

A guardian angel

Laura Pond | March 08, 2016 | JOONDALUP TIMES

THE grief of losing her baby grandson motivated Margaret Lay (88) to help thousands of parents and babies.

The Kingsley resident volunteered at King Edward Memorial Hospital (KEMH) for 38 years, providing support to families following the loss of a baby, as well as clothes, blankets and essentials to disadvantaged women and newborns.

She recently retired from her position as volunteer co-ordinator but said it had been a “magic journey”.

Mrs Lay wanted to help after her eldest son and his wife’s baby died soon after birth.

The traumatic birth left her daughter-in-law in a coma for several days and as her son had to return to their farm, she was left to liaise with the funeral director and organise the arrangements for her grandson’s burial.

“When I came away from there, I was devastated,” she said.

“I had nobody around me and no-one to tell me what to do.

“I kept thinking about the other people who lost babies who didn’t have help either.”

Back in Perth, Mrs Lay visited KEMH to volunteer her services.

“I needed something to do so I decided to go in and see if I could do something to help.”

Mrs Lay put together ‘grief packs’ to provide information, support and comfort to families through the hospital’s Perinatal Loss Service and established a group of volunteers who knit and sew clothing for baby bundles that are given to parents in need.

“It started with some of my friends and then their friends and it grew,” she said.

“It was anything and everything the hospital needed over the different areas and we kept that going all those years.”

There are now more than 300 volunteers who contribute to about 700 baby packs per year.

“Not everyone is able to provide for themselves in one way or another and that shouldn’t have to impact on the babies that come into this world,” she said.

Mrs Lay said she got immense satisfaction and pleasure from her role.

“When I look at the final result, I think that is reward in itself,” she said.

“It’s been an enormous piece of my life and I’ve loved it all and I feel very proud of what it’s achieved.”

