

Friday, 12 May 2017

## Playback Theatre highlighting Palliative Care at free event

Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District's Palliative Care Service is taking a creative approach to this year's Palliative Care Week – inviting members of the community to share their experiences and stories by participating in an interactive theatre session with Playback Theatre.

Palliative Care Clinical Nurse Consultant, Kathleen Wurth said Playback Theatre involves audience members sharing their personal experiences, which are then dramatically acted out by improvising performers.

“The performances can be profoundly moving or hysterically funny, depending on the stories told, but they are always unique and prompt lots of discussion and reflection,” Ms Wurth said.

“The purpose of the special Palliative Care event is to honour the stories of families and staff who have been involved in the real work of facing death, dying and grieving. Importantly, it's also an opportunity to learn and grow from past experiences,” she said.

Palliative Care Week is being held from 21 – 28 May and this year's theme is: *You Matter, Your Life Matters. Palliative Care can make a difference.*

“We have a saying in Palliative Care – ‘*You only die once. Let's get it right*’. We do everything in our power to help people to get it right for them, and that will be something different for every individual.

“We want people to talk to those close to them about what matters most at the end of life, and understand that palliative care can provide hope. It may not be hope for a longer life, but hope for controlled symptoms, support for patients and carers, and an optimal quality of life,” Ms Wurth said.

ISLHD Director Palliative Care Service, Dr Greg Barclay said the Playback Theatre event will be an excellent opportunity for staff as well as community members to talk about end-of-life care and what can be done to make it easier on all concerned.

“Palliative Care makes a difference to thousands of people every year in our region. These days, good end-of-life care is the responsibility of every doctor, nurse and health provider. The role of the Palliative Care Service is to support other non-specialist staff when a patient's dying is comfortable, and to get more involved when symptoms are complex or distressing.

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Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District

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“Through participation in the theatre event, it is hoped audience members will gain a better understanding of the complexities of end-of-life care - what it is, what it involves and the medical, practical and ethical decisions that need to be made by professionals, family members and the person who is receiving care,” Dr Barclay said.

Gerry Orchin from Playback Theatre said doing this sort of work is more an act of service than a challenge.

“Playback provides an opportunity to tell important personal stories in a safe public space. In listening to those stories some audience members will make connections between what they hear and their own experiences, which can help them feel less isolated.

“Our intention is to honour all the stories that will be told, and to reflect them back - using music, movement and the spoken word - without any rehearsal but with as much grace and humour as we can,” Mr Orchin said.

### **Event details**

What: Palliative Care Week Playback Theatre  
When: 6pm – 8pm, Friday 26 May  
Where: Wollongong Hospital – Auditorium – Level 8  
Who: Free event open to patients, family members, carers, other interested community members and staff

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