

Five decades of care

JESSICA WILLARD

jessica.willard@examiner.com.au



WHEN Kathryn Fox commenced her nursing training at St Lukes she was just 16 years old and straight out of high school.

Next week the 73-year-old will retire after a career spanning 56 years, and all at the one hospital.

In that time she has cared for thousands of patients. And while she might not remember all of their names, she said many of the stories remained with her.

"I can still remember a particular patient, in a room, back when I was training," she said. "I was straight out of school, no experience and was suddenly confronted with all sorts of things - so it stays with you.

"Throughout my career, I have always reflected on whether I did enough, or whether I could have done more, but I'd like to think I have always done my best.

"I have always concentrated on my work, and doing my work well."

Born on King Island, Mrs Fox moved to Launceston when she was 10, but says she never set out to become a nurse. Rather, she always thought she would end up teaching - until she didn't.

"I was always going to be a teacher, until my last year at school. But I have no idea why I changed my mind,"

she said.

"But I chose nursing and that was that."

A clinical nurse, Mrs Fox dabbled in a number of specialities throughout her career including her "first love" of surgery.

But it was as a recovery nurse that she said she found the most fulfillment.

"I like the patient contact and the one-on-one communication," she said.

"It's where I liked being, with the patient and working with them to a stable condition. It's where I can see I am making a real difference."

Next week will be Mrs Fox's last one on the job and after more than five decades, including navigating the COVID-19 pandemic, she said the time was right.

"I've just had enough and I also wanted to go while I still felt like I could do my job well," she said.

Calvary St Lukes clinical nurse manager Garry Stratton said Mrs Fox's lengthy career was a rare one, and a credit to her work ethic.

"I can't think of any other nurses who would have worked for 56 years," he said.

"She will leave a big hole. Here at St Lukes, we are a very tight team and very supportive of one another.

"We will all miss her contribution to this workplace greatly and her career really is an achievement she and this hospital should be proud of."

With no official plans for her retirement, Mrs Fox said she was looking forward to some time to herself.

"It's been busy. It's not easy working full-time, shift work and maintaining a family. I know I won't be idle for long though."



ACHIEVEMENT: After more than five decades as a nurse at St Lukes Hospital, Kathryn Fox will retire next week. **Picture:** Jessica Willard