

40 STORIES IN 40 YEARS

Tanja Bahro



Tanja Bahro has had a remarkable and diverse career. With an extraordinary history working in various industries, she has always ensured that the outcome of her work creates a difference in people's lives.

Tanja moved to Australia when she was 29. Since then, she has worked in a range of sectors including education and healthcare, across a number of different roles. After working at Family Planning Victoria as the Manager of Education and Training, she made a shift in industry and entered the palliative care sector.

Tanja is now the Consortium Manager for the Southern Metropolitan Palliative Care Consortium and focuses her efforts on implementing Victoria's end of life and

palliative care framework in the region, assisted by strong collaboration with other regions. She also engages in passion projects, such as providing cultural diversity training to the sector.

"Palliative care has always been a strong interest of mine. It was something that really resonated with me after my mother passed away in Germany, without receiving, or having access, to this type of care."

"Working in the sector requires compassion, the ability to listen and understand what people need, an attitude to see the bigger picture, and the drive to create a positive difference and make things happen."

"As a consortium manager, I am involved in cross-sector engagement and offer effective change through proved palliative support to the region. I support the Consortium by fostering alliances and partnerships and strategic planning and development to ensure that people and healthcare bodies receive the correct information about palliative care."

Tanja only entered the sector 13 years ago and since then, she has grown a stronger appreciation for the people working in the industry. There have been several career highlights for Tanja, but it's her colleagues and the people she's met that have been the most memorable aspect of her job.

"One moment that really stands out to me was my first national palliative care conference. I remember all the attendees had gathered in a room and as soon as music came on, everyone started dancing on the stage and on the tables. It was a beautiful time that encapsulated people having the ability to embrace and seize the moment and just enjoy life."

"It is not the responsibility for people to know about palliative care. It's the responsibility of clinicians and acute health in general practice to talk about it and educate communities."

When looking at the sector into the future, Tanja says that there is still a strong need to improve the quality of service and community access to palliative care.

"Since the 80's, palliative care has been more apparent and there is greater awareness around the topic. Palliative care is more evidence based and we have access to more research, but the sector still has a long way to go."

"In general, I believe palliative care is not resourced very well. As a specialist area, the sector is lacking staff and resources due to the funding available. Because of this, we are not always able to fully meet the needs of individual patients."

"I want to see a more prominent ability of clinicians and general health practitioners to be involved in palliative care. Healthcare workers also need to have honest conversations with patients and their families about end-of-life options."

"I am interested to see the progress in providing remote communities and immigrants with better access to palliative care. In my career, I have contributed to improving healthcare accessibility for this demographic."

"A few years ago, I worked on a fantastic project which offered training sessions to educate staff in the general health sector about palliative care. The project was piloted and tested, and it ran in our region with around 300 people who worked in all areas within the industry. The project achieved amazing results with 77% of participants reporting that it changed their practice."

"I want to encourage more clinicians and people who genuinely care about making a difference in people's lives to be more involved in palliative care."

"We all know that the ending of someone's life is a difficult time for everyone involved. Palliative care provision has a ripple effect that serves the patient, their family and impacts the clinicians and other people around them."

"I think if you promote good death, there will be a sad yet peaceful outcome. While a bad experience of death will cause heart ache and trauma."

"I always look to work in areas that people don't talk about. From working in family planning to palliative care, I gained a deeper understanding to the life cycle. To me, life is about enjoying the journey rather than the end."