





*'We are millions living with dementia  
right now and we need your help to  
lead meaningful and fulfilling lives while  
we are waiting for a cure.'*

~Dr Richard Taylor, who has Alzheimers  
Disease, from his address at the  
Conference of Alzheimers Disease  
International in Singapore, 2009.



Dementia is estimated to cost  
the Australian health system:  
6 billion dollars per year.

At present, more than 320,000  
people are estimated to have  
dementia with more than 1  
million people providing support.

*'There are two disabilities of dementia.  
The first is a result of damage to brain  
cells, but there is another hidden  
disability: the excess disability caused  
by a care approach that disempowers,  
isolates and overmedicates the  
person.'*

~Dr Al Power from his foreword in the book,  
*Creative Approaches in Dementia Care*

# Spark of Life : A New Paradigm in Dementia

*Spark of Life* is a pioneering philosophy to dementia care.

It offers a profound, practical approach that lifts the spirit, awakens dormant abilities and heals relationships broken through dementia.

*Spark of Life* is about redefining what it means to have dementia, opening up new possibilities for improvement. It is also about revitalising the culture of dementia care; enriching the quality of life for people with dementia and giving joy and renewed energy to carers.

*Spark of Life* was first implemented as a therapeutic program, specifically developed for people with advanced dementia. The program was then researched as part of a Masters Degree and from its findings the philosophy and whole systems approach was developed.

In July 2009, Dementia Care Australia received an international award from IAHSA covering 30 countries for Excellence in Ageing Services for its *Spark of Life* Whole Systems Approach.

***'Spark of Life was unanimously chosen for its optimistic approach towards dementia and dementia rehabilitation.'***

Christa Monkhouse, Swiss  
IAHSA Board & Jury Member



*Hilary Lee & Jane Verity with Baroness Sally Greengross at the House of Lords, London, after they received the award in 2009 on behalf of Dementia Care Australia.*

Following the international exposure from the award came a demand for a sustainable model to enable *Spark of Life* to be implemented in aged care.

This demand resulted in the development of a 3-week *Spark of Life* International Master Course. The course equips a Master Practitioner with the tools and strategy to take their organisation to the next level and become a *Spark of Life* Centre of Excellence.

There are currently 30 Master Practitioners in 8 countries.

The *Spark of Life* Philosophy has been successfully implemented in diverse cultures around the world and is also being embraced in other fields such as mental health and intellectual disability.

Dementia Care Australia is the independent, self-funded organisation behind the pioneering *Spark of Life* Philosophy.

Established in 1993, the purpose of the organisation is to enrich the emotional wellbeing of people with dementia, their families and carers through education.



## ***Spark of Life***

### **Vision**

To ignite the spirit in people with dementia, their families and carers.

### **Mission**

To educate the community on how to ignite the spirit in people with dementia, their families and carers.

***'Spirit is the life force at the core of our being.'***

Jane Verity, Founder of *Spark of Life*



# Why people with dementia can improve: a perspective from neuroscience

*'From the scientific side there is growing evidence especially from neurobiology, that brain plasticity and 'soft wired' human empathy will support the 'soft' Spark of Life Approach through 'hard' scientific facts.'*

Christa Monkhouse,  
IAHSA Jury Member 2009

At first sight it may seem unlikely that a social and emotional approach such as *Spark of Life* could have a positive impact on the brain of a person of dementia.

However, new developments in neuroscience show that the brain has potential to heal itself.

We now know that the brain is 'plastic' which means that it has the ability to change its structure with each activity it performs.

This plastic ability gives our brain the potential to compensate for lost functions.

Mirror neurone research shows that when we focus our attention on our thoughts and emotions, or align with another's inner world the brain will create new neural connections.

Therefore, when people meaningfully engage with compassion and empathy in a trusting environment, they nurture the brain to create new pathways.

This is the science behind 'rementia' (recovery of lost powers when the social environment around a person with dementia becomes more supportive and understanding) a term first used by Professor Tom Kitwood, who developed person-centred care.

A Churchill Fellowship report from the United Kingdom claims that *Spark of Life* is the model for rementia.

The report states that, '*Spark of Life* enables people living with dementia to come to life with new abilities thought to have been long lost to their illness' (Bolton, 2012).

## A *Spark of Life* Example of 'Rementia'

Ces had advanced dementia and had not communicated with anyone around him for over 12 months.

In one 1-hour *Spark of Life* session, through the gentle approach of trained facilitators, Ces chose to come out of his shell and began to communicate in full sentences. His improvement enabled him to continue to participate actively for the next three and a half years until he passed away.

