



BALLARAT
HOSPICE
CARE INC.
Home Based Palliative Care

2023–24 Annual Report



**Thinking ahead...
a new
strategic plan**



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**BALLARAT
HOSPICE
CARE INC.**
Home Based Palliative Care

From our Board Chair and CEO

The 2023/24 Financial Year has been a significant 12 months for Ballarat Hospice Care Inc. (BHCI) While every year of operation is significant for a community-based, not-for-profit organisation like Ballarat Hospice Care Inc.; this past reporting year has definitely felt like one of transition. Not so much a transition from the old to the new, but certainly a strong focus on the future, as we sense the environment in which we operate changing rapidly. Of course with that change comes a need to respond and we are confident our response has been comprehensive.

Examples of transition and change over the financial year are:

2023 – 2027 Nurses Enterprise Agreement – the negotiating period for the 2023 – 2027 BHCI Nurses Enterprise Agreement commenced on February 13th 2023 and, concluded with the Fair Work Commission formally approving the Enterprise Agreement on August 14th 2023 and the new Agreement taking effect 7 days later, from August 21st 2023. This very detailed negotiation process with the nursing team has resulted in a new Enterprise Agreement that supports improvements to career development opportunities through an enhanced classification structure, increases to base salaries at all levels with all Nurses moving to a higher classification in addition to annual salary increment increases and enhanced conditions and entitlements in line with entitlements for hospital-based nurses. The new

Enterprise Agreement has also facilitated a change to a 7-day, extended hours roster and changes to our After Hours and On Call nursing arrangements that have combined to improve the work/life balance for our Nursing team without compromising our exceptional after-hours support for our patients and their families.

Significant Board Renewal – the 2023/24 Financial Year has seen significant changes at the Board level in line with our Board Renewal strategy. At last year's AGM 5 of our long-serving Directors; Stephen Lewis (21 years of service), David Leach (14 years), Neale Gribble (11 years), Sandra Marston (8 years) and Mandy Macdonald (3 Years) all retired and 3 new Directors; Sarah Byrne, Sandra Campbell and Ross Phillips, were formally endorsed.

Staff retirements and recruitment – over the last financial year we have also experienced changes in our staff with the retirements of Debbie Hubble (Casual Specialist Palliative Care Nurse, 9 years of service) and Michelle MacGillivray (Community Engagement Manager, 4 years). We also welcomed new recruits Specialist Palliative Care Nurses Christine Henderson in (May 2024) and Meg Spencer in (May 2024). In addition, Gemma Kelly joined us in (June 2024) as Communications and Engagement Coordinator and Brian Harrison in (May 2024) as a casual Stores and Equipment Assistant.

Transition to web-based systems for major organisational functions – we have continued to review all internal systems and procedures to find opportunities to replace outdated, manual and time-consuming processes with contemporary, automated and web-based systems where appropriate. An example of major advancement in this space includes transitioning from paper-based, manual processing of all HR, Rostering and Payroll functions to an outsourced, fully managed, web-based solution called Employment Hero. Apart from the efficiencies gained in outsourcing management of our HR and Payroll processes the transition to Employment Hero also means that staff can access and manage their HR, rostering, timesheets, leave requests and payroll details via a mobile phone app 24/7 and from any location. Other examples of transitions to web and app-based applications include the provision of employee support and wellbeing programs through Converge International for our Employee Assistance Program and Headspace for employee health and wellbeing support.

Increasing service demand (numbers & complexity) – our health system and local partner health agencies, particularly hospitals, have continued to experience increasing demand strain post-COVID with significant workforce and State government budget stress which subsequently flow onto workload impacts for BHCI. This continuing transition in service demand has manifested not so much in an increased number of referrals or patient numbers for BHCI but anecdotally; it appears patients are generally referred to BHCI later in later stages of their illness progression, and thus requiring support that is more complex and time-consuming. We have continued to consider and implement changes to our service model to adjust to this transition.

In the context of managing the impacts of this period of transition, we have also had an opportunity to complete a thorough process of reviewing our current and future organisational priorities through the development of a new BHCI Strategic Plan for the period 2024 – 28.

We have been fortunate to engage the services of Claire Edwards (TAG Health) to guide us through the rigorous process of identifying where we have been and, importantly, where we want to focus our energies in the years ahead. Claire has been a shining light in bringing clarity to what can be made a complex and at times onerous process. From engaging with our Board to proactive engagement with our employees and partner organisations, Claire has assisted us in developing a clear and concise Strategic Plan that will provide us with focus and clarity over the next 4 years.

In considering the most critical components of success, both in the context of the history of BHCI and also regarding the goals of our new Strategic Plan we are of the view that success is ultimately due to one single aspect...our people.

While we often refer to the great qualities of our People (Directors, Staff & Volunteers) it is timely to think in more detail about the specific qualities that define the people, our people, who make BHCI the 'special and unique' palliative care organisation it is so widely regarded as. To varying degrees, ALL of our PEOPLE demonstrate the behaviours of leaders. To more accurately define these qualities we are drawn to the writing of Cameron Schwab (ref:)

To a staff member of the BHCI team, all demonstrate degrees of the following attributes of leadership:

Our people:

- Are committed learners. Our people take responsibility for their personal development in the context of the team and the organisation
- Consistently set high expectations of themselves and behave to those expectations. They do the right thing, even when it's hard
- Have high functional capability. Know their role, play their role, as leaders and skilled technicians
- Understand that it is not just what they bring to the team, it is what they are prepared to do for the team that counts

Having achieved the above, our People embrace the notion of leaders as teachers, understanding their influence, and honouring their role by coaching and mentoring self-responsibility. When a team of people demonstrating such qualities come together then the result is invariably a successful environment of personal and professional development for which each individual takes responsibility and shares ownership, knowing better people make better leaders and thus stronger organisations. For BHCI and our aspirations for continued growth and success, it will be the aggregation of daily, individual contributions of our high-performing people that will be the key.

