



BARWON SOUTH WESTERN REGION

PALLIATIVE CARE CONSORTIUM

ANNUAL REPORT

2019 – 2020



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*This annual report was prepared by: Myra McRae
On behalf of: Barwon South Western Region Palliative Care Consortium
Telephone: 03 4215 5662
Email: myra.mcrae@barwonhealth.org.au
Web: www.bswrpc.org.au*

INTRODUCTION

The Barwon South Western Region Palliative Care Consortium was established in 1998. Its objectives were determined by the Department of Human Services policy document, *Strengthening Palliative care: a policy for health and community providers 2004-09*. This policy was reviewed in 2009-10 and led to the development and release of the Department of Health, *Strengthening palliative care: Policy and strategic directions 2011-2015* in August 2011.

In July 2016 the Victorian Government released the 'Victoria's end of life and palliative care framework – A guide for high-quality end of life care for all Victorians'. The implementation framework developed by the DHHS in consultation with service providers across the sector guides the delivery of the 'end of life and palliative care framework' for government-funded specialist palliative care services, palliative care consortia, state-wide specialist services and the PCCN.

This framework is different to previous policies in it recognises that if we want sustainable and responsive palliative care in Victoria we can no longer leave the responsibility with Specialist Palliative Care Services.

The framework will deliver actions on the following five priorities:

1. Deliver person-centred services:
2. Engage communities, embracing diversity
3. Coordinate and integrating services
4. Make quality end of life and palliative care everyone's responsibility
5. Strengthen specialist palliative care

The framework articulates clear expectations, enabling a broader range of staff to respond to people's end of life care needs in our diverse community.

The Barwon South Western region palliative care consortiums' key functions in implementing the Framework include:

- Leading the implementation of relevant aspects of the framework in the region
- Monitoring and reviewing the implementation of the framework in the region
- Facilitating the integration of care for people with a life-threatening illness and their carers' and families across the service system
- Working to optimise the community's access to quality palliative services
- Enabling more efficient and cooperative use of resources that supports an integrated approach to care for the patient

The role of the consortium includes:

- Undertaking regional planning in line with departmental directions
- Coordinating palliative care service provision in each region
- Advising the department about regional priorities for future service development and funding
- In conjunction with the Palliative Care Clinical Network (PCCN), implementing the service delivery framework, and undertake communication, capacity building and clinical service improvement initiatives

The function of this annual report is to report the activities of the consortium and detail implementation of the framework by the Barwon South Western Region Palliative Care Consortium over the last financial year.

1.1 BSW Region Overview

The Barwon South West is an economic rural region located in the south western part of Victoria. The Barwon South West region stretches from the tip of the Queenscliff Heads to the border of South Australia. It is home to Victoria's largest provincial centre, Geelong and the major centres of Aireys Inlet, Apollo Bay, Camperdown, Colac, Hamilton, Lorne, Port Campbell, Port Fairy, Portland, Torquay and Warrnambool.