To view the footage of how Ces comes out of his shell, please go to the home page of Dementia Care Australia;  
[www.dementiacareaustralia.com](http://www.dementiacareaustralia.com)

# Spark of Life Education

Dementia Care Australia has developed a comprehensive education program on the *Spark of Life* Philosophy and Whole Systems Approach providing holistic solutions, shifting focus to what is possible.

The education embraces humanistic, enlightened practices that address the common challenges of dementia as well as what it takes to enable sustainable culture change in residential care services and in community settings.

There are different levels of engagement through a multi-layered education program.

*Spark of Life* Education is provided through one and three day courses that are for everyone caring for a person with dementia.

## 1-Day Introductory Course on *Spark of Life*

This day provides an introduction to the *Spark of Life* Philosophy with specific communication techniques and simple steps to overcome common challenges.

## 3-Day *Spark of Life* Certified Courses

### Practitioner course

This course focuses on providing profound insights and understanding about dementia.

Over 3 days participants learn the skills to enable rehabilitation, to awaken dormant language, and to dissolve challenging behaviours.

### Club Facilitator course

The Club Facilitator course is directed at leaders and recreational therapists working with people who have dementia.

In this course, participants learn the framework and principles for success when setting up and running the *Spark of Life* Club Program.

## *Spark of Life* International Master Course

When an organisation decides to adopt *Spark of Life* as their care philosophy, they then select a key staff member to undertake the 3-week *Spark of Life* International Master course. This is the only course that certifies a person to educate others in the *Spark of Life* Philosophy and Whole Systems Approach.

Successful graduates are equipped with all the resources they need to educate everyone at all levels in their organisation. In addition they receive a systematic strategy and comprehensive self-assessment tool to guide them on the implementation of the whole systems approach to become a *Spark of Life* Centre of Excellence.



A *Spark of Life* solution circle in a facility in Iceland



# Benefits

## For Aged and Community Care Organisations

There are 4 key areas in which aged and community care organisations can benefit from implementing the *Spark of Life* Whole Systems Approach:

### 1. Occupational Health and Safety/Human Resources

A team that has been educated in the 3-day *Spark of Life* Certified Practitioner Course by their Master Practitioner has the skills to:

- Contribute to a safe work environment through preventing and solving challenging behaviours
- Contribute to daily job satisfaction through the rewarding experience of seeing positive results of their personal interaction with their residents, clients or patients

### 2. Care Culture

A team that is empowered and appreciated through the *Spark of Life* Whole System Approach has:

- A compassionate and inclusive culture
- A desire to work beyond boundaries
- A focus on the positive and on solutions

### 3. Cost Savings

The implementation of the *Spark of Life* Whole Systems Approach translates to cost savings in the following areas:

- Retention of staff
- Reduction in absenteeism
- Less time spent on managing complaints and behaviours
- Reduced need for medication
- Reduced cost associated with falls and injuries

### 4. Reputation

Achieving recognition as a *Spark of Life* Centre of Excellence enables an organisation to be:

- A preferred employer due to the reputation of enhanced staff satisfaction
- A preferred care provider due to enhanced reputation within the local community for having an excellent standard of emotional care of their residents and clients



# Benefits

## For the Person with Dementia

People with dementia can experience profound benefits from the implementation of *Spark of Life* Philosophy by the people around them:

- Their spirit is reignited restoring joy, zest for life and the will to live
- They can experience dementia (the recovery of lost abilities through the social and emotional environment becoming more supportive and understanding.)
- Their emotional needs are met restoring meaning and purpose in their lives

Professor Richard Taylor, an internationally recognised and respected presenter who has dementia, attended a *Spark of Life* presentation at the international Alzheimer's Association Conference in Singapore in 2009 and made the following statement about *Spark of Life*:

***'The Spark of Life - is life!***

***It is the light in the eyes of every baby born on the planet. It lights up the lives of others, and provides the light for all human beings to see and be seen in their full wholeness and humanity.***

***The symptoms of dementia may appear to cause the spark to flicker, but the spark is still there. All it takes to brighten itself is others who believe in us and show patience, love, and support.'***



## For Families

- Families benefit in many ways from the education, the profound understanding they gain and the skills they learn.
- For families whose relatives with dementia live in residential care experience the benefit of peace of mind knowing their loved one is treated with empathy and compassion.
- Relationships that may have been broken through dementia can be healed.

