

## Carole Cracknall



As a palliative care volunteer for Ballarat Hospice Care Inc, Carole Cracknall plays a very special part in the patient's end of life journey.

She joined as a carer in 2009, and for the last 12 years has specialised in providing support for not only the patient, but their loved ones.

Her passion for volunteering came after seeing how 'marvellous' the hospice staff were in helping care for her husband, who passed away in 2000.

"They were wonderfully caring. I didn't need that much help, but knowing they were always there, just a phone call away was so reassuring."

"One moment I remember fondly was when my husband was towards the end of his life, he was well past eating, and a nurse came in and asked if he was able to

eat. He said 'no, but I'd love some roast lamb'. The next month, the palliative care doctor came and asked him how his roast lamb was. I couldn't believe it, the extra effort they gave to make sure patients and family members felt well cared for."

"I decided then and there, when I retired, I wanted to give back to palliative care because they were so wonderful to us. So, a couple years after I retired I went up to Ballarat Hospice and applied to be a part of the volunteer program and I'm still here now."

***"Ballarat Hospice Inc. not only care for the patient, but for their volunteers."***

Carole gracefully admits that she 'is a changed person' because of volunteering.

“My late husband was a priest, so we had done this sort of caring through the church. For me, it’s an absolute privilege to be accepted into people lives at such a sensitive time.

‘I’ve met the loveliest people. I’ve had dozens of patients, and they are all different, and they are all beautiful, and I think I’ve learnt something from every single one of them.”

“I cared for a 100-year-old lady who was just gorgeous. I’ve lived in Ballarat my whole life, and so had she, so we were able to take a walk down memory lane together. We could relate so well that way.”

“While my position is about volunteering with patients, volunteering can be much more than physical and emotional care. You can work in the opportunity shops (op shops) or help fundraise. We even have people who volunteer to walk the pets of our patients.”

Carole also touched on the importance of volunteer work not only for the patient, but for the wellbeing of their carer too.

“It’s important support. Just knowing that there’s someone there for the carer takes such a load off their mind. It gives the patient someone to talk to when they don’t want to add another burden to their loved ones. A lot of the time, people can’t talk to each other but they can be honest with you, and that’s what I try to encourage.”

“I worked with the family of a little boy who was very unwell, and I was asked to support his mother. We would just go out for coffee, and go shopping, and talk about everyday things. It was a different kind of care, but it was still care.”

“It is so rewarding when a carer rushes up to you in the streets and gives you a hug of gratitude, even ten years after the event.”