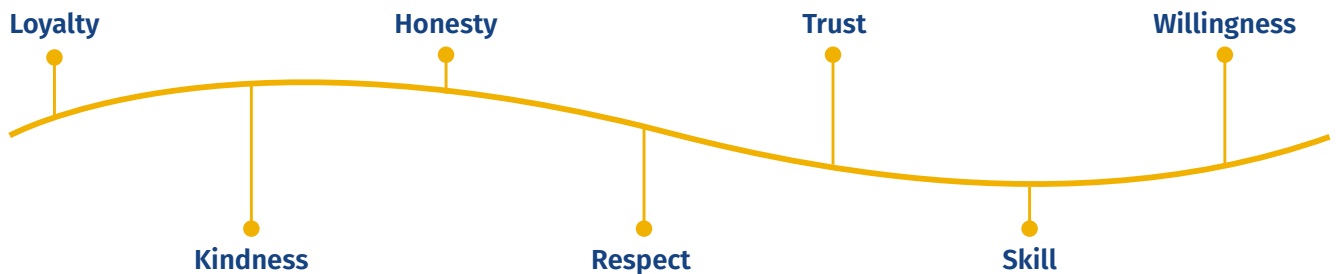
Malcolm Weaver
Board Chair

Andrew Howard
Chief Executive Officer

Who we are

We are a team of specialist palliative care nurses, supportive care advisors, compassionate administration, support staff and volunteers. Established by community members in 1985, our not for profit organisation has guided patients, and supported carers and families to live, die and grieve well.

Our Values



Vision

To offer our community a specialist palliative care service focused on end of life issues and care.

Mission

Ballarat Hospice Care, using a skilled, interdisciplinary team approach, facilitates with compassion, the provision of home-based, holistic palliative and end of life care.

Our aims

1. To provide specialist palliative care equitably and responsively within available resources.
2. To promote palliative care values within the community.

Philosophy

We believe that

- the care of patients must acknowledge the whole person in their social context
- grief, loss and death are a part of life
- suffering can be alleviated by providing support relevant to patients and carers, which reflects their choices
- all patients and carers are entitled to open, honest communication, which respects choices and autonomy
- caring for ourselves and each other enables us to care for others
- bereavement support is an essential element in supporting people after significant loss.

Our new strategic goals

Our clients and community

Continue to improve, adapt and enhance our person-centred care.

This objective is the core of Ballarat Hospice Care's services. Continuing to improve, adapt and grow our person centred care is central to achieving our vision. We will provide excellent, individualised specialist palliative care that puts clients and families at the centre of decisions.

Our people

Build exceptional teams, united as one, embracing the future.

In order to provide excellent care, we know we need to invest in ourselves. Through this objective, we will ensure that we create a dynamic and innovative workforce that continues to possess the right skills, knowledge, expertise, attributes and tools to provide exceptional, compassionate care.

Our partners

Work with our partners to extend our influence and improve understanding and support for patients and families.

We will use our position to influence the agenda on service delivery for palliative and end-of-life care.

We will work in collaboration with existing partners, while also seeking and developing new partnerships to extend our influence and to improve understanding and support for everyone in our community affected by life-limiting illness.

Our business

Secure financial, operational and environmental sustainability for the organisation.

As more people will need our services in the future, we need to make sure we can continue to deliver over the long term. This means increasing our sources of income, especially those that are the most reliable.

Our business development portfolio will grow income through new streams of work and other business opportunities. We will continue to drive cost efficiency and ensure best use of our financial resources.

Who we are

Ballarat Hospice Care provides excellence in palliative and end-of-life care for clients and their families.

We support people who have a diagnosis that is life limiting – this includes respiratory and heart diseases, neurological conditions as well as cancers and other illnesses.

We are a team of specialist palliative care nurses, supportive care advisors, compassionate administration, support staff and volunteers. Established by community members in 1985, our not for profit organisation has guided patients, and supported carers and families to live, die and grieve well.

Our care seeks to improve quality of life in various ways, for example; we support and advise on symptom control, provide emotional, bereavement and spiritual care, social care and we provide personal care when it is needed at the end of life.

Our care

Ballarat Hospice Care is an independent not-for-profit organisation dedicated to providing specialist care and unwavering support to individuals facing life-limiting illnesses.

Our mission is to help people navigate through the toughest times imaginable, ensuring they can cherish every moment with their loved ones.

As a beacon of compassion in Ballarat, we extend our services to all individuals in need. Each year, we proudly support nearly 200 clients per month and their families across an expansive area of Ballarat and surrounds. Our commitment is to empower individuals, making each day the best it can be, and creating opportunities for precious moments to be shared with family and friends.

At Ballarat Hospice Care, we understand the importance of comfort and familiarity during challenging times. That's why we prioritise providing care in the comforting surroundings of clients' homes.

The dedication of our wonderful team of nurses, health and social care professionals, as well as our support staff, has been nothing short of remarkable. They have exemplified the true spirit of compassion and commitment, going above and beyond to ensure the delivery of high quality effective and compassionate care.

As we introduce our strategy, we reaffirm our pledge to remain at the forefront of compassionate end-of-life care, continually evolving to meet the ever-changing needs of our community. Together, we embark on a journey of care, empathy, and hope, ensuring that no-one faces the challenges of life-limiting illnesses alone.

Acknowledgement and inclusion

We

- acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land where we live and work, the Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung people. We pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples
- are committed to ensuring our services are safe, respectful, equitable and inclusive to all people, their carers and families
- welcome and work with people of every age, health status, race, ability, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, culture, linguistic background, and financial status.





