



Ellen and Catherine Nicholson with Joanne Millar



Cousins Joanne and Alison were honoured to be present

## Senior Australian *of the Year*

ON A WARM SPRING DAY at Government House in Sydney, on 13 November this year, a morning tea was held for all New South Wales Australian of the Year nominees. Dr Catherine Hamlin was nominated as New South Wales' Senior Australian of the Year. Dr Hamlin's niece, Joanne Millar attended, along with Ellen and Catherine Nicholson, as representatives for Dr Hamlin. For Joanne, it was a once in a lifetime experience.

"Governor David Hurley and his wife Linda told us 'to make ourselves at home and enjoy the grand rooms and beautiful gardens of Government House.' He emphasised how proud he was of the great people in his state, in diverse fields, who are making such an impact for good, in their communities and worldwide. Over 2000 individuals were put forward to the NSW Australia Day Council and just 18 were shortlisted. They were all very humbled to reach this stage of the process," Joanne said.

Later that day, a cocktail reception was held at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Circular Quay for the announcement of the winners. Joanne attended this event with her cousins Mr Philip Nicholson and Dr Alison Morgan. "During the evening all finalists received a certificate from the Premier of New

South Wales, Gladys Berejiklian", she said. "Dr Hamlin has been in Ethiopia for over 50 years. Though now retired from surgery, she remains a tremendous inspiration to staff; past and present; doctors all over Africa and beyond; students from the Hamlin College of Midwives; all who visit the hospital, in Addis Ababa and the regional centres; and of course, her family, some of whom have also chosen medicine as a vocation. Over 50,000 women have had their lives changed due to the dedication of the staff of Hamlin Fistula hospital. Thousands more women have delivered their babies safely in Government Health Centres around the country, having been attended by the well trained and very capable Hamlin Midwives. We were thrilled when Dr Hamlin was announced the New South Wales Senior Australian of the Year! Dr Alison Morgan who accepted this award on her behalf said that Dr Hamlin would be humbled by this recognition, and delighted that this will raise even more awareness of this life-changing work and the impact it is having in her adopted country, Ethiopia. In our own country where all too often it is bad or sad news which hits the headlines, it is wonderful to recognise and celebrate the achievements of ordinary Australians doing their best for the good of others."

# Hospital Alphabet, Letter by

By Joanne Millar



Daniel started as a driver, but now he is the transport manager!



Patients enjoying their embroidery

We all know that ABC could stand for the Amazing, Boundless Compassion which typifies the work of the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital in Ethiopia. But what about DEFG? To share some more of this wonderful institution, I propose that these letters stand for Drivers, Embroidery, Flowers and Guards.

The hospital drivers are very important people. They drive patients and supplies to and from the regional hospitals, patients to specialists, and cured patients to bus stops as they begin their journeys home. They collect special guests from the airport, take Dr Hamlin to and from worship, drive the student midwives, and perform general errands, amongst a multitude of other tasks! One of the first drivers was Daniel, a nephew of Mamitu. He was Dr Hamlin's preferred driver for many years and always careful and considerate. He has worked hard and is now in charge of this

essential part of hospital operations. When you are in Addis traffic with one of these very capable drivers, you know you are in safe hands indeed.

Once you are there, if you stroll around the hospital, you will see patients busily stitching beautiful embroidered designs on table runners and tablecloths. Their work is of a high standard, thanks to the tuition and oversight of the craft teacher for many years, Zawditu. Before commencing their project, the patients sew a sample piece, usually a flower. This is so they can master the stitches, correct tension, as well as all the other

delicate touches needed to produce work of such high quality. The finished works can then be purchased from the hospital craft shop. On her departure, the patient is given the total value of her products sold. What a help this is! She may be able to purchase basic necessities, start a small business, or have the funds for school supplies for her children. She returns home not only healed, but equipped with some savings, confidence, skills, and the prospect of a better future.

Dr Hamlin once wrote in a personal letter, "I believe that gardens are created by man but inspired by God, for man's enjoyment... A garden can speak to our hearts and restore peace to a disturbed mind. I find as soon as our patients arrive, their downcast eyes, their depression and their whole outlook on life begins to change. I have seen some who stand gazing at a beautiful rose or a tall delphinium, obviously such beauty is so seldom



# Letter



Dr Hamlin's  
garden



Dr Hamlin's  
faithful guard

seen in their lives, and so our gardens adds to their wellbeing." There are indeed many blooms filling the garden beds and on shrubs. The roses are of course lovely and are often picked to beautify the chapel, offices, and Dr Hamlin's house. Personally, I love the range of fuchsias. There are many varieties, single and double, in colours of white, pink, purple, and red. Their delicate flowers are like a company of ballerinas dancing in the breeze. The gardens are lovingly tended by a team of gardeners who certainly take pride in their work and know how beneficial a beautiful garden is for the patients and staff.

As you approach either of the hospital entrances you will meet the cheerful guards. They are not armed, but there to watch over the comings and goings of the patients, staff, and visitors and to open gates if you are arriving or leaving at night. When it is cold, you may see them wearing

one of the colourful knitted shawls; they know a good thing when they see it! Dr Hamlin also has a guard in her compound each night to keep watch. It is an honoured position to guard such a lady!

The Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital is now a large operational machine. It has many parts aside from the medical aspects and all are needed to help make it run well. Central to all must be the love, care and compassion shown to the patients of course; but it is also shown in abundance to the hospital employees.

Dr Hamlin has led by example for the last 42 years at this hospital. She continues to be an inspiration and example to us all.





# Dr Hamlin's nephew Dr David Knox has been visiting his aunt in Ethiopia.

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Every morning she appears walking up from her house through the oasis-like gardens she has created around the hospital. She is supported by a stick on one side and on the other by Mamete the ex-patient who became a self taught fistula surgeon (now retired). Stopping frequently to admire the roses and to give advice about the garden they reach the main building where she is greeted with joy by all the staff that pass. She is 93 and suffering from some of the common problems of old age but is looking forward to turning 94 in January! She is interested in every staff member and the continuing work of the hospital even though her questions are often repeated.

Later over a cup of coffee at her house I am offered “squashed fly” biscuits (a family favourite) and we talk about children and grandchildren. She tells me she is planning to spend Christmas this year with the Bambi family. Mr Bambi established one of the first supermarkets in Addis and his family. The Bambis are her old friends from the Emperor's days.

She is called ‘Emaye’ the revered and loved mother, the unifying figure that gives each and every staff member inspiration for their work.

We wish her a Happy Christmas for this year, and a 94th Happy Birthday for January, next year! We pray she will have many more of each to celebrate.

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