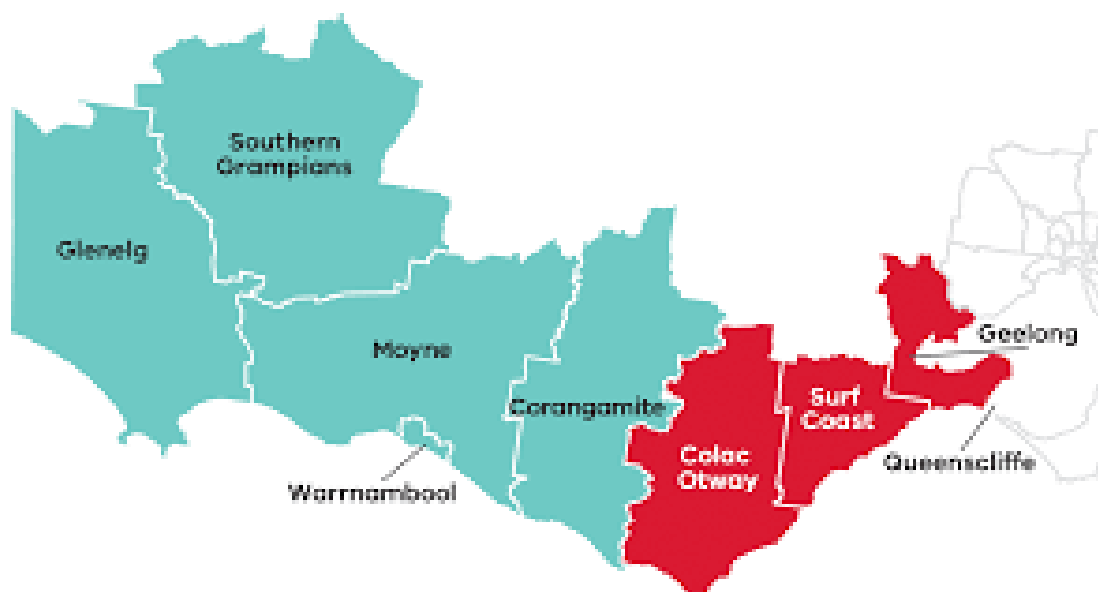


Fig 1. Map of Barwon South Western Region



Fig 2. Victoria State Map

Barwon South Western region comprises an area in excess of 40,000 square kilometres and approximately 392,000 residents as at the 2016 census with an approximate projected population of 464,813 by 2031. The Barwon South West region includes the local government areas of the City of Greater Geelong, Surf Coast Shire, the Borough of Queenscliff, Colac-Otway Shire, Corangamite Shire, Shire of Moyne, City of Warrnambool, Glenelg Shire, South Grampians Shire and Bannockburn and District located in Golden Plains Shire.

There are six palliative care services located across Barwon South Western Region:

- Barwon Health (BH), Regional Health Service
- Colac Area Health (CAH), Rural Health Service
- Bellarine Community Health (BCH), Community Health Service
- Portland District Health (PDH), Rural Health Service
- South West Healthcare (SWH), Rural Health Service
- Western District Health Service (WDHS), Rural Health Service

The region's population structure is ageing at a rate 10% higher than the Victorian and Australian averages. It is anticipated that the proportion of people aged 65 or older is likely to increase from 21% in 2001 to 37% by 2051. The region's population aged 75 years and over is projected to rise from 7.9 per cent in 2006 to 15.4 per cent in 2036.

Local Government Areas	Total Population (2016 Census)	Projected Population 2031
Greater Geelong	233,431	296,360
Surf Coast	29,972	39,577
Queenscliff	2,853	3,061
Colac-Otway	20,972	19,969
Corangamite	16,051	14,212
Moyne	16,495	17,426
Warrnambool	33,665	38,708
Southern Grampians	15,944	14,824
Glenelg Shire	19,557	18,267
% of Golden Plains Shire	2,325	2,409

Fig. 3 Population by LGA

Traditional Owners

There are approximately 4,700 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people located in the Barwon South Western region made up of six major clan groups:

- Dja Dja Wurrung
- Djab Wurrung
- Eastern Maar
- Gunditjmara
- Wadawurrung
- Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk.

Barwon South Western Region Palliative Care Consortia respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land in which it conducts its business, their Ancestors and Elders past and present and emerging.

Diversity in the Region

While regional municipalities generally have a high proportion of Anglo-Australian residents, BSW actually has the largest proportion of residents born in main non-English speaking countries (NESC's) (6.7 per cent) and speaking a LOTE at home (6.7 per cent) of all the Regional Advisory Councils, with most other municipalities in the region having only around 4.5 per cent of LOTE speaking residents and similar proportions born in one of the main NESC's. Italian is the most widely spoken LOTE in the region, with over 3,000 speakers, or 0.8 per cent of the population. Other languages with more than 1,000 speakers include Croatian (2,292) and German, Macedonian and Greek (each around 1,150).

1.1 Palliative Care Services in BSW Region

Barwon South Western Region Funded Palliative Care Services

Community Palliative Care services are located at Barwon Health (Geelong), Bellarine Community Health (Point Lonsdale), Colac Area Health (Colac), Portland District Health (Portland), South West Healthcare (Warrnambool) and Western District Health Service (Hamilton).