The following are quotes from family carers:

***'You have switched on a light at the end of what was a long dark tunnel. Actually, I feel like you have switched on the lights along the tunnel too, as I feel empowered now to deal with the challenges each day brings.'***

Cheryl Dufty, Family Carer

***'The techniques I have learned are really going to change my coping mechanisms, my whole outlook, my relationship with my mother, my children and my partner. It is like a golden bridge back into my life'***

Sally Harding, Family Carer

# Jane Verity

OTR, FT

Founder & CEO

Jane Verity is the Founder and CEO of Dementia Care Australia; Founder of *Spark of Life* and the Dementia Foundation for *Spark of Life*.

Jane is a world leader and pioneer in the social and emotional care of people with dementia. She has the vision and passion to create profound change in the world of dementia care.

Originally from Denmark and now living in Melbourne, Jane is an Occupational and Family Therapist, and Master Practitioner in Neuro linguistic Programming (NLP). She has earned the highest international accreditation as a professional speaker and is known for her life changing presentations.

In 1998 Jane studied with Professor Tom Kitwood at the Bradford University, UK and became the first person to bring Person Centred Care to Australia and Scandinavia.

In 2009, Jane was invited to present at the Asia Forum on Ageing in Singapore, as the international representative on dementia care to provide advice to the Ministry of Ageing.

Jane has a deep interest in empowering people who are caring for a person with dementia at home and is acutely aware of their circumstances. Caring for her own mother with dementia brought to the approach a unique understanding and intimate knowledge that is only gained through personal experience.

Jane has authored two internationally published books and contributed to others.

She is a regular contributor to journals and a keynote presenter at national and international conferences.

Jane has presented *Spark of Life* to aged care organisations, Alzheimers Associations, health professionals and family carers as well as people with dementia in Australia, New Zealand, Spain, UK, Denmark, Sweden, Iceland, Faeroe Islands, Singapore, and USA, ( including Alaska).





# Hilary Lee

MSc, OTR

President of *Spark of Life*

Hilary Lee is President of *Spark of Life* with a global focus on dementia education, research and innovation, working with leaders who are agents of change in different fields. Hilary has a background in Occupational Therapy and a Masters Degree in Science from Curtin University, Perth.

Hilary now works with Dementia Care Australia, and together with the Founder, co-developed the *Spark of Life* Whole Systems Approach.

Hilary was born in England and has lived in Perth since 1988. As a social entrepreneur, Hilary drew inspiration from her Swiss father who at a leadership level worked with UNESCO to help rebuild people's lives in many countries after the Second World War.

She has pioneered projects on how to ease the transition to residential care, early identification and prevention of depression and a multidisciplinary approach to palliative care. Hilary has also achieved the advanced level of Dementia Care Mapping (through the University of Bradford, where Person Centred Care was developed).

In addition, Hilary has developed a new assessment tool with Associate Professor Dalia Gottlieb-Tanaka and Professor Peter Graf at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, called the Creative-Expressive Abilities Assessment Tool for people with dementia. This tool is now used around the world.

Hilary has unique expertise in the use of creative arts as a means of self-expression and communication in dementia and founded the Australian chapter of the Society for the Arts in Dementia Care. She has provided a forum for sharing of knowledge in this field through state, national and international conferences and symposia since 2006.

In 2011, Hilary co-edited a book called *Creative Approaches in Dementia Care* by Palgrave MacMillan Publishing, UK.

Hilary is a keynote speaker and since 2003 she has spoken at national and international conferences in Australia and around the world, including UK, Canada, USA, Singapore and New Zealand.





# The Future

## For Dementia

It is the vision of Dementia Care Australia that a new future is emerging for people with dementia where the importance of keeping the spirit ignited is acknowledged as a priority. This is a vision of hope for people with dementia and all who support them.

Dementia Care Australia envisages that in the future every aged care home and community organisation will have the opportunity to have their own Master Practitioner and become *Spark of Life* Centres of Excellence.

With so many homes and services implementing this profound whole systems approach, Australia will lead the field in the emotional care of people with dementia and all who care for them.

Dementia Care Australia has a vision for an inclusive society where:

- People with dementia are valued as sentient human beings with valid contributions to make
- People with dementia have opportunities for continued meaningful engagement that will preserve their skills for as long as possible
- Families of people with dementia continue to experience support from family and friends
- People with dementia and their families have hope in their lives

## For Humanity

Dementia Care Australia also envisages that in the coming years the universal elements of the *Spark of Life* Philosophy will be implemented in diverse fields of life such as new areas of health, schools and education, business and community services.



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