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Voices

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Spring 2014



Welcome to our Spring edition of Voices

Sandra Larkin, Director of Hospice Services

This twice yearly Voices newsletter provides information about how Ipswich Hospice Care serves the people in the Ipswich and surrounding communities, as well as some of the organisation's recent achievements.

Ipswich Hospice is now in its 21st year and on the 1st October we celebrated our 20th anniversary. Over the past 20 years we have cared for 1200 terminally ill people and their loved ones. For 11 years we have also been providing bereavement services through Hilda's House and in that time over 2500 clients have been supported. Please see page 3 for more about our anniversary celebrations.

I have recently joined the Hospice team as the new Director, taking over the reins from Ros Holloway who was the Director for 8 years. Ros is still working in palliative care in the Ipswich region in a different role and still connected to Hospice.

I have been a Registered Nurse since 1982 and in the last 10 years have worked in aged care in management, quality and project roles. My first aged care position was at a high care facility in Corinda. The average length of stay for older people living in residential aged care is approximately six months. Therefore, aged care services are providing palliative care constantly and it became important for me to learn more and apply best practices to improve palliative care in aged care. In 2010, I managed a project (funded by the Government) to implement model of end of life care across a large residential and community aged care organisation. There were many positive outcomes and my interest and passion in palliative care continued to grow.

I have completed education courses and met other professionals in palliative care in South East Queensland and when I saw the position of Director of Hospice advertised I could not believe how much the position matched what I wanted to do in my career.

Death is an unfortunate reality for us all and it is a sad fact that some of us will not live to a ripe old age. I feel very fortunate to be the new Director and my aim is to continue to, along with all our team members, assist people to die with comfort and dignity.

Most people who come to Hospice have a malignant disease. Over the last two years Hospice has cared for 205 dying people and 15% have been younger than 60. I consider 60 to be young and it is a time in people's lives that they start to retire and enjoy a life where work is not the main focus. It is very sad and confronting when a person's doctor tells them they only have a few months to live. None of us know when our time is up and death and dying are not always discussed or planned for.

Palliative care is defined by the World Health Organisation as "an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problem associated with life-threatening illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification and impeccable assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, physical, psychosocial and spiritual". What is important to remember is that whilst someone may only have a few months to live, living and enjoying life at this time is what palliative care is all about. Hospice strives to assist and empower people to live and participate in what is important to them and their loved ones at this stage of their life.

There have been many improvements in planning for death in Australia over the past decade and it is reassuring to know that the Government is

supporting palliative care services to increase the public's awareness of advance care planning and more people are completing Advance Health Directives, Advance Care Plans and Enduring Powers of Attorney.

Unfortunately Hospice has not seen any increases in Government funding over the past few years. An important part of my job is to continually lobby for more recognition of the importance of palliative care and the service Hospice provides with the hope that more funding will be provided. All contributions to Ipswich Hospice are greatly appreciated by all the people that work, volunteer, visit, stay and die here.

“ I feel very fortunate to be the new Director and my aim is to continue to, along with all our team members, assist people to die with comfort and dignity. ”



Palliative care is such a vital health care service for anyone who has been told they have a life limiting illness.

Drawing from her Strength

During 2013 Rebecca and Peter Weston served as President and Vice-President of the P & C at their children's school, and Rebecca continued to fundraise for the kindergarten all 4 of their children had attended – all while both of them worked in their individual careers. On 27 December they returned home from a 2 week family holiday in New Zealand and Rebecca felt unwell. By 31 December their world had been turned upside down with a terminal diagnosis. At 44, Rebecca was told her very rare and aggressive cancer would give her mere weeks or months to live.

Throughout their marriage Rebecca and Peter deeply valued their family and community connections. None of that changed as they faced the journey ahead practically and with deep love and care for those around them. A week after her diagnosis, they sat down with their children—Lauren (18), Jared (15), Taylah (12), Merrick (6) to have a conversation that no parent dreams of. They explained openly and carefully what was happening and what would come. “We had four children in different ages, stages and with very different personalities. We simply tried to be there for each of them in the ways they needed us to. In many ways we had to fly by the seat of our pants,” explained Peter.

Rebecca was one of those rare people who could truly be counted upon.

She was an organiser and a finisher who made sure that what she did was done well and on time. This journey would be no different. She created a Facebook page to share her journey with those around her and faced the road ahead with immense courage and determination. Peter reflected that “there was no doubt that she was going to do it her way, and when things at times overwhelmed her, it was my job to pick up and take over. Twenty-five years later I'm still awed by the fact that she chose me. I'd do anything for her.”

Chemotherapy proved particularly challenging and resulted in long, unexpected stays in hospital. This wasn't where Rebecca wanted to be, so when it was clear that the chemo wasn't helping she made the decision to end treatment. Alongside this, Rebecca decided for her young family's sake that she didn't want to die at home. It was this decision which brought her to Ipswich Hospice.