Inpatient Palliative Care beds are located as follows: Barwon Health – 14, South West Healthcare – 6, Camperdown - 1, Colac Area Health – 1, Portland District Health – 1 and Western District Health Services – 1.

Pal@Home Pilot Project

Commencing in December 2019, this 12 month pilot project at Barwon Health has 6 beds on a bed substitution model.

Regional Palliative Care Consultancy Teams – the teams are located as follows: Barwon sub-region team provides services to specialist palliative care teams at Bellarine Community Health, Barwon Health and Colac Area Health. South West sub-region team provides services to the specialist palliative care teams at Portland District Health, South West Healthcare and Western District Health Services. Each team is multi-disciplinary, with a mix of medical, nursing, allied health, psychology, pastoral care and bereavement personnel making up the team. Services involve a mix of primary and secondary consultations to clients and palliative care team members, GP's and acute health service staff both public and private, primary consultations are also available in the form of one to one patient assessments with subsequent advice and/or an opinion being relayed to the referrer.

Hospital Based Palliative Care Consultancy Teams – the teams are located at the University Hospital Geelong campus of Barwon Health. The team is made up of medical and nursing personnel who provide primary and secondary consultations within the hospital. The hospital based consultancy team received 847 referrals during 2019/20. South West sub-region team is located at South West Healthcare, comprising of medical, nursing and counselling services the team provides consultancy services to other hospitals in the South West sub-region when required.

All palliative care services in the BSW region use a Shared Care Model of care. The Shared Care Model involves Community Palliative Care and Community Nursing teams working cooperatively and collaboratively to ensure the appropriate and best quality care is provided for Community Palliative

Care patients and their families. Relationships between services are characterised by professional respect, give due recognition to difference in skills and comply with professional codes of conduct. The needs-based model of palliative care is patient and family focussed. It is driven by the level and complexity of patient, primary carer and family needs rather than by organisational and service structures, organisational objectives or traditional patterns of service delivery. The model operates across clinical settings and incorporates care provided by primary and specialist providers.

All services provide advice, in home assessments, family support, loss and grief screening pre-death, bereavement follow up post death, phone assessments and After-Hours telephone support. Barwon Health, South West Healthcare, Portland District Health, Western District Health Service and Colac Area Health all provide bereavement counselling, social support. The use of Telehealth has increased significantly across all services in the region mainly due to a reduction in face to face patient visits and clinics. Barwon Health are conducting a research project on the use of Telehealth from a patient, carer, staff and volunteer perspective, however the results will not be available until 2020 -21 financial year.

