



**A MINISTRY OF OUR LADY'S NURSES FOR THE POOR**

June 2017

Dear friends of the Brown Nurses,

It is hard to believe we are already half way through the year and winter is now upon us!

Here at Glebe, we bid farewell to a well-regarded colleague. She'd been on parental leave and unfortunately could not return as planned. Another of our nurses remains gravely ill; we ask that you remember Ruth, and her devoted family, in your prayers.

As I've mentioned in other newsletters, we often find ourselves filling gaps in service and, lately, we've experienced a run of issues relating to palliative care in the community:

One concerned a gentleman who came to Australia from Scotland many years ago but neglected to "regularise" his immigration status. He worked as a self-employed handyman but found himself suddenly without income when he had a stroke last year, and shortly after was diagnosed with cancer. Although ineligible for Government financial benefits, he could at least access some medical treatment through the reciprocal arrangement between Australia and Scotland. However, this did not cover the cost of medications or other services in the home. Thankfully, he had a supportive group of friends (themselves not well off) who were passing the hat at their local club to pay for medications and they later arranged a fundraiser to help pay his rent.

As we discovered, although he had the palliative care team coming in to assess the efficacy of his medications and plan for his eventual move to a hospice, there were other aspects of his care that were not being attended to. For example, his unit was overrun with cockroaches. We paid for a fumigation and he later told us how wonderful it was to pass a night without having insects crawling over him in his bed. We collected prescriptions and medications for him when he became too weak to leave his home. Eventually, we saw him daily until he was admitted to hospital, ensuring he was left clean and comfortable, and with a selection of beverages and toilet items within easy reach.

Another client who recently came into our care required a laryngectomy due to cancer and now cannot speak. Instead, he writes out what he wants to say or uses the text function on his mobile phone. A few weeks ago he was informed that the cancer had spread elsewhere and could not be treated. He felt let down by the doctors involved and was initially unwilling to be linked with the palliative care team. Imagine the frustration of not being able to communicate freely in these circumstances and trying to build up a rapport with relative strangers?



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He sent us a series of distressed messages earlier in the week saying that he was not eating, and felt cold and alone. We re-stocked his fridge with some liquid and puree food, ahead of arranging Meals on Wheels to commence the next week. Yesterday, one of us spent a few hours with him at the GP and his pharmacy. Today we received an encouraging message from him saying he'd enjoyed a good night's sleep; the socialisation was more therapeutic than the "stash of pills" we'd collected and he enjoyed the Thai pumpkin soup we provided! He's now agreed to allow the palliative team to become involved, as long as we "hang around".

And, finally, a lady who lives in Waterloo: Along with cancer that is now in multiple sites, she has a diagnosis of mental illness. She's experienced some wild times over the years including substance abuse and reported murderous intent. Her communication can be acerbic (putting it mildly) and she does not suffer fools. Unfortunately, following a rather forthright outburst from her directed at the local palliative nurses, they became fearful of visiting the home. We started our contacts by doing her grocery shopping and have been able to build on that to the point where she agreed to let us oversee the re-supply of her medications, and we will accompany the palliative nurses on their required visits.

As always, I acknowledge the hard work of our nurses and Administration Manager. Sometimes there are no thanks for the effort, but that is not why we are here. For them, and the clients in our care:

***Isaiah 41:10***

*Fear not, for I am with thee: turn not aside, for I am thy God: I have strengthened thee, and have helped thee, and the right hand of my just one hath upheld thee.*

With kind regards,

**Wendy Peddell RN**  
Director of Services