Our Board of Governance

Patron

Rob Knowles AO

Chair

Malcolm Weaver

Diploma of Business, former Chartered Accountant

Deputy Chair

Meredith Johnson

Bachelor Economics

Treasurer

Sandra Campbell

B.Bus, Member Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand

Members

Gabrielle Kirby

Bachelor Health Science, Graduate Diploma Palliative & Gerontic Care, Master Health Management

Geoff Russell

B.A. (Sociology), Grad. Dip. Bus. Admin., Dip. Fin. Services. GAICD

Mandy Macdonald (Retired March 2024)

Diploma of Human Resource Management, Diploma of OH&S, Diploma of Management

Ross Phillips

MB.BS, FANZCA

Sarah Byrne

JD, B.Bus(Law)

Acknowledging retiring Board Members

Stephen Lewis

Stephen first volunteered for the Board in 2002 and held the position of Treasurer from 2003-2019. Stephen resigned at the 2023 Annual General Meeting.

Stephen was instrumental in developing a financial plan as Treasurer for the Board. This enabled Ballarat Hospice Care to survive particularly in financial terms for the period from 2003 – 2008. His contributions during the planning for the Palliative Care Hub deserve special mention as his financial experience and expertise ensured that we planned to ensure the ongoing financial viability of Ballarat Hospice Care. As long standing officers of the Board, Stephen, Geoff Russell together with former CEO Carita Clancy formed a close bond based on honesty and trust and belief in the future of Ballarat Hospice Care within our community.

David Leach

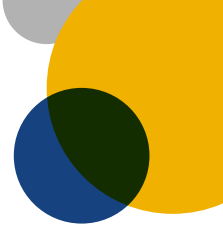
David first volunteered for the Board in 2009 and resigned at the 2023 Annual General Meeting.

David was a wonderful contributor to the Board over the years in spirituality as it relates to life and living. David is a keen advocate to ensure ethics played a vital part of Board planning. David is a deep thinker who on many occasions thought about decisions from a place that others had not considered.

Neale Gribble

Neale volunteered for the Board in 2012 and resigned at the 2023 Annual General Meeting.

Neale has an in depth knowledge of all matters legal and risk. He has significant community contacts and is a strategic thinker; always ready to contribute to debate and planning.



Sandra Marston

Sandra volunteered for the Board in 2015 and resigned prior to the 2023 Annual General Meeting. Sandra held the position of Treasurer from 2020-2023.

Sandra is a consummate professional who took over the Treasurer role from Stephen Lewis. Sandra always kept a keen eye for trends either in income or expenditure and never hesitated in drilling down on those matters and reporting back to the Board to keep everyone well informed and across the finances.

Mandy Macdonald

Mandy volunteered for the Board in 2021 and resigned in March 2024.

In a time of significant board change, Mandy was an active and insightful participant in discussions at both committee and board level, and she has left a positive legacy. Her wide corporate experience allowed her to provide wise counsel as a member of the subcommittee responsible for the recruitment of our current CEO Andrew Howard. Mandy was a significant contributor to the working group tasked with the responsibility of establishing protocols and procedures for ongoing Board renewal.

Responsible Ministers and Officers

For the reporting period:

- The Hon. Mary-Anne Thomas, MP
- Professor Euan Wallace, Secretary Department of Health
- Theresa Williamson, Manager End of Life Care and Palliative Services, Program Improvement – Health Services and Ageing, System Improvement Group, Commissioning and System Improvement Division, Department of Health

Further acknowledgements

We do not work in isolation; as always we rely on support, assistance and guidance from our partners and we thank them.

- Grampians Regional Palliative Care Team
- Grampians Region Palliative Care Consortium
- General Practitioners
- Specialists
- Grampians Health and in particular Gandarra Palliative Care Unit
- St John of God Hospital
- Central Highlands Rural Health
- Palliative Care Services at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne
- Hepburn Health Services
- City of Ballarat
- Hepburn Shire
- Golden Plains Shire
- Moorabool Shire
- Pyrenees Shire
- Victorian State Government particularly the Department of Health
- Western Victoria Primary Health Network
- Grampians Public Health Unit
- PalCare
- Ballarat Community Health
- Committee for Ballarat
- Future Shapers Program
- Peace of Mind Foundation
- Compassionate Ballarat
- Ballarat Cemeteries Trust
- Ballarat Foundation
- Palliative Care Outcomes Collaboration

Recognition

This year we particularly acknowledge and celebrate our staff members who have contributed

15 years of service

- **Melanie (Mel) Pither, Clinical Care Coordinator**

Mel is a highly valued member of Ballarat Hospice Care. She possesses natural attributes of integrity, kindness, respect and conscientiousness. She is a quiet, gentle, thoughtful and unassuming leader with great resilience and emotional intelligence. These qualities are supported by a wealth of clinical and organisational knowledge, skills and expertise in addition to her many academic achievements. Mel is someone who is always learning and striving for improvement to achieve the best outcomes for patients, their carers, families and the organisation.

Mel's work ethic and leadership have been instrumental through many organisational challenges which include the planning and transition to our present purpose built facility, accommodating a rapid increase in patient numbers, managing the COVID pandemic, and, more recently, her leadership through the 2023 Nurses EA negotiations, the transition to our current extended hours 7 day Nursing Roster and the transition to an outsourced, web based Roster and Payroll program. Mel is someone who is not only highly respected with the Ballarat Hospice Care team, but also in the wider palliative care community.

We are grateful for the profound impact Mel has on not only the patients, families and carers but also her palliative care colleagues and the organisation.