Organisational Chart

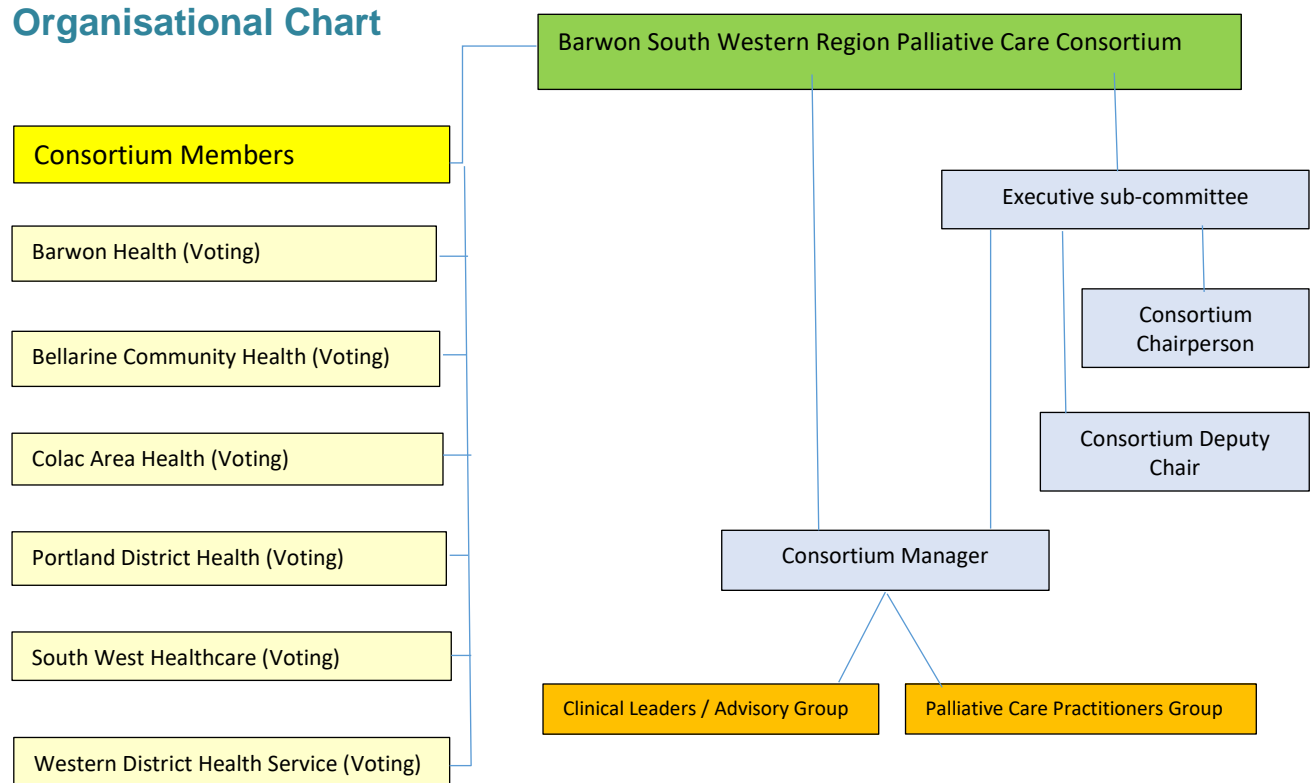


Figure 4: Barwon South Western Region Palliative Care Consortium Organisational Chart (Reviewed July 2019)

CONSORTIUM CHAIR'S REPORT 2019 - 2020

The 2019-20 financial year has been a particularly challenging year for the Barwon South Western Regional Palliative Care Consortium.

Although the year commenced strongly with all services developing plans to meet the needs of their communities in relation to care provision and education, external events changed the focus of attention quite dramatically for most of the services on the 30 September 2019 when the Barwon Health and SWARH network experienced an unprecedented cyber security attack.

Services had only just begun to return to “business as usual” when the COVID-19 pandemic began to impact upon the delivery of health care in early 2020. The response to the pandemic and ensuring the safe delivery of care to people with life limiting illnesses and their families has been the focus for all 6 services within the Barwon South Western Regional Palliative care Consortium. Services have developed new ways of working to ensure clinical care is not compromised.

Despite the challenges of the year, the focus of BSWRPCC has continued to be on strategic and innovative planning along with providing regional education and clinical support. In particular, the highlights for the year include:

- Increased capacity of services to provide terminal care to people in their preferred place of choice through embedding 7 day per week specialist palliative care service delivery which was introduced in 2018-19.
- Volunteer programs continue to run very successfully across the region with significant growth in the variety of support available. Volunteer programs have had to innovate and be incredibly flexible as they continue to aim to provide care during the pandemic in a remote capacity.
- Innovative delivery of events aiming to enhance the community capacity to support end of life care. A number of events were held remotely via Zoom during National Palliative care Week 2020.
- South West Health Care have led the implementation of PALCARE as an alternative to the Palliative Electronic Record Management (PERM) systems for all services with the exception of Barwon Health Palliative Care and Bellarine Palliative Care.

The challenges of first the cyber security attack followed closely by the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on the services capacity to achieve a number of initiatives previously identified. Most significantly:

- Work has commenced to transition previous regional education modules to a remote platform with a view to reinstating the delivery of education across the region.
- The ability to be able to externally benchmark our data via the Palliative Care Outcomes Collaborative (PCOC)

Finally, as always I would like to thank Myra McRae, Consortia Manager, for her ongoing tireless support to both myself and the consortium and its members during what has been an incredibly challenging 2019-20.

Jacqui White - Consortium Chair

PRIORITY 1 Person-centred services

- A person's care is individualised
- Families and carers are supported and valued
- People have information that supports decision making
- People have opportunities to develop their advance care plan

Across the region validated tools are used, as endorsed by the Palliative Care Clinical Network – Safer Care Victoria (PCCN-SCV), Palliative Care Outcomes Collaborative (PCOC) and Victorian Integrated Non-Admitted Health (VINAH) minimum data sets across inpatient, community and consultancy services.

