changing the Drugs and Poisons legislation to allow and under Nurse Board requirements to allowing Enrolled Nurses to do medication in Victoria in 1991.
- Introducing the Eden Alternative philosophy in 2001 and seeing the difference this made to the emotional and spiritual needs of our Elders and clients as well as our employees. Petra was a founding Board Member and past Chairperson of Eden-in-Oz.
- In 2006 assisting Prins Willem Alexander Aged Care (NRVAQ) transition out of sanctions, starting a long association with PWA. Petra became a Board Member in Qld (NRVAQ) the same year.
- Navigating the successful integration of New Hope Foundation (2016) and Netherlands Retirement Village Association Queensland (2017) with MiCare to establish linkages into broader migrant communities and achieving significant efficiencies through the synergies that size can provide.
- Serving the broader aged care community for 20 years as a director of the peak body "Leading Aged Serves Victoria" with significant lobbying to raise the awareness of the needs for Culturally Appropriate Care.
- Seeing MiCare recognised both domestically and internationally through numerous awards. In 2006 we won the International Homes and Services Association Award for the Polder Model. In 2013 Petra received a Ridder of Oranje Nassau – the Dutch

Knighthood. In 2006 she was presented with the Jonas Kreveld Award for services to the Dutch Community. Petra also led many international study tours.

- Mentoring and observing staff in their career development. Even when they may have left MiCare, Petra took pride in knowing they were taking with them the values and skills developed at MiCare into other organisations. And of course, welcoming many of them back when they later returned to MiCare.

Much has changed over the 30 years Petra has led MiCare and it's a tribute to her resilience and passion for what MiCare does. She embraced the significant technological advances, kept up to date with the many changes in aged care legislation and moved easily through a workforce that now includes Baby Boomers through to Millennials.

We are all indebted to Petra for the legacy she will leave behind at MiCare. The organisation is in a very strong position and well placed for its next stage of growth and opportunities, based on the rock-solid foundations that Petra built.

We all wish Petra a very long, healthy and fulfilling retirement. She no doubt will spend more time quilting and gardening, and entertaining her extended family, and perhaps some more travel.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Jos van de Ven**