10 years of service

- **Katrina (Trine) Tansey, Supportive Care**

Trine transitioned to Ballarat Hospice Care as a clinical nurse from Gandarra where she was an experienced Oncology nurse. Over the last few years Trine has been an exceptional Bereavement Counsellor within the Supportive Care team.

Trine delivers comfort and care with professionalism, warmth and humanity. Her humour and "effervescent" disposition are a delight to everyone she interacts with; this includes patients, carers, bereaved family members, her colleagues and our health and support service partners in care. Trine is credited with being able to bring a smile to peoples' faces; many who thought they may not smile again.

We are thankful for Trine's high level of professionalism and passion to support patients and their families and carers during end of life care and in bereavement.

5 years of service

- **Simon Murphy, Specialist Palliative Care Nurse**

Simon is a valued and respected member of the Ballarat Hospice Care team. He is an experienced registered nurse, with his career encompassing working in a rich variety of health care and palliative care settings. When he joined Ballarat Hospice Care he and his family were returning to the region after spending many years living and working in the Northern Territory.

Simon's gentle, unassuming and respectful interactions with patients and their families are much appreciated and welcomed. So often patients and their families feel the health care system is reactive, rushed and impersonal. Simon's ability to give patients time, to give patients the opportunity to ask questions and his ability to listen to them & their concerns are fundamental elements to the way he makes patients feel safe in the care of Ballarat Hospice Care. Simon is always willing to share his skills and knowledge with the team, and he provides great support to new staff, especially those new to palliative care.

We are grateful for Simon's wisdom and the compassion he brings to our team and most importantly to the patients and their families he cares for.

- **Diane Nimmo, Strategic Projects and Research Manager**

Diane is a highly skilled and dedicated professional who consistently sets a very high standard of excellence across all of the projects she has supported. Diane's ability to navigate complex challenges with unassuming insight and poise, combined with her positive, 'can do' attitude and her naturally collaborative approach have made a significant impact on BHCI project successes over the last 5 years.

Diane is a highly respected professional not just within our team but also across the Regional palliative care sector. We look forward to many more years of her contributions as we adapt and strengthen our services in response to ever changing community needs and increasing service demands.



Pictured above: Some of the Ballarat Hospice Care team

Our Staff

Chief Executive Officer
Andrew Howard

Operations Manager
Katherine Brumby

Medical Director
Dr David Brumley OAM

Finance Manager
Kerrie Smith

Quality and Compliance Manager
Karen Taylor

Strategic Projects and Research Manager
Diane Nimmo

Volunteer Manager
Maree Povey

Communication And Engagement Coordinator
Gemma Kelly (Welcomed June 2024)

Clinical Coordinators
Vicky Smith
Melanie Pither

Specialist Palliative Care Nurses
Valerie Armenante

Sarah Brennan
Leanne Burns
Louise Cooke
Christine Henderson (Welcomed May 2024)
Janine Lynch
Mandy Martin
Mandy Sharp
Meg Spencer (Welcomed May 2024)
Simon Murphy
Stacie Nawodycz
Leanne Mouritzen
Vicky Smith

Supportive Care Coordinator
Angela Anderson

Supportive Care Advisors
Claire Wilson
Joanne Lang
Katrina Tansey

Administration
Lee Ellis
Caryl Whitfield

Op Shop Coordinator
Roger Simkin

Stores Coordinator
Peter Jones

Equipment & Maintenance
Max Watson
Brian Harrison (Welcomed May 2024)

Volunteer Milestones

We appreciate and honour the support, willingness and dedication of our volunteers. This year we acknowledge

5 years of service

- Heather R

10 years of service

- Ann S
- Carol Ta
- Carol To
- Jan C
- Laureen R
- Marg M
- Sue C
- Susie C

20 years of service

- Les V
- Pam S

Farewells

All at Ballarat Hospice Care value the contributions of

- Debbie Hubble – Specialist Palliative Care Nurse (Retired July 2023)
- Michelle MacGillivray – Community Engagement Manager (Retired May 2024)

We also acknowledge the following four volunteers and sincerely thank them for their service

- Barrie M
- Carole T
- Graham P
- Joan J



Our Volunteers

Over the past year, our volunteers have continued to play an essential role in extending the care and support we provide to patients and the community. From offering companionship and practical assistance to raising funds and providing administrative and operational support, their commitment has been invaluable. Their dedication, kindness, skill, and willingness have strengthened Ballarat Hospice Care's ability to deliver exceptional care and support. We are incredibly grateful for the dedication and hard work of our volunteers, whose efforts continue to make a significant impact.

Volunteer statistics

- Number of Active Volunteers - 88, including the Board members
- Recruitment - 16 new volunteers, including 3 Board members
- Resignations - 8 volunteers, including 4 Board members.

New Volunteers

- Anne R
- Robert M
- Kelly-Ann R
- Jo Black
- Jim M
- Maureen R
- Tracey K
- Grant K
- Wipasri C
- Debbie M
- Kaye V
- Greg P
- Wendy M

Impact

- Supportive Care Volunteers supported 30 patients with 296 visits and 40 phone calls, providing social connection, emotional support and respite to patients and their carers
- Op Shop volunteers raised \$154,767 gross revenue
- Fleet volunteers - completed the equivalent of 440 car details, keeping our vehicles in the best possible condition

- Equipment cleaning - 20 sessions, freeing up the equipment and stores team to do more deliveries to patients
- Board of Governance - attended 34 governance meetings (includes committee meetings) to provide leadership and strategic oversight to the organisation
- Staff Wellbeing - Phyl provided 25 mediation sessions for staff, supporting staff wellbeing
- Gardening - Graeme and Deb spent 175 hours caring for and maintaining our beautiful garden
- Administration volunteers assisted by writing bereavement cards, preparing nurses information packs, mail outs, preparing staff newsletters, archiving and providing invaluable support to the Quality and Compliance Manager leading up to accreditation. As a result staff reported feeling less pressured, well supported and enjoyed working alongside the volunteers
- Volunteers contributed to the Afterhours PalCare Project. They not only supported BHCI as an organisation and BHCI's patients and their carers, they also supported the three other community palliative care services and their patients and carers in the Grampians region; thereby assisting BHCI to strengthen their leadership role in the region
- Total hours contributed by volunteers across all programs is 9732, which equates to a dollar value of \$291,960 (@ \$30 per hour).

