

NATIONAL 15-21 MAY 2023
VOLUNTEER
THE CHANGE MAKERS WEEK

Volunteer reflections

#NVW2023 #TheChangeMakers

**WE ARE THE
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I remember a time when I walked into a small room and sitting in the corner was an elderly lady who was looking very sad.

I greeted her in Italian and she looked up very surprised. She could not believe that that someone speaking her language was visiting her. She said she hadn't spoken to anyone since being admitted days earlier as her english was very poor and all the doctors and nurses seemed to rushing in and out without having much time to speak with her.

I spent quite a while with her and by the time I left, her eyes were shining and she was smiling. The patient thanked me profusely and admitted she hadn't spoken that much in a long time!!

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"On my weekly visits to various wards as a spiritual care volunteer, I have met some many very lonely and sick people. Most of them really appreciate the visit and chat, especially if they speak Italian. I also provide communion for those patients that are Catholic, so that is a blessing". Silvia

"My volunteering is important to me. During my 8 years at Bundoora extended care, I have taken on many diverse roles. Some have been very challenging and others very rewarding. I hope to make a difference in people's lives". Reg

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My most memorable moments were when we used to play bingo with the patients.

There was lots of laughter and smiles. Prizes were little things like a bar of soap or a hand towel, but the patients would get so excited about winning something and they would say with a big smile on their face... "Is this for me?"

Those moments always made me feel happy that I was helping someone and I made their day a bit brighter.

It's a great feeling . Jo Mckenna

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I walked into a patient's room and her daughter was present. The scene was like many hospital beds; white sheets and a white hospital blanket. However, across this patient's bed was a visual delight of a knitted bed throw with beautiful bright colours and assorted textures and stitches.

I saw the patient was quietly moving her fingers over it, touching the textures. I commented on the bed throw and the patient's daughter told me that her parent had a similar bed throw at her Nursing Home and loved it.

I recognised the rug was one of the hand made items gifted to the volunteer team from the Sunbury Library Monday Knitting Group and was given to the patient by one of our other volunteers. The patient's daughter teared up, telling me how much the family appreciated this bed throw. I was so pleased to know that this gesture brought so much happiness to the patient and their family. Stella

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Just prior to the start of the 2023 AFL season, I entered a patient's room and they weren't very 'chatty'. I quickly thought of topics to encourage conversation, and I talked about Alistair Clarkson's return to coaching,
WOW - Jackpot!!!

This patient was a keen footy supporter of the same club as me. Then they told me that a special visit had been arranged for them to attend team training in 2 days. I saw this patient again the next week and was greeted with "Pull up a chair Stella. Come here, I want to show you the photos on my mobile". It was terrific for the patient and for me!! Their room cleared of other people and before leaving, I suggested we sing the Club song (which I had learnt growing up) and we did!! It was such a special moment.

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“Volunteering makes me feel good within myself knowing I am helping and hopefully making their job easier.

I enjoy meeting people and I have made a new friends along the way.

I have been helping in administration for over 1 year. Having worked all my life, I know how hard it can be to meet guidelines.

If I had a volunteer when I was working would have been so much easier”.

Frances Martello.

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I started volunteering as a Patient Visitor in the Palliative Care Unit in November 2022. 6 months along and I can confirm that it is a rewarding role and I feel enriched and honoured to be a small part of the journey of a Patient and their family. Of course, it is sad when a Patient passes away ... however, the Unit is not a place of "sadness". The Staff there provide devoted care with friendly, positive attitudes and a genuinely warm atmosphere, whilst being sensitive to every Patient's condition. From day one, I was warmly welcomed by all Staff. I sense that these Staff are a team of friends. My Patient visiting role can range from quietly sitting in a patient's room, listening to their stories, and sometimes their fears and engaging them in a conversation. When asked, I tell them a little about myself. Supporting the patient's family is part of the role and I've made a few cups of tea/coffee.

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I have many beautiful stories over the past 10 years, but one I will never forget.

One patient I visited twice a week at the Geriatric ward at BH. His name was John and was there after a stroke. He had a tracheotomy done few years earlier and was unable to speak. His wife used to be there from early morning till late. I used to go in and talk to him and the wife, even though he couldn't reply, he used to smile. His wife commented that he likes me. One morning when I walked in and started chatting as usual, he stretched both his hands out to me. He had rails on both sides of the bed so I reached out and held them. He pulled me closer and thinking that he wanted to whisper something so I leaned closer to listen then he kissed me on my cheek. When I straightened up he put his hand over his tracheotomy tube and said Thank you. I felt like crying. When I went on my shift 3 days later, he was gone. It makes me sad even now when I think of him and many other, but it makes me grateful to know that I was able to bring some happiness and kindness before they passed away.

Being a volunteer in the hospital has been so rewarding.

Monica Don Paul.

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**What do you like about your
volunteering at Northern Health.**

"The smile on the face of client, whose day has been made a little bit brighter by our being there". Dennis

"I enjoy coming in as it gets me away from my housework."

"I get very bored and lonely at home. I have made many friends here and I just love my volunteering'

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I was waiting for the bus to go home after my volunteering and there was a lady sitting there and she said 'Hello Mandy, how are you?'"

I wasn't sure how this lady knew my name and thought I had still had my name tag on. She told me she used to bring her husband into the hospital for Cancer treatments and I used to help them each time they visited. I asked her how her husband was going and she told me he had passed away a few months ago and she thanked me for the little chats we had during their visits. This is one of the moments that reminds me why I love being a guide. Being able to spend time with our patients, having little chats can really make their day. Mandy

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I became a volunteer after I had my major stroke. I was in St Vincent's hospital for almost a month and then went to rehab in Camberwell Rehab Hospital for nearly another month.

I then came to Broadmeadows Hospital for speech therapy. I was there for at least another month, and that's when I was told about volunteering here as it should help me with improving my speech. I have been here since which is about five years.

Since I've been at Broadmeadows Hospital, I have met many people and have become good friends with many of the volunteers I have met. Matteo

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Become a Volunteer at Northern Health.

I have been a patient of Northern Hospital for 19 years.

Northern Health improved my health and my wellbeing; as such, I decided to become a volunteer to help other people.

The most important part of being a volunteer is to be friendly, a good listener and to be positive.

Patients thank me for helping them and for being positive and smiley. Michael

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There are so many good memories.
Every time I think of one good thing,
another pops up in my mind!

My favourite thing about
volunteering is the friendships I have
made and the laughter and little
chats that we share.
This brings me lots of joy.

I love helping people to find where
they need to go and love chatting to
the elderly people, I think they like
these little chats as well. Eden

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