

Regina Kendall



Regina Kendall has worked in the healthcare industry for over 32 years, with the past 16 dedicated to palliative care. She is now based in Ballarat and works with the Grampians Regional Palliative Care team in a regional specialist consultancy palliative care position.

“Before starting at the Grampians Regional Palliative Care Team, I worked in oncology and radiation oncology at The Alfred Hospital and Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre. I did quite a bit of palliative care before moving back to Ballarat in 2002.”

“Palliative care is about living and living with the best possible quality of life for whatever time you have left.”

Here, Regina set up the nursing department for the Radiation Oncology Centre before moving into a palliative care role in 2005, working with a community palliative care team and the Grampians Regional Palliative Care team.

Regina explained that the motivation for this transition was because she “missed the holistic care of patients” that sometimes lacks in a traditional healthcare setting.

“I really enjoy the holistic approach to care. There is something about holistic care and the fact it allows you to know the person, not just the disease process, that is really important to me.”

“The Grampians Regional Palliative Care Team cover a large area (over 48,000 square kilometres) that starts at Bacchus Marsh and goes to the South Australian border, along the western corridor. Working in a regional palliative care team, I see patients anywhere – this may be in a hospital, aged care facility, in an outpatient setting or within their homes.”

“I also run an outpatient clinic in the Ballarat Regional Integrated Cancer Centre. Patients that come here are often early referrals, usually requiring symptom management, not

community palliative care, so it's a great early introduction to palliative care for patients. People can really begin to understand what specialist palliative care can offer and understand that it's not all about death and dying."

"It is really important to reframe palliative care from the onset, it gives patients the opportunity to live well."

Regina reflected on how far palliative care has come over the last 40 years, and how it has become more integrated with other medical teams in the early stages rather than just focus on management at the end of a patient's life.

"15 to 20 years ago, people were only referred to palliative care when they were at the end of their life and there were no further treatment options for them."

"What we see now is that palliative care is a partnership with active treatments, particularly with cancer, patients still have active treatment, but their condition is slowly deteriorating. Today, palliative care has greatly expanded into early referrals so we can manage symptoms a lot earlier."

"However, some people, including healthcare providers, still assume that palliative care is in the last days or weeks of a person's life. They have this perception that palliative care can only be done when someone is actively dying, but it is much more than that."

"I don't think palliative care is just our business, I think it's everyone's business."

When talking about the impact Palliative Care Victoria has had over the past 40 years, Regina praised the work of the organisation.

"PCV gives consumers a voice which is vitally important. Plus, they really help with volunteers, education and training. It's another platform in which we can communicate, but also have a stronger consumer focus in care delivery.

When it comes to Regina's career highlights, she said it was the increased awareness of palliative care in the community, and her expanded scope of practice as a Nurse Practitioner which has contributed to increased access to specialist palliative care in her region. With support from organisations like PCV Regina has been able to grow awareness of the palliative care principles across communities and has helped her to grow as a palliative care professional, to which she is grateful.

"The knowledge and growth of palliative care in the last 10-15 years has been great. It has given me an opportunity to engage and work with healthcare professionals in regional areas, ensuring people can live and die well. Being able to enhance better patient care, and to support people who are going through a terminal diagnosis is incredibly rewarding."