Events

- Volunteer End of Year BBQ - December 2023
- Volunteer Week Morning Tea - May 2024
- Op Shop 10-Year Anniversary Celebration - March 19, 2024, held at the Hub, a special morning tea
- Advance Care Planning Week - Volunteers assisted the Supportive Care Team at a community stand in the Sebastopol Library, fostering engagement and meaningful conversations.

Training

- Two volunteer information sessions
- Two volunteer induction sessions
- Two palliative care volunteer training sessions
- Op Shop Volunteers had the opportunity to attend a “Dealing with Challenging Situations” training session in November 2023
- “Managing Challenging Interactions” training by Lifeline Ballarat in May 2024
- Patient Biography Training – 2024.

Announcing a new program

The Patient Biography Program launched in 2024. The program offers our patients an opportunity to share their life stories, experiences, and wisdom. By documenting their journeys, we honour their legacy and provide a therapeutic outlet for reflection. The program involves several volunteer roles, including biographers, editors, proof-readers, and IT support, with 12 volunteers receiving comprehensive training. Thanks to a community grant from the City of Ballarat, we acquired 10 biographer kits and produced new patient volunteer brochure. Prior to the launch, we trialled two BHCI patient biographies, integrating valuable insights into volunteer training and program development.

Extended hours for Supportive Care Volunteers

Our Supportive Care Volunteer Program now offer support outside regular business hours, providing more flexibility and timely assistance to our patients and their carers.

The new Supportive Care Volunteer hours are:

- Weekdays - 7:30 am - 8:30 pm
- Weekends and Public Holidays - 9:00 am - 8:30 pm.

The extended hours allow our volunteers to provide companionship, assist with tasks, and offer respite support for carers at more convenient times for patients and their carers.

Op Shop

- Celebrated it's 10 year anniversary
- Extended trading hours by opening on Saturday mornings in 2024.



Annual Volunteer Survey

The Annual Volunteer Survey is a crucial tool for understanding and enhancing the volunteer experience at Ballarat Hospice Care. This year, the survey provided valuable feedback on various aspects of volunteer engagement and satisfaction. The insights gathered guide future improvements, ensuring our volunteers continue to feel supported and appreciated.

Feedback from the survey:

- ‘Thank you for being a respectful and appreciative place in which to volunteer!’
- ‘I always feel appreciated’
- ‘The organisation is so warm and welcoming and a beautiful place to volunteer. I enjoy the friendships that have been made and the support that is given.’
- ‘I enjoy being a small part of an amazingly well organised, vital community service.’

Maree Povey
Volunteer Manager

The Alumni Program

As Ballarat Hospice Care draws close to 40 years of operation, the Board has established an Alumni Association comprised of past Board members, staff and volunteers who have served the organisation for a minimum of five years and are current financial members.

The purpose is to collectively maintain and share the history of Ballarat Hospice Care with each other, to establish a Life Membership process and make recommendations for consideration by the Board.

In addition, it is a forum where Ballarat Hospice Care might leverage on the experience of long serving past staff, volunteers and Board members to ensure that their collective skills, knowledge and experience are not lost to the organisation. The program also provides an opportunity for those who are interested, to maintain an association with Ballarat Hospice Care and promote the organisation to the wider community. Further, it provides an ability for members to make comment or suggestions on present programs and service delivery.

It is planned that in the near future, a dedicated secure web portal will be established to contain resources relevant to the Alumni program.

The Alumni will meet twice annually as a way of keeping members appraised of current and proposed future developments in palliative care. The inaugural meeting was held in May 2024.

Geoff Russell
Board member

Key service statistics



Referrals



Admissions



Discharges



Deaths



Home deaths



Individual patients
(average per month)



Total patients
annually

Clinical service

62%

Patients died in their place of choice
2023-2024

1,267

Average number of monthly contacts
(including after hours contacts)

2,128

After hours contacts
(total after-hours contacts)

15,206

Total contacts for 2023-24
(including after-hours contacts)



From Our Operations Manager

We continue to be incredibly proud of the integrated way Ballarat Hospice Care works across nursing, supportive care and equipment loan to meet the needs of our patients and their families. Patients' needs are foremost in every decision that we make.

All aspects of service delivery follow the lead of the patient on what matters most to them and what their care needs are. It is patient centred care delivered in a seamless way by the entire team. The patient may not know if you are a nurse, a supportive care team member or a member of the equipment team; the important thing is that their care needs will be met.

We feel hopeful and optimistic about the future of our service delivery and our ability to continue to provide exemplary care to our patients, carers and their families. We have a committed, skilled and highly professional workforce who are dedicated to providing high quality care. We will continue to experience a changing health landscape and we are well positioned to seize opportunities for service improvement and innovation over the next 12 months. We are committed to the health and wellbeing of the entire team and the maintenance of a strong and supportive workplace culture.

Katherine Brumby
Operations Manager



Supportive Care

The Supportive Care Team continued to work closely with patients and families in a range of ways. This includes practical support to navigate Centrelink and referral to appropriate services to manage legal issues through to providing respectful and powerful emotional and psychosocial support.

