

# NEWSLETTER



*Karuna patient Glenda and her husband Bernie*

## *Spiritual Support*

*Providing comfort and peace during the palliative care journey*

Spirituality plays an integral role in our wellbeing. This is particularly important in palliative care. Especially when an individual's physical, mental, and emotional needs change due to illness. When spiritual care is provided alongside palliative and end of life care, the patient's personal values, beliefs, and practices can be used to alleviate some of the complex emotions that come with a terminal diagnosis.

This is why Karuna's dedicated Community Services team are committed to putting spiritual care at the forefront of conversations with patients and their families.

You might have had the opportunity to read our 2024 Tax Appeal, where we introduced you to some members of our Community Services team. Venerable Tsultrim, Michelle, Dr Wendy and Caroline all fill different roles at Karuna. But they all work closely to ensure a patient's needs are met and Karuna's spiritual foundation remains at the heart of the care we provide.

You may have noticed that spirituality is becoming increasingly important to Australians. A recent study found that 34%\* of Australians who stayed in hospital for more than one week received spiritual or pastoral care. And more than half of Australians (54%)\* indicated they would like to receive spiritual care in the hospital in the future.

As you can tell, spiritual care has helped patients to feel more confident about their treatment process. They also felt supported by those who listened to their hopes and fears, and were comforted by their religious or spiritual beliefs.

Spirituality is where Karuna makes a difference in palliative and end of life care. A vital part of maintaining our spiritual foundation is ensuring all patients and their families have access to our spiritual care services.

For Glenda, a recent Karuna patient, counselling sessions with our Spiritual Care Practitioner Tsultrim brought great comfort and peace of mind throughout her palliative care journey.

Glenda was referred to Karuna in late 2022, following diagnosis of a brain tumour. During her career, Glenda was an aged-care nurse. Glenda saw first-hand how important it was for both the patient and their family to face death as a normal process within their personal value system.

Glenda's husband Bernie said when his wife started meeting with Tsultrim, she already understood that dying well depended on a holistic combination of nursing care and spiritual support.

"Glenda gained great comfort from her conversations with Tsultrim. This was evident because, despite the effects of a brain tumour, she often referred to their discussions and clearly looked forward to each meeting with her," said Bernie.

"Spiritual care was calming for both Glenda and the family; a reminder that death is not simply clinical or medical, but a part of life and something larger than the individual."

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Glenda was a spiritual person in the Christian tradition throughout her life, however the care she sought from Tsultrim was not directly connected to religion.

Glenda was drawn to the spiritual rather than the dogmatic aspects of religion. She valued her conversations with Tsultrim because they allowed her to verbalise life's issues and fears in a safe and comforting environment.

Glenda spent 15 months in Karuna's care before she died peacefully at home, exactly as she wanted. Tsultrim met with Glenda several times over the course of her treatment. She also provided guidance and reassurance to Bernie and their extended family.

"Although it is now several months since Glenda died, Tsultrim occasionally rings to ask me how I am going. That may seem a simple thing, but it is the kind of thoughtful gesture our family truly welcomes from Karuna."

*\*Research study mentioned in this article is The Future of Spiritual Care in Australia, commissioned by the Spiritual Health Association.*

If you are able, please consider making a donation to our 2024 Tax Appeal.

Your support will help more families like Glenda and Bernie access vital spiritual care services whilst they navigate through the palliative and end of life journey.



## Message from the Chief Executive Officer

Dear Karuna supporters,

Welcome to our Winter newsletter.

I hope you have had a chance to read our 2024 Tax Appeal letter, where we introduced you to four members of our incredible Community Services team.

Tsultrim, Michelle, Dr Wendy and Caroline provide essential care to Karuna patients and their families, from medical support to social work and counselling. A vital part of the care they provide is rooted in spirituality: care for the mind, as well as the body.

It is a privilege to expand on our Tax Appeal letter by highlighting the experience of recent Karuna patient Glenda, her husband Bernie, and their family.

Spirituality was important to Glenda in her life, and it was truly touching to hear how much she valued her time with Tsultrim as her illness progressed. We are grateful to Bernie for sharing Glenda's story with us and you.

