

# **HOSPICE CARE ASSOCIATION OF NORTH-WEST TASMANIA INC.**

## **HISTORY OF THE ASSOCIATION 1985-2010**

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24th November 1999

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14th July 2006

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6th November 2010

### **Mission Statement**

**“Working together to promote  
and provide quality care to  
support people living with a  
life limiting condition”**

Early in 1985, a public meeting was called in Burnie at the Anglican Church Hall to see if there was interest in forming a Hospice Association on the North West Coast.

About 70 people attended with Rev. Eric Cave chairing the meeting and Fr. Jim Smith and Anne Mulnuysen from Hobart Hospice being present. A steering committee was formed to look into the possibility.

On September 18, 1986, the inaugural meeting was held at the Adult education Building in Burnie attended by 51 interested people.

Dr. Ed Simpson spoke on the aims and objectives of Hospice and progress reports describing activities to date of the steering committee were shared. The constitution, which had been drawn up by the committee was adopted at the meeting.

### **Officers elected were:**

**President - Mr Gerry Fulham**  
**Senior Vice-President - Mrs Pat Cherry**  
**Junior Vice President - Rev. Eric Cave**  
**Secretary - Mrs Jenny Williams**  
**Treasurer - Rev. Peter Astley-Bogg**  
**Publicity Officer - Mrs Yvonne Fulham**

### **Committee Members**

**Mrs Christine Guest, Mr Byron Cross, Mrs Norma Jamieson, Mrs Elizabeth Barron and Mr Carl Castellino.**

During ensuing months, this committee met monthly and a grief training course was conducted by Rev. Eric Cave and Nada Franks.

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Publicity with talk-back radio programmes was arranged. Newsletters were published and some money raising functions were held. During this time, Dr. Frank J Reynolds replaced Rev. Eric Cave on the committee.

With further resignations taking place, the committee began to struggle, with only 4-5 members still faithfully trying to make decisions on its direction. The then

acting chairman, Pat Cherry, in talks with Hugh Hiscutt, called a meeting for July 1988 at the Hellyer College to try and re-waken interest in the Hospice objectives.

New blood arrived! Unfortunately, notes on this meeting appear to have been lost but those elected were:

**President - Maureen Knowles**  
**Vice-President - Martin Jones**  
**Secretary - Barbara Gardam**  
**Treasurer/Public Officer - Viki Elphinstone**

The first training programme for volunteers was launched with 20 volunteers completing the course on November 28, 1989.

At the annual meeting in 1990, Mrs Viki Elphinstone was elected as Training Co-ordinator, the first of the Association, while Mrs Lyn Evans was elected as Volunteer Roster Co-ordinator.

From this time onwards, the Hospice Care Association of North West Tasmania has never looked back. Chairmanship and other positions continued to change, with a future steadying of positions leading stability to the Association.

Fund raising began with a good response from members, who also began talking to community groups to bring understanding to those unfamiliar with the concept of Hospice.

In 1990 three members, Viki Elphinstone, Barbara Gardam and Lorraine Edwards attended the first Australian Conference on Hospice and Palliative Care in Adelaide.

In 1991 Hospice Care branched into the Mersey-Leven area and volunteer training was commenced. With this came the need to appoint a Roster Co-ordinator for the area, a position voluntarily filled by Vicki Jeffrey.

Visits were made to the Association for the first National Hospice week in 1992 by Mr. Mal McKissock for a two day seminar and by Professor Norell Lickissc.

In the following years, an annual ball was held as a money raiser, as well as raffles

and button days for much needed funds. Volunteer speakers were also invited to community organisations to raise public awareness of the Association.

Throughout this time, members worked from their own homes and much credit is due to Lyn Evans for the time she gave working from her own home (1989 - 1993). But the number of requests was growing, so in March 1992, the group began looking for office space.

It was with much delight, and after considerable negotiation, Hospice accepted an office in the Jones Street Health complex, and moved there in April 1993. Donations of furniture and equipment were thankfully received from business houses and community organisations.

With the move into its own office, Hospice had met all its short-term goals.

The office proved to be invaluable for the Association, as by now there were 62 volunteers on the coast and about 10 clients on the list at any one time. At this stage, it was essential to look for funding to enable Hospice to continue its services.

The Federal Government Palliative Care Programme funding in 1994 covered a part-time Co-ordinator (Viki Elphinstone) and Clerk (as Lyn Evans was unable to continue), plus the purchase of a car. A grant of \$71,000 was made for the first year, with \$54,000 for the following three years.

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Hospice Care Awareness week began to be held annually with Button Day appeals contributing to still much needed funds. The Button Day fundraiser continues to the present time.