We have noticed over time the increasing complexity of supportive care work. This may be due to the number of patients who are being referred to Ballarat Hospice Care with advanced disease and other complex chronic disease issues, as well as the increased stress on families due to the current social-economic challenges faced in the community more generally. This means that in these cases patients have not yet considered legal and financial matters when they become patients of our service, resulting in an intense period and level of the work undertaken with patients and their families to

manage a range of important personal issues. This situation can place pressure on our team. We are extremely fortunate that we have a fully staffed, very experienced and professional Supportive Care team. Our team members have a professional background of social work and have extensive experience in varied fields of practice.

We continue to provide a high level of bereavement support which includes face-to-face and phone support. We have found that in line with the increasing complexity of needs we are seeing an increase in complex grief experience where loved ones are in a heightened state of grief for longer periods of time. Providing support to bereaved family members and carers is an important element of the support we provide. Many patients tell us that they are relieved to know that we will support and be in contact with their family or carers after they have died. Peoples' lives are rich, full, and often complex.

Key to our successful work in Supportive Care is the collaborative work we undertake with other providers, such as NDIS providers, home care package providers and case managers, District Nursing supports, mental health support services and domestic violence services.

In summary what guides our supportive care work is responding to the needs of our patients and their carers in a timely way; working with our health and social service partners, while always maintaining a compassionate professional approach.



Nursing

This year we recruited additional nurses to our service in an extremely competitive employment environment. We have been fortunate with our 2023-24 new recruits; they possess a mix of both experienced palliative care nursing experience in addition to very experienced general nurses with less experience of community palliative care. Importantly, they all came to us with a deep understanding of how our values guide our work.

The skills and experience of the nursing team continues to grow and develop. A new initiative this year has been the introduction of nursing portfolios. This is where nurses take a lead role in an area, examples include neurological disorders, discharge planning and indigenous health. Nurses are tasked with gathering resources and sharing their knowledge with the team so collectively the entire nursing cohort benefits. Over time the nurses with a portfolio will lead, mentor and share their knowledge through the delivery of relevant in-services to the clinical team.

Another exciting development has been the implementation of a seven day nursing roster, enabling us to provide care and support to patients early or later in the day and therefore reduce demand on after-hours support. This support is crucially important for patients who may be deteriorating or experiencing an acute episode of their disease. It means that we are supporting these patients promptly; a positive outcome for both patients and our nursing team.

Our nursing team provided community palliative care to patients in their homes where many patients had complex medical needs along with complex family dynamics. While patients are referred to our service with a diagnosis that limits their life; sitting alongside that can be a myriad of other chronic disease issues which impact on the complexity of care required. We are fortunate with the skill, professionalism, knowledge and care of our clinical team. They manage the ever-changing challenges to deliver high quality palliative care in the home.

The clinical team continue to highly value collaborative work with the Grampians Regional Palliative Care Team (GRPCT) and Gandarra (in patient palliative care), Grampians Health to ensure that patients' needs are being met and seamless care is provided to ensure optimal patient care is received. This means that while we have patients who wish to be cared for at home, at times they require symptom management review which dictates their care be provided by the GRPCT and or Gandarra in a completely transparent and seamless way. Our team is fully committed to continuing to embrace shared work with both GRPCT and Gandarra into the future and we value their expertise to provide excellent patient-centred care.

Equipment/Stores

An ongoing, essential and highly valued part of our service delivery is equipment loan. This aspect of our service ensures patients maintain their independence and safety while being cared for at home. The efficient and responsive delivery and collection of an enormous range of equipment by our team is part of our service. The equipment offered varies from small items such as small hand held fans to large items such as hospital beds, electric recliners and oxygen concentrators.

All equipment provided is appreciated by patients and their carers. Our work in this area is highly regarded by the many Occupational Therapists we work with from other services such as Grampians Health and St John of God Hospital, where

we have shared patients. Once again collaboration and good relationships are key to the seamless experience of health care delivery for our patients.

Our equipment is continually audited and reviewed and when necessary new equipment is purchased and older equipment replaced. To assist with this ongoing expense we are deeply grateful for the donations received throughout the year to assist with equipment purchase.

Katherine Brumby
Operations Manager

Quality

Following on from the successful reaccreditation in 2023 of both the Quality Innovation Council (QIC) and the Rainbow Tick Standards we continue to monitor and implement actions identified in our quality work plans. Our processes are on track and we look forward to the support provided by QIP our accreditation provider to achieve a positive mid cycle accreditation review in November 2024.

We have focused on clinical safety and clinical reporting through the strengthening of the Clinical Governance Committee with professional development being a key

component. The Risk Committee has been responsive in identifying, monitoring and analysing risks particularly in relation to cyber security and workforce safety, ensuring effective controls and treatment strategies are in place. Legislative compliance monitoring is a continual process and this combined with working within the Department of Health guidelines keeps our staff, volunteers, patients and their families safe.

Karen Taylor
Quality and Compliance Manager

Carer Recognition

Ballarat Hospice Care takes all practical measures to ensure that its employees and agents have an awareness and understanding of the care relationship principles in relation to the Carer Recognition Act 2012 (Vic) and the Statement for Australian Carers in the Carer Recognition Act 2010 (Cth).

Child Safety

Ballarat Hospice Care is committed to creating and maintaining a child safe organisation where protecting children and preventing and responding to child abuse is embedded in the everyday thinking and practice of all management, employees, volunteers and contractors. Ballarat Hospice Care has zero tolerance for child abuse.

Statement of Attestation: - Risk Management Compliance

Ballarat Hospice Care is required to annually attest to its compliance with the mandatory requirements of the Victorian Government Risk Management Framework (VGRMF August 2020). Ballarat Hospice Care has completed the process and undertaken an audit against the supplied checklist to support this attestation and has recorded any findings of non-compliance to ensure continual improvement of the risk management function.

