

Dear Sir or Madam,

1. My name is Fran Deakin and I live in Bacchus Marsh. This is my experience with Palliative Care. I cared full time for my husband following a severe stroke, 2003 until 2007. When the stroke happened Arthur was taken to Footscray and then after I begged the staff they finally allowed him to have 6 weeks rehabilitation. Because Bacchus Marsh is out of their area which stops at Melton, they allowed me to take him home Christmas Eve but nothing was set up to help with his care e.g. showering etc, they did help with ramps. I at least had enough knowledge to know that help was available if I could find the right people to contact. Eventually I was directed to Linkages in Ballarat and our eventual case manager was brilliant.

Towards the end of Arthur's life I asked about Palliative Care because I wanted to care for him at home. One week before he passed away I once again brought up the subject of Palliative care. I was told he was not "ready" yet. On the Sunday prior to his death (the following Friday) he had a bad turn which had been happening on a regular basis so I rang the local hospital and asked for a district nurse to come and see us. She came only because she knew me and stayed a while. Then as things started to settle again she prepared to leave. While saying goodbye he took another turn. The comment was "is this what you have been trying to tell us". I answered, "yes" and the nurse said she would bring the matter up at their next meeting. That same night and following another turn I called the ambulance, who also knew me well and would always come because they knew that I would not waste their time. Usually they gave him morphine and settled him before leaving but this time, they decided to transport him to the local Hospital where it was decided to hospitalise him. The next day, Monday, my local Dr, who was extremely good to us, told me that he would not be going home and would probably not see the week out. There was no palliative care bed or room available so, because I told the staff that I would not leave him, they put him into a private room and set up a stretcher for me. By Wednesday he had lost consciousness and he passed away on the Friday. So my opinion of palliative care is not good.

2. I have now volunteered to help a young Filipino lady who had just lost her husband. She could speak English (using incorrect grammar) but now has to learn to read and write English in order to get a job, she was not educated in her home country. She was not even told what help was available to her so she was only offered basic help. She didn't know what questions to ask in order to get proper help and didn't realise that help was available. Over the last 4 months I have taught her to reading to about a year 4 level and write at approximately year 2-3. She is working so hard and taking classes to work with English and wants to work in age care. At the moment we have to continually debate with Centre Link because she must fill out forms on what jobs she has applied for. One would believe that to do this task you need to read and write in order to apply for jobs which of course she is not qualified for. I have been able to get her to a stage where I believe with help she can manage the course, which starts in February.

I don't know if this is of any value to you but I hope it may somehow help someone else to get help in similar situations.

Regards Fran Deakin