

Tuesday, 19 March 2019

Palliative care scholarships upskill local nursing workforce

Two local nurses will complete the Master of Nurse Practitioner program, specialising in palliative care, under a new Brisbane North PHN scholarship initiative.

Kathryn Hooper from St Vincent's Private Hospital and Lynn Knowles from Mercy Community will undertake their studies via Queensland University of Technology and expect to graduate at the end of 2020.

In awarding the scholarships, the PHN's Executive Manager for Aged and Community Care programs Michele Smith congratulated the recipients and said there was increasing pressure for connected palliative care services across acute, community and primary care sectors.

"Our needs assessment has shown there is a high level of fragmentation in the delivery of palliative care services in the North Brisbane and Moreton Bay region," Ms Smith said.

"We are pleased to support the workforce to respond to these challenges through the Palliative Care Nurse Practitioner (PCNP) Scholarship Program," she said.

"The need to upskill nurses in palliative care service delivery was also highlighted by the Brisbane North Palliative Care Collaborative, leading to the establishment of the PCNP Scholarship Program.

"We recognise that the health system currently does not support people to die well at home, and there is also a lack of local data related to palliative care," Ms Smith said.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has revealed the number of palliative care-related hospitalisations increased by 28 per cent between 2011-12 and 2015-16, highlighting an increased need for palliative care services at a national level.

Meanwhile, one in every 90 employed nurses in 2016 were palliative care nurses, equating to 3457 nurses nationally.

Australian College of Nurse Practitioners Queensland Chapter Chair Melanie Proper acknowledged the PHN's innovative model and congratulated the scholarship recipients.

"Palliative care is such a huge area of need and also a perfect place to position the nurse practitioner model. There is a lot of evidence to show it makes a huge impact on improving outcomes and increasing access," Ms Proper said.

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To support the broader palliative care workforce, Michele Smith said the PHN had also offered a number of scholarships for graduate certificate level qualifications to eligible nurses.

“The longer term goal of the scholarship program is to build a network of palliative care nurse practitioners across acute, community, aged and primary care with more effective and accessible services,” Ms Smith said.

The program also aims to improve communication between services and provide better support to patients navigating the system.

ENDS

Editor's note:

Photos from the scholarship launch

For print quality images of the scholarship presentation at Lutwyche on 7 March 2019, go to:
https://www.dropbox.com/sh/q9pt25hpducg7z5/AADj0FK_cO7pwpi4ZI5P5grNa?dl=0

About the recipients

Kathryn Hooper, St Vincent's Hospital

Kathryn currently works at St Vincent's Hospital in the specialist community palliative care team. She has also worked at Karuna Hospice for many years as a CN, and a CN/ Educator within aged care and public health. As a Worimi woman, Kathryn is passionate about improving access to culturally appropriate palliative care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Brisbane North region including being able to die on country where possible.

Upon completion of her studies Kathryn will be the first Indigenous Australian palliative care nurse practitioner in Queensland.

Lynn Knowles, Mercy Community

Lynn commenced working for Mercy Community in 2010 as a Registered Nurse within the residential aged care facility. Lynne has completed courses in dementia training as well as palliation.

She recently completed her Masters and her work has grown since then to include not only palliation care, assessments, incontinence aid co-ordinator, dementia assessor, wound nurse and many more.

About Brisbane North PHN

Brisbane North PHN is one of 31 Primary Health Networks nationwide and supports clinicians and communities within North Brisbane, Moreton Bay and parts of the Somerset region. The PHN covers approximately 4,100 km² of urban, regional and rural areas, with a population of over 960,000.

The key objectives of the PHN are:

- increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of medical services for patients, particularly those at risk of poor health outcomes, and
- improving coordination of care to ensure patients receive the right care in the right place at the right time.

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