

# 40 STORIES IN 40 YEARS

## Ian Millard



Ian Millard is passionate about making a difference to people's lives and has spent many years dedicated to improving quality of life for palliative care patients. He has worked in the healthcare sector for many years, mainly across consulting and clinical settings, and has had an involvement in palliative care since the early days of his career.

"My relationship with palliative care started when I was a Chaplain at the Alfred Hospital. Whilst working there, I was asked to link with the hospital's palliative care consultancy service, which was my first introduction to palliative care."

"In 1999, I got a new role at Melbourne City Mission as a spiritual care worker. I was also employed at Broadmeadows palliative care in the pastoral care division and worked in the inpatient care units."

While working at the Alfred Hospital and Melbourne City Mission, Ian worked very closely with nurses and saw himself attracted to the work they did. So, he decided to make a mid-life career change and moved into nursing.

"I studied part time at Monash University while continuing my work at Melbourne City Mission. I completed my graduate year at St. Vincent's Hospital and worked part time in oncology, hematology and palliative care whilst also being on the nurse bank at Melbourne City Mission. Eventually I decided to take on a full-time role at Melbourne City Mission as a Clinical Nurse Specialist

"A significant part of my role today involves engaging with patients and families to explain our services. It is our job to educate people and many conversations I have with people are to highlight that just because they have been referred to palliative care does not necessarily mean that they will die soon."

For Ian, working in palliative care is all about giving patients and their families the information they require so that they can make an informed choice when it comes to their end of life plans.

“As a palliative care professional, it is important that we don’t make assumptions or judge the decisions made by patients and their families. We should present all of the options and accept that they are making those choices because it’s right for them.”

“I remember someone once saying that we are not interested in a patient’s length of life, in shortening or lengthening their lives. We are here to improve quality of life no matter how long that may be.”

“Each day looks different for our team. I do a lot of clinical as well as practical tasks, such as, educating family re: care, including the giving of injectable medication, having difficult conversations with clients about changes in their symptoms and what that means in the overall projection of their illness, talking to newly referred clients, and organising equipment.”

“We receive a mixture of new referrals from all walks of life. I work with people who have life-altering illnesses, people who are at their end stages of life, as well as families who need support and more information about our service.”

***“The focus of palliative care is to improve quality of life regardless of how long it may be. We help patients and families understand the service and help them make informed and educated decisions.”***

During Ian’s time in the sector he has seen significant changes in palliative care, particularly when it comes to awareness of the service and accessibility.

“What I would still like to see improved is the service more streamlined with a stronger integration and connection between the different services involved with patients in a hospital, home, or inpatient setting.”

“There has certainly been a dramatic change in the patient demographic and the type of terminal illnesses that patients have. Previously it was just cancer patients, but now we have a lot of patients with a non-malignant and other chronic illness.”

“Palliative care has exposed me to a deeper meaning of care. I have met some of the most amazing and wonderful patients and families who have taught me so much and made an impact in my life.”

“There is more to life than just living. Life isn’t just about reaching the end, it’s about the potential for a future that is balanced, surrounded by loved ones, overcoming challenges, always learning and having quality of life, which will be different for everyone.”