

## Diane Wright OAM



Diane Wright OAM has worked in palliative care over 20 years. In this time, Diane has had a significant impact on the community, founding and establishing Anam Cara House Hospices in both Geelong and Colac.

Palliative care holds a special place in Diane's heart

"I have always had an interest in helping people, which was ignited by something my father would ask me every day from around 12 years old; 'what difference are you going to make in the world today Diane?'"

Early in her career, Diane worked closely with children, first at the Yarra Valley Grammar School and then in Colac, where she implemented the Interchange Program, a not-for-profit organisation that supports children with a disability and provides respite for families.

***"I was the person who would be called in to support families and patients at their end of life. It was privileged work."***

After completing post-graduate studies, she was working as a palliative care counsellor in Geelong where she had a vision to create a new facility that would provide 'home-like care and respite.'

"I saw hundreds of people across the five-year period I was working in Geelong and I noticed there was a common theme that kept recurring; that most people wanted to remain at home and be with their families at the end of life, however family members and carers were becoming burnt out so providing that care was challenging."

"I became quite passionate about it and realised there was a gap in service and that people needed short term respite for carers to recharge their batteries so they could continue providing care at home."

Motivated by the growing need and driven by her passion for community, Diane went on to found and establish Anam Cara House in Geelong and Colac in 2007 and 2011 respectively.

“Anam Cara was instigated by the community, for the community and provides care for people affected by a life limiting illness.”

“We have had the privilege to work with so many incredible people and support them in their end of life journey for which I am incredibly grateful.”

***“I believe in the sanctity of life. I see it as a sacred journey and everyone should have the opportunity for best possible end of life care.”***

There are a number of career highlights for Diane, but in particular it is the people she has had the pleasure of working with and getting to know across her time in the sector, including colleagues, patients and their families.

“Working with patients’ families is an experience I find very humbling. Helping people at the end of their life will always be one of the driving forces to my work.”

“As well as working alongside and learning from some incredible people including Dr Bruce Rumbold, Dr Eric Fairbank AM, Fr Kevin Dillion AM, Professor Sandra Legg, I have had the great privilege of meeting people like Dame Cicely Saunders and Dr Balfour Mount.

“I have also been inspired by many people. One in particular is Dr Sinead Donnelly, who gave me the name Anam Cara. Sinead is from Ireland originally and created a documentary with her brother on “Living and dying in Ireland”. They referenced the term ‘anam cara’, from John Donohue which means soul friend.”

Diane also said Palliative Care Victoria has been integral in the development of palliative care services across regional area, including Anam Cara House.

“Palliative Care Victoria, as the peak body organisation for palliative care, is outstanding, right across our state. I acknowledge the work of the board and staff. They set high standards and expectations for the provision of care through advocacy, widespread delivery of information to our community, education and general assistance to other agencies.”

***“Living and dying is a natural process, and everyone deserves the best possible care right up until the end of their life.”***

When looking at palliative care into the future, Diane expressed that there is a strong need to improve access to the service and continue offering options for people, whether that be home care, care in an aged care facility or hospital and respite care.

“We need to work hard to ensure that best possible palliative care is provided to all Australians, regardless of their age, culture, diversity, economic or situation. We need to

deliver that care in a timely but skillful and compassionate manner, in the place of their choice.”

“I think as a society we are measured by how we care for our frail and chronically ill people, and I believe by compassionately providing good palliative care, and addressing the needs of patients and their carers, we are showing the value we place on life.”