In addition, Ballarat Hospice Care has met the accreditation requirements of the Quality Improvement Council's Health and Community Services Standards 7th Edition without any recommendations for Standard 1.6 Risk Management. Appropriate internal controls exist to review and address integrity, fraud and corruption risks.

Website

Ballarathospicecare.org.au





Research and Service Improvement

Grampians After-hours PalCare Project

In the 2023-24 financial year, Ballarat Hospice Care continued to lead the Grampians After-Hours PalCare Project. This initiative, spearheaded by the Grampians Region Palliative Care Consortium (GRPCC) and co-funded by the Western Victoria Primary Health Network (WVPHN) and GRPCC, involved five health services in the Grampians region providing specialist palliative care. The project, initiated in 2021, aimed to enhance after-hours support for palliative care patients who wished to be cared for and die at home. This was in response to the need for community palliative care services to meet Department of Health funding expectations and ensure the sustainability of BHCI's existing after-hours service.

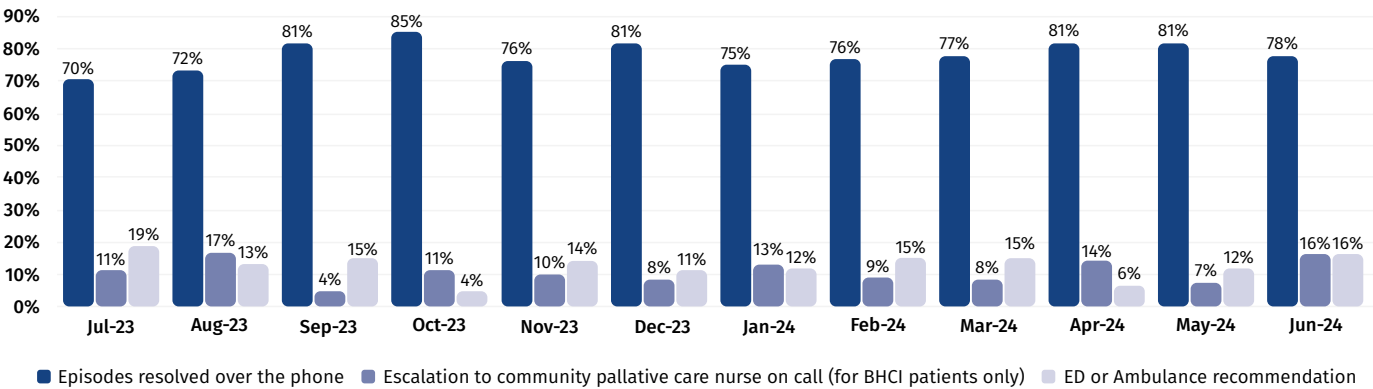
The impact of the service was significant, benefiting both patients and healthcare providers. The service reduced the need for hospital visits, alleviated pressure on emergency services, and allowed patients to remain at home. Moreover, it mitigated the physical and psychological strain on BHCI nurses, who previously handled all after-hours calls. The Caritas Christi Triage service reduced nurse burnout, safeguarded well-being, and led to a notable improvement in nurse retention and overall satisfaction. BHCI nurses expressed that the reduced after-hours burden allowed them to provide more focused, quality care to patients in need.

The focus in 2023-24 was on finalizing the project's deliverables while ensuring the continuation of the newly implemented after-hours service model. This included ongoing data collection, detailed evaluation, and the development of a robust business case to secure long-term sustainability. The pilot highlighted the need for a Telehealth-based after-hours service, with specialist palliative care nurses addressing patient needs across the region.

Key Outcomes

- Telehealth-based After-Hours Support: St Vincent's Hospital Caritas Christi Afterhours Phone Triage Service triaged 619 episodes across the Grampians region on behalf of community palliative care services.
- Resolution Rates: 78% of calls were resolved directly by the Caritas Afterhours Coordinator over the phone.
- Emergency Escalations: 12% of cases required advice to call an ambulance or present to the Emergency Department.
- BHCI-Specific Triage: 10% of calls were escalated to BHCI's Nurse on Call, specifically for BHCI-registered patients.

Without the Caritas Christi Afterhours Phone Triage Service, many of the 619 episodes would have burdened GP services, Ambulance Victoria, and Emergency Departments, all of which already face significant demands. By avoiding unnecessary emergency calls, the service contributed to better resource management across the healthcare system.



Funding from WVPHN and GRPCC is set to conclude on June 30, 2024. To continue this model and meet Department of Health funding guidelines for community palliative care, ongoing financial support from member services is essential. A strong business case has been developed, advocating for the continued provision of after-hours specialist palliative care in the community to uphold best-practice, patient-centred care.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Anna Gray, Manager GRPCC and the GRPCC members for their continued support, collaboration, and the trust placed in us to lead this vital project.

Comprehensive Palliative Care in Aged Care Project

In January 2023, Ballarat Hospice Care received a \$150,000 grant from the Victorian Department of Health to improve palliative care access for residents in aged care facilities. The funding was part of a broader initiative under the Comprehensive Palliative Care in Aged Care (CPCiAC) national project agreement, a 2018 Commonwealth budget commitment designed to enhance palliative and end-of-life care outcomes for older Australians living in residential aged care.

The project, conducted in collaboration with the Grampians Region Palliative Care Team (GRPCT), GRPCC, and Central Highlands Rural Health (CHRH), aimed to develop and pilot a comprehensive framework to support aged care staff in the early identification of palliative care needs. Early identification is critical for managing symptoms, improving the quality of life for residents, and guiding appropriate clinical responses. Pilot sites included residential aged care homes in Creswick, Daylesford, and Trentham.