Rebecca, Peter and her mother Karen visited Hospice and Rebecca immediately felt at home

enough to say, 'this is it'. Subsequently, Rebecca and Peter brought their children to Hilda's House and as a family had the opportunity to talk about the road ahead and the support that was available to each one of them.

In early June Rebecca was admitted to the Palliative Care Unit at Ipswich General Hospital. She was able to come home briefly to celebrate one of the children's birthdays and again the next day. She realised as she left that this would be her last visit home. By the end of the week, after eating the hospital kiosk out of 'Frosty Fruits', Rebecca came to Hospice. Rebecca's family and friends were able to spend time with her in a place of peace and privacy. “We can't speak highly enough of Hospice and the people there. Hospice made a very rough journey smoother. They couldn't do enough for us. From the kitchen volunteer who offered to make Rebecca whatever she wanted to eat, the support from the Hilda's House team, and the unwavering care and compassion of the nursing team were so very important to us all.”

In keeping with her tradition of trying to get out of hospital on Fridays, so that she could spend her time at home with her family, **Rebecca died peacefully on a Friday afternoon in late June. To the very end she did it her way**



– even at her service there was no coffin it was a wicker casket, that she choose months before.

Family and friends celebrated her life, and several have taken the opportunity to receive support from Hilda's House. Peter noted that neither he nor Rebecca had had counselling prior to this journey, but that he was now proud to say, “I have counselling and I've participated in the Adult Grief Group. It is important to me to do whatever I need to.”

“I'm drawing from Rebecca's strength. She helps me to keep going.”

“We have both always drawn strength from caring for others and listening to them. Getting support is helping me to be able to do this.”

The Weston family lost Rebecca in a very short space of time. When we asked Peter about words of wisdom he suggested that life is to be lived, and that if you've only got a small time left – and who of us ever knows how long we have – it is important to be where you want to be, with the people you care about and to be doing it the best way you can.





Our 20th Birthday!



2014 marks 20 years since Ipswich Hospice Care first opened its doors and began caring for the Ipswich community.

At the Annual General Meeting on the 1st October a special celebration was held to commemorate this wonderful occasion.

In the mid 1980s Dr Hilda des Arts began gathering members of the local community and council to help start the process to build and open what was known then as the Ipswich Hospice Centre. It wasn't until 11th September 1994 that the centre was officially opened and almost another 2 years after that before the centre took its first 24 hours a day, 7 days a week patient.

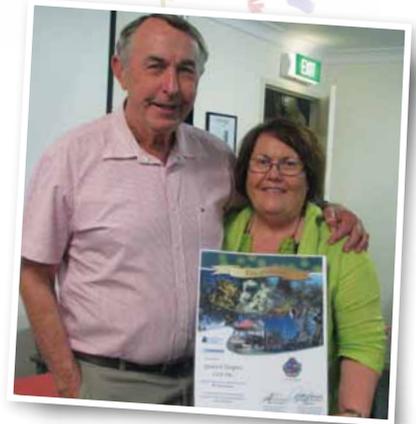
Entering his 15th year as Chairman of the Management Committee, Peter McMahon noted in his speech at the celebrations Hilda's passionate, persuasive manner. Having so little resources in the beginning Hilda was a driven and persistent woman, actively lobbying, networking and building relationships. Hilda had a vision and worked hard to ensure that it would come true.

Since 1994 Hospice has seen many achievements as were noted by the 4 Directors of Hospice Services, Naomi Bevin (nee Cavanaugh), Jan Wilton, Ros Holloway and Sandra Larkin. There was the addition of a 7th guest room, the opening of the

Hospice Cafe and Bargain Centre (both now closed) as well as the current Friends of Hospice Bookshop in the Old Flour Mill. Dr Geoff Mitchell (one of the original Board members) acknowledged in his pre-recorded video, as he was unable to attend, how Hospice pioneered the start of Case Conferences and formed the basis of what is now the National Palliative Care Guideline published by Therapeutic Guidelines.

In 2003 Hospice opened and established Hilda's House which celebrated its 10 year anniversary last year. Opening a bereavement support centre at Hospice was one of Hilda's dreams and has been one of Hospice's greatest achievements. Just this year Hilda's House was awarded Met with Merits by ACHS and was considered one of the leading bereavement support centres in the state. In fact, Hilda's House is the only bereavement specific support centre in South-East Queensland, as was noted by Hilda's House Manager, Grace Harwood in her speech.

Mayoress Janet Pisasale also attended the celebrations and presented Peter McMahon with a certificate on behalf of Mayor Paul Pisasale congratulating Hospice on a successful 20 years of



service. Clinical Care Coordinator, Sharon Ferrar, who has been with our organisation for 19 years, acknowledged the achievements of the past 20 years and had the honour of cutting the butterfly logo shaped cake.