In 1996, the first Memorial Service was held and continues on an annual basis to the present time.

A grant of \$8,500 from the Rural Access Programme in February 1998 allowed expansion of services to encompass the far North West and West Coasts with the

commencement of volunteer training in Smithton, Zeehan and Queenstown. 20 volunteers completed the Circular Head training course and Jan Nes was appointed Roster Co-ordinator. Office staff at the Hospice Care Association moved to new premises at Parkside, Burnie in January 1999, combining space with Palliative Care Nurses and Social workers.

In 2002/2001 funding for the Association became a critical issue and it appeared that the Association could not continue. However eventually a special government grant for 2 years provided operating funds and in 2003 acceptance of a 5 year business plan guaranteed funding for the ensuing 5 years. A new 5 year plan was submitted to ensure continued operation after June 2008.

In May 2002 the Association was given the opportunity to take over the running of the kiosk at the North West Private Hospital which was ably managed by volunteer and Board member, Dianne Fitzgerald for a period of 5 years before handing over the reins to Janet Warner in 2007.

Unfortunately the kiosk was not performing as well as hoped and in October 2008 Hospice ceased its association.

In August 2003 Viki Elphinstone moved on to work with Palliative Care after 15 years of dedicated work, of which 6 years were voluntary. Her contribution cannot be under-estimated in the moving of the Hospice Care Association from a small, committed group of people to a viable business, but nevertheless, still a large group of committed people.

Vicki Jeffrey took over as manager and after a difficult 12 months Gaylene Reid was appointed as Roster Co-ordinator in 2004. Vicki resigned in September 2006 after 15 years with the Association. This was followed by a short period with Gaylene as acting manager until a manager, Liz Leslie was appointed in October. Liz managed the Association for two and half years before leaving in March 2009 at which time Gaylene Reid was appointed manager. She was supported in the office by a volunteer, Helene Atkinson for about 4 months and then Sue Jordan returned in a regular two day a week capacity.

Over the past 25 years the Hospice Association has given over 43,000 voluntary hours of work on the North West and West Coast.

Since training began, 464 volunteers in 34 groups have completed the initial training programme. Currently there are 72 volunteers on the list.

Following the awarding of Life Membership to Patricia Cherry in 1995, the following people have also been awarded the honour:

1999 - Viki Elphinstone

2002 - Verna Smith  
Bett Fishwick

2004 - Stan French  
Barbara Schmidt  
Betty Hinds  
Mary Stevens

2005 - Shirley Wilson

2010 - Cecilie Radford  
Carol O'Neil

2006 - Pam Wright  
Vicki Jeffrey  
Robert Hatto

2007- Damien Thompson  
Ken Moore

2008 - Sue Jordan  
Lyn Alcock  
Kathy Winduss

### **Hospice North West**

In early 2000, a group of interested stakeholders met to look at the feasibility of establishing a Hospice facility on the North West Coast. A working party was formed and after many months of hard work, a proposal was submitted to the State Health Minister outlining the desperate need for such a facility, and the option of establishing it at the North West Private Hospital in Burnie.

In the ensuing years this proposal was pursued relentlessly with changing Health Ministers, other politicians and through publicity in *The Advocate*.

In 2003 the Health Minister commissioned a state-wide Palliative Care Review and in mid 2004 the report "**Palliative Care in Tasmania: current situations and future directions**" was released. This report highlighted what we had known for many years - the North West Coast desperately needed many dedicated Hospice beds. The concept proposed was the "Hospice without Walls" model. The Health Minister promptly publicly announced that 4 beds would be allocated for this purpose at the Mersey Hospital.

In June 2006 Viki Elphinstone was appointed for a 6 month secondment from Palliative Care as Project Officer for the "Scoping Project for Developing a 'Hospice without Walls' Framework for Inpatient Settings" to research and present the model for implementation of these beds.

It was hoped that once this was completed, the beds would be commissioned and then the same model used to implement similar beds at other regional hospitals along the North West Coast.

This model does not supersede our initial plan for a Hospice facility and the dream is to still eventually see the establishment of such a facility on the North West Coast. But for now the "Hospice without Walls" concept is a great start and will provide much needed relief for families coping with a loved one with a terminal illness.

As of October 2010, we still do not have any designated Hospice beds on the Coast. A new \$60 Million Cancer Centre is planned for the North West at the Burnie Hospital.

**"LOOK TO THIS DAY FOR YESTERDAY  
IS BUT A DREAM AND TOMORROW  
IS ONLY A VISION BUT TODAY WELL LIVED  
MAKES EVERY YESTERDAY A DREAM OF HAPPINESS  
AND EVERY TOMORROW A VISION OF HOPE"**

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