



PalliativeCare
TASMANIA



ANMF Diversity Scholarship 2021 Winner Profile : Melissa Hammersley

My name is Melissa Hammersley and I am a mature aged entry Registered Nurse having nursed now for four years in a broad range of departments including Theatre, Sub-Acute Medical Ward, Oncology and most recently, Emergency at the Mersey Community Hospital.

The Mersey Community Hospital has recently provided the community with a dedicated Palliating ward. This ward has come with countless professional development and learning opportunities to all staff involved. This included a brief placement at the Whittle Ward in Hobart which has enhanced our care to the dying and their families enormously.

When I was contacted with regards the Scholarship I was extremely excited about what opportunities there could be for me to grow personally and professionally. I believe we have a long way to go with palliation and it's a very fulfilling and growing field to be involved in. To be able to mentor my peers is something I am extremely enthusiastic about.

When I first started Nursing, palliation was not an area that I was particularly interested in. I was quite surprised once I had the opportunity to start caring for the dying on the Medical Ward I found it was a very meaningful but challenging role. I found 'we do not palliate people well' generally and it appeared everyone had different opinions as to caring for the dying. This lack of knowledge really encouraged me to seek evidence and further educate myself on palliation.

Having this knowledge on board has increased my mentoring and education in the practice setting, for example having knowledge of palliating medications, signs of dying, the deteriorating patient and what to do and the correct use of syringe drivers. Whilst caring for the dying patient you have to be mindful of families and often with complex dynamics.

My biggest 'tip' for anyone seeking or working in palliation is the importance of being aware of the emotional impacts in what you are communicating to patients and their families as I have found health concerns often come hand-in-hand with hardship and high emotional situations. It is also imperative that when your patient dies your care does not end there, your care should remain until the patient has been relocated and to continue to assist families where required.

I have found the biggest misconception with 'palliation' is generally we believe that this person is in the immediate dying phase, this is a myth as we can be considered palliating for several years.