Celebrating midwives creatively

By Belinda Moore

The idea of creating a quilt for display in Ballarat Health Services’ Maternity Unit in Victoria came to surface during a staff lunch break one day in April 2014.

About 15 years ago midwives on staff at the time created a quilt, which can still be viewed in the entrance to the birthing suite today. Since then many more just as creative staff have joined the midwifery team at Ballarat Health Services and so it was thought time to create another quilt to display in Ballarat Health Services’ Maternity Outpatients Department.

The quilting project idea was launched appropriately on International Day of the Midwife 5 May 2014. A group of 23 interested midwifery staff volunteered to work on a beautiful design from a Melbourne quilter, Irene Blanck, who held a quilting workshop for those of us contributing to the quilting project.

The blocks that made up the content of the overall quilt came from two midwives’ personal fabric scrap supplies at home. Once the fabric was sorted the blocks were packaged up and delivered to each of the 23 maternity staff members who wanted to work on this quilt.

Over the next four to five months we all worked on our own blocks. It was so inspiring to see each completed block when handed back as we came to realise just how talented our colleagues were.

Once the blocks came in a few of the quilt contributors got together to piece together the original quilt design. Several staff also worked on putting the borders together. There were so many beautiful examples of fine team work in the production of this quilt, just like when we work as a team in our maternity unit for the women utilising our services.

The idea of incorporating the four seasonal trees into the quilt design came from one midwife who didn’t want to complete a block as she wasn’t a quilter or any other kind of sewer. The idea of these four trees was to include a little about what the maternity unit does on a daily basis, which is care for childbearing women. The four trees represent the cyclical nature of childbirth with each of the four trees representing autumn, winter, spring and summer.

The quote that is found intertwined in one of the borders of the quilt came from the theme of the 2014 International Day of the Midwife – “midwives changing the world one family at a time”. A local quilter from Ballarat, Kerryn Brand, was very kind to complete the wording for our quilt, which further represents the midwifery team’s contribution to this celebration we recognised all of those that helped us with producing this quilt during International Day of the Midwife week, May 2015.

The quilting project idea was presented to the Ballarat Health Services’ Maternity Outpatients Department every day we are constantly reminded by our maternity services. Nothing was too much for this enthusiastic group of men who could see the value in protecting our quilt as much as we did.

Nothing was too much for this community group, particularly for Richard Giles who custom built with his own hands the frame to display our quilt that complimented our quilt magnificently. Richard also went the extra mile to arrange a local glazier business to cut and fit glass to complete the frame and further protect our quilt.

There was no better time than an International Day of the Midwife to celebrate this quilt and thank all those that helped us with producing it. So from one International Day of the Midwife to another we celebrated the unveiling of this beautiful quilter from Ballarat, the Grampians region, while also acknowledging the kind expertise from those who guided us with producing this amazing quilt.

Although the celebration of this quilt was during just one week of May, as we walk past this amazing quilt in the Maternity Outpatients Department every day we are constantly reminded by why we continue to do what we do as midwives for women and their families.