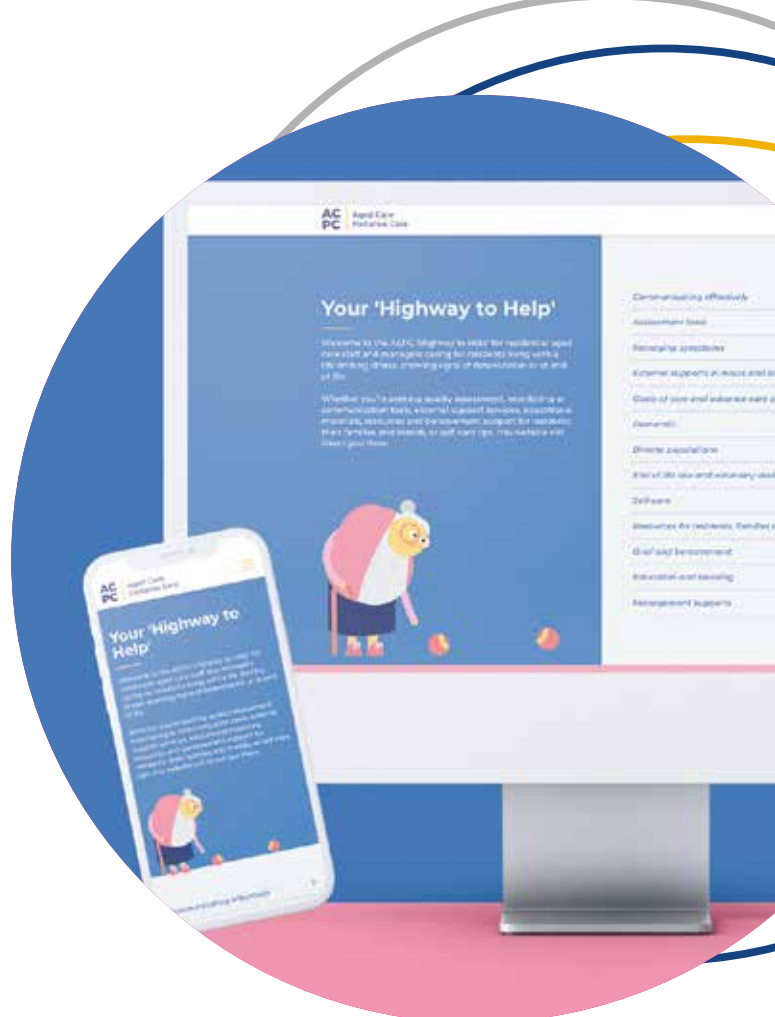
Key Achievements

- **Palliative Care Education:** BHCI delivered palliative care education through the PEPA Aged Care program, equipping residential aged care staff with the knowledge and skills to provide quality end-of-life care.
- **Evidence-Based Framework:** An evidence-based framework was developed to identify and respond to palliative care needs early. This included:
 - **Symptom Assessment Tools:** Aged care staff were provided with systematic tools for symptom assessment and monitoring.
 - **'Needs Rounds':** Specialist palliative care advice was made available to aged care staff through regular "Needs Rounds," led by a specialist palliative care nurse. These rounds, conducted both face-to-face and via telehealth, provided ongoing, case-based education for staff.
 - **Referral Pathways:** A streamlined referral pathway for patients with complex symptoms ensured timely access to specialist palliative care.
 - **Implementation Support:** A preliminary implementation guide was created to help other residential aged care facilities adopt the CPCiAC model, along with governance guidelines for palliative and end-of-life care.
 - **Aged Care Palliative Care (AC-PC) Website:** One of the project's major successes was the creation of the AC-PC website (www.ac-pc.com.au). This platform serves as a curated hub of palliative care resources, offering tools, educational materials, guidelines, and links to support services for residential aged care staff.

Evaluation and Future Plans

The project's evaluation showed that all developed resources were well received across the three pilot sites, with aged care staff reporting improvements in their ability to identify and manage palliative care needs early. The framework's effectiveness in improving resident outcomes was also widely acknowledged.

Building on the outcomes of the 2023-24 project, BHCI has been provided with further funding to extend the CPCiAC project in 2024-25. The extension will focus on expanding the model to additional residential aged care homes in the Grampians region, tailoring the framework to meet local needs and leveraging existing resources.



Highlight: Aged Care Palliative Care Website (AC-PC)

A key highlight of the project is the development of the AC-PC website. This resource, designed to streamline access to essential palliative care information, was met with enthusiastic support far beyond the project participants. BHCI CEO Andrew Howard, who has a background in managing residential aged care, emphasized the significance of the website:

"I have never come across such a complete, comprehensive, and up-to-date one-stop resource for supporting comprehensive palliative care in residential aged care. I am confident that Residential Aged Care Registered Nurses and Clinical Managers will find great benefit from having access to this resource."

BHCI extends sincere thanks to the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care and the Victorian Department of Health for funding and supporting this project. We also acknowledge the contributions of the project Steering Committee, GRPCT, CHRH and the GRPCC aged care staff, whose commitment and enthusiasm were vital to the success of the project.

Special thanks go to BHCI Specialist Palliative Care Nurse Val Armenante, whose leadership as CPCiAC Project Officer in 2023-24 was instrumental in driving the project's success.

Diane Nimmo

Strategic Projects and Research Manager

Donations

We are sincerely grateful to all our donors for their generous support throughout the 2023-2024 financial year. Your contributions help us continue providing compassionate care to our community.

If any adjustments are needed, please reach out so we can ensure the list is accurate and complete.

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The full financial report is available on the website.





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