

# 40 STORIES IN 40 YEARS

## Anne Lane



Anne Lane never planned for a career in palliative care. She trained in a nurse apprentice program in Colac, south-west of Melbourne, before working for the Royal District Nursing Service the Royal Children's Hospital.

However, the need for a new challenge was what led Anne step away from the Children's and apply for a job working in a regional palliative care program. She intended to only stay for two years, but ended up staying for 22 years, retiring 10 years ago.

"I was doing a bereavement support program when I saw an advertisement for the job in the Wimmera. I initially thought it away, but thought about it and thought I might as well give it go."

"I was coming up to 40 years old, and I kept thinking to myself 'am I going to stay in Melbourne and keep nursing, or

should I take a chance and be a little adventurous? I chose the latter."

***"Palliative care gives people options in terms of their care, and I saw my role as providing that type of support."***

In 1990, Anne made the move and started working for the Wimmera Base Hospital, who auspiced a local palliative care program.

"I went from working with medical staff all around me to a small regional town where I had no one. While the program was part of Wimmera Base Hospital, it was run by a community committee and we had absolutely nothing."

"There was one person to service an area of 35,000 square kilometres, so it had to be consultative program. My role was to teach all the nurses out in the smaller hospitals and support them. I would also family assessments and refer them to the local nurses.

“There were no educational opportunities available then, but I was lucky that I had really good support from two or three other medical practitioners who were working in the field. If I got stuck with anything they would help out.”

***“Palliative care allows people to live their lives as full as they can in spite of their condition.”***

“It was really difficult in the beginning. We received some money from the government, but it wasn’t enough. We relied heavily on donations from philanthropic trusts, as well as local community members who would fundraise for us. This paid for all the equipment loaned out to patients and families who were caring for people at home or in hospital.”

Despite the many long days on the road, Anne’s passion for palliative care extended outside of work hours, often ‘doing a day of work and then doing another day of work in the evening’.

“I did a lot of night teaching for other nurses. I’d drive down the highway to Nhill or Rainbow, wherever I was needed, and teach the nurses about end of life care. I also did a lot of community education to church groups, Rotary Clubs, Lions Clubs.”

She was also heavily involved in Palliative Care Victoria, ‘going back and forward from Horsham to Melbourne every fortnight’ for various meetings and events.

***“Palliative care would be nowhere without Palliative Care Victoria.”***

While Anne recalls her time working in palliative care very fondly, she does recognise the many challenges the sector has faced, particularly in the regions. One of the main challenges has always been funding which contributes to fewer staff and an inability for proper training.

“We relied so heavily on volunteers in the beginning. I had a volunteer secretary for quite a while before we had enough money to employ one part time. Gradually the extra money came in from the government, so I had enough money to actually get an extra worker two or three days a week.”

“Over the years, things greatly improved with the funding. While I was still working, the hospital built a haematology day centre at the hospital, and were able to bring on more staff to cater for the growing need for palliative care.”

“While I’ve not been involved in palliative care for ten years, I can identify that the local community seems to have a better understanding of what palliative care is. However, it is vital going forward that there is funding to support the community in any way they need to be supported.”