We recently celebrated Palliative Care Week (19 - 25 May) with a small event at Karuna House. Thank you to all those who joined us to recognise our incredible

team and the importance of spiritual and palliative care.

Over the last few months, our team continued to build connections within the community. This includes presentations given to Brisbane community groups by Sabrina, our Community Fundraising Officer, and a day trip for staff to visit Chenrezig Institute in the Sunshine Coast Hinterland.



As the end of financial year approaches, I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to all of our supporters for their generosity. Your ongoing kindness makes it possible for our team to provide care, and ensures that Karuna patients and their families have access to vital support services when they need it most.

With my sincere appreciation,

Tracey Porst  
Chief Executive Officer | Managing Director  
Karuna Hospice Services

# A visit to *Chenrezig*

On Saturday, 13 April, a group of Karuna staff and their families visited Chenrezig Institute in the Sunshine Coast Hinterland.

Chenrezig is one of the oldest Tibetan Buddhist Centres in the west and the first in Australia. Since its foundation in 1974, it has grown into a dedicated space for Buddhist education and practice. Many people from all over Australia travel to Chenrezig to learn Dharma, meditate, purify and collect merits.

The team enjoyed exploring the beautiful grounds of Chenrezig, including the Garden of Enlightenment memorial gardens, containing Buddhist prayer wheels and memorial stupas. The Garden is also where His Holiness the Dalai Lama spoke in 2011.

Our team also had the chance to visit the Gompa, the spiritual heart of Chenrezig, where programs and events are held.

A highlight of the visit was sharing lunch in the Big Love Café, along with some of Chenrezig's residents, teachers, and volunteers. The group included Venerable Pende Hawter, Karuna's founder; Geshe Phuntsok Tsultrim, the resident Tibetan teacher; Venerable Wangmo Carlyle, the Gompa Manager; Colin Crosbie, Executive Committee Chairman and one of Chenrezig's first students; and Calvin Yu, the institute's current Secretary.

We are very grateful for the time everyone offered us, and for the opportunity to explore Chenrezig's beautiful grounds.



## Reflecting on *Palliative Care Week*

This year, National Palliative Care Week was held from 19 May - 25 May. The week recognises the contributions of palliative care professionals throughout Australia, and is also an important opportunity to educate and empower our communities about end of life care.

We hosted a small event at Karuna House on May 22, to recognise Palliative Care Week and celebrate the 'people at the heart of quality palliative care' – the doctors, nurses, social workers, volunteers, and many others.

Thank you to everyone who joined us on the evening. It was a lovely opportunity to share our appreciation for our Karuna team, and connect with our supporters and others in the palliative care industry.

We would also like to extend our gratitude to Heartfelt Funerals, for gifting us a beautiful lucky door prize.



# Karuna in the community



## Building new connections

Community support is a vital part of Karuna care.

Our Community Fundraising Officer, Sabrina, has been busy connecting with different groups in our community to discuss Karuna's services and fundraising opportunities.

Some of the groups she's met with recently include Rotaract of Brisbane Rivercity, Lions Club of Brisbane Inner North, and The North Pine Branch of the Anglican Mothers Union Australia.

Thank you to the groups who took the time to meet with Sabrina and learn about Karuna.



## Thank you Quilting Queens!

We want to say a huge thank you to the Quilting Queens, who held another stall at Brookside Shopping Centre to raise funds for Karuna.

The stall was held at the end of April, just in time for supporters to purchase Mother's Day gifts,

The sale included a range of gorgeous items, such as quilts, baby blankets, bowl cosies and wallets.

Their efforts raised an incredible total of \$10,444. We are so grateful to the Quilting Queens for their ongoing support of Karuna, in memory of their sister Maureen.

# Save the Date!

## Acting with Patience

Ven. Tsultrim is hosting a morning workshop on the value of cultivating patience in the face of life's obstacles.

For more information please email [events@karuna.org.au](mailto:events@karuna.org.au).

## Annual Memorial Service

Karuna's Annual Memorial service will take place on **Thursday, October 3**.

More information about the event will be sent through shortly.

## FOLLOW KARUNA ON SOCIAL MEDIA!

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