



*San Palliative Care Team Dr Gill Rothwell, Julie Edwards, Dawn Hooper and Kerrie Kneen*

# Living well to the end

**“Palliative care means living actively with a diagnosis. It’s not about dying.”**

For San Community Palliative Care Nurse Practitioners Dawn Hooper and Julie Edwards, caring for patients with a life-limiting illness can be incredibly rewarding. Patients and families report they feel supported and prepared.

Started in 2012 thanks to funding from a generous donor, Dawn and Julie’s specialist skills enable them to support the care patients with a life-limiting illness receive from their medical specialists.

“We work with patients when they are at their most vulnerable and when their landscape is changing quite quickly” says Dawn.

“Patients linked to us early on generally do better since as we get to know and work with them, they trust us and when things change for them and they develop symptoms, we’ll often be the first people they call.”

Julie and Dawn see an average of 170 patients a year in the community and can assess symptoms, diagnose, prescribe medication, and order extra tests and care services quickly, and at the time terminally ill patients need it most.

Patients’ carers often find this particularly beneficial says Julie.

“Looking after someone can be really tiring so a lot of our work is around supporting the families, and anticipating their needs. San Palliative Care Service can provide help in the hospital or at home - it’s their choice.”

Australia-wide, access to support that enables choice seems challenged with national statistics indicating only 14% of the 70% who would prefer end-of-life care at home, achieve it.

Since the start of the San service however, in-hospital surveys indicate a 30% reduction in end-of-life admissions to the San, with over 50% of patients able to stay at home.

“To be yourself, to sit, to talk, to listen, that’s what people want” Julie says.

“People want someone to talk to, someone that cares and someone to understand from experience.”

Dawn agrees.

“It’s about helping patients, it’s about what they are going through, making sure they are informed, have support and are able to make their own choices about what they want and where they would like to be cared for, so that when the time comes, they know it will happen with dignity.

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*The love and the care that we see between families at these times ... well, it really is humbling. Our jobs are really a privilege.”*

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***This is a free service to San patients funded thanks to a generous donor. Like to help with the continuation of this program? Contact Karen Gair at the San Foundation on 94879405 or [foundation@sah.org.au](mailto:foundation@sah.org.au)***



76 year old Deirdre Burbury was cared for by the San’s Community Palliative Care service after a stroke and diagnosis with colon cancer.

“I had no idea what I was doing” says daughter Rochelle.

“I had never dealt with cancer before and had no idea what Palliative Care was or how it worked.

The service made us feel very comfortable with the process.

It made us less fearful.”

*Deirdre and Rochelle Burbury*