The AGM thanked leaving Management Committee members Melissa Fellows, Cecilee Pilkington and Colleen Freeman, who combined had served more than 30 years on the committee. Hospice was also pleased to welcome Anthony Elmore, Pat Evatt and Linda Hardy to the Management Committee. We have no doubt that they will be an excellent and valuable addition to the Hospice team.

It was also acknowledged throughout the celebration that Ipswich Hospice would not be where it is today without the support of the Ipswich community. Hospice is an achievement that all of Ipswich should be proud and the staff and volunteers would like to thank the community in helping us to provide services for 2 decades. Here's to another 20 years of service!

Not Simply a Kids Toy

It's one thing to know that our loved ones who pass away remain in our hearts, but we also know that sometimes we care for someone right here and now.

The Hilda's House 'OK Bear' is designed to bring comfort to those who are missing someone they love. Our bear tells the 'cuddler' "I'm here for you." The saying was conceived by one of the children in our Kids' Grief Group and as a team we instantly knew that it made sense for the Hilda's House bear.

OK Bear is not only for children. We all know that even adults need someone or something to cuddle sometimes.

Purchase your OK Bear at Hilda's House or Hospice Reception for \$25.



4 Paddock TO PLATE a Great Success!

At the end of July the Ipswich City Rotary Club presented a unique fundraising event in support of Ipswich Hospice Care named Paddock to Plate.

Paddock to Plate hosted 160 guests in the Phoenix Room at Ipswich Girls' Grammar School. JBS Australia, who have supported Ipswich Hospice Care since it first opened in 1994, were one of the major sponsors of this event and provided educational entertainment throughout the three course meal. The fore and hind quarters of beef were brought in and cut by expert JBS butchers to explain the work that JBS Australia do, as well as to describe each slice of meat and the process that takes meat from the paddock and on to the consumer's plate. JBS Australia also donated all the meat that was consumed in the entrée and main courses. Alison Fyfe from River 94.9FM acted as Master of Ceremonies for the night and did a fantastic job!

There are many people to thank for their efforts and support of this event especially:

- Ipswich City Rotary Club particularly Mr Peter McMahon, Mr Thomas Harrys and Mr Greg Forster
- The Prince Alfred Hotel
- Ipswich Girls' Grammar School
- JBS Australia and in particular Mr Anthony Pratt and Mr Brad De Luca
- All raffle prize donors

Without the support and efforts of all these people and businesses this event would not have been the success it was!



Introducing Quinn & Scattini Lawyers

Life rarely goes according to plan. There are any number of ways in which things can and do go off track. And when that happens, the situation is often one where Quinn & Scattini Lawyers can help to pick up the pieces.

These are some of the ways that Quinn & Scattini can help in tragic or difficult situations:

- Injuries, especially in the workplace or in traffic. Katherine McCallum, the Team Leader of Quinn & Scattini's Personal Injuries Team, holds the qualification of Accredited Specialist approved by the Queensland Law Society.
- The passing away of a loved one. As well as assisting with probate and administration of estates, Quinn & Scattini have expertise in contesting wills. Quinn & Scattini conduct cases on a "no win, no fee" basis. Russell Leneham, the Team Leader of Quinn & Scattini's Wills & Estates Team, holds the qualification of Accredited Specialist approved by the Queensland Law Society.
- Family breakdown. Quinn & Scattini's Family Law Team assist with every type of Family Law situation, from amicable agreements to fully contested court disputes involving property or child issues. Tim Ryan, the Team Leader of Quinn & Scattini's Family Law Team, holds the qualification of Accredited Specialist approved by the Queensland Law Society.

Quinn & Scattini are no ordinary law firm. The expertise of their lawyers is second to none. Unlike most suburban law firms, Quinn & Scattini's lawyers do not try to practise in every area of law each one specialises in their chosen area of practice. As well as the areas of practice mentioned above, Quinn & Scattini have lawyers who specialise in Business, Property, Litigation, Criminal and Traffic Law.

Quinn & Scattini Lawyers are pleased to become a Gold Sponsor of Ipswich Hospice Care. Not every sorrow can be prevented. Not every illness can be healed. Not every tragedy can be avoided. But every circumstance can be met with compassion and strength. And when the situation calls for legal advice and representation, Quinn & Scattini have the expertise to help you through it.

Quinn & Scattini have been serving the legal needs of Queenslanders for 40 years, and have served the Ipswich community through a local office for nearly 10 years. They can be contacted by phone on 3202 3177, on the internet at www.qslaw.com.au or simply drop in to see them at 55 Limestone Street, Ipswich.



Every dollar from every donation made to Ipswich Hospice Care will go towards fulfilling the goal to provide the highest quality palliative care for terminally ill people and supporting bereaved people in our community.

4 ways to donate

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