All services across the region embed the reporting of the CSNAT tool to assess carer needs, Resource Utilisation Groups – Activities of Daily Living (RUG ADL), Australian-modified Karnofsky Performance Status (AKPS), Problem Severity Scores, Edmonton Symptom Assessment Score, Phase and a Distress Thermometer into the palliative care software (PERM) used by 83% of community palliative care services in the region.

Up-to-date interdisciplinary care plans which reflect the wishes of clients and carers are contained within the PERM software. A Patient Care Plan and a Health Professional Care Plan are created at the completion of each assessment. The number of completed care plans within the region is 100% for all clients. These are a mix of 83% electronic and 17% paper care plans covering all clients. All care plans are provided to the client's GP and other care providers as required. In addition Barwon Health has implemented Symptom Management Plans for specific symptoms to assist patients and carers and shared these with the other palliative care services in the region.

Lists of respite services that may be appropriate for clients with life-threatening illness are available in each palliative care service in the region. Information and education on respite availability, including provision of care for children with a life-threatening conditions, is provided to families and carers by all (100%) community palliative care services across the region as part of standard admission packages for all new clients. All Specialist Palliative Care services have access to the eligibility criteria of the respite services available to clients allowing them to offer tailored advice to clients.

Barwon Health continue to support an in-home respite program which is managed by the Multicultural Aged Care Services (MACS) and funded by Hospice Foundation Geelong which makes available palliative care trained staff to provide care in the home when there is a high need. South West Healthcare has maintained their respite in the home service by Warrnambool's not-for-profit hospice service, staffed by volunteers, which provides care for local people who wish to die at home.

In 2019/2020 all (100%) of palliative care program staff in the Barwon South Western region received education about appropriate respite services and eligibility criteria as part of palliative care induction programs and ongoing education. As part of their interactions with respite services all (100%) palliative care services in the region report having endeavoured to increase the level of knowledge about caring for people with life-threatening-illness within respite services by advocating on behalf of clients and ensuring their specific needs are understood by respite service staff and met wherever possible.

Volunteer programs have been running successfully across the region.

In the South West volunteer training and support has been strengthened by the completion of two further volunteer induction programs, and now there are over 100 active palliative care volunteers within the hospital and community setting. Barwon Health have an innovative Volunteer Program which includes bereavement support, Dignity Therapy, Life Stories and Backyard Blitz which offers garden maintenance for palliative care patients, and Have a Go which provides the opportunity for people accessing palliative care to be able to identify bucket list items that they might want to tick off before they die and to be supported in achieving them. In addition, a new palliative care program at Barwon health is utilising Virtual Reality Technology as a form of diversion therapy that allows patients to encounter immersive experiences. Patients are able to enjoy city tours, wildlife and Space experiences.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the volunteer programs have become innovative in finding alternative ways to support patients and carers in our communities. Patients and carers showed great understanding in the need to cease face to face visits for their safety and that of the Volunteers. Volunteers have been providing companionship via telephone, support and advice on how to connect with family and friends via apps on phones or devices. Tips for ways to stay connected through technology such as streaming concerts, religious services and virtual museum tours. The Volunteer Coordinator at Barwon health produced a "Resource and Activity" pack, which included crossword puzzles, Sudo, colouring in, and quizzes to help inpatients and community patients occupy themselves during restricted visiting. Bereavement care is provided by members of the supportive care team by either video conference or telephone, whilst bereavement support previously provided in face to face group settings continues to be provided by volunteers albeit in the setting of individual phone calls. Work is underway exploring the options to transition this volunteer support to a video conference setting to allow for group engagement.

Barwon Health supports Bellarine and Colac palliative care volunteers through provision of specialist palliative care training. South West Healthcare support Portland and Hamilton with their volunteer programs. In the changed environment associated with COVID-19 face to face training hasn't been available.

There were several activities for Volunteer week in 2020. Barwon Health's Volunteer Coordinator Jen Walsh and CNC Melanie Davies developed a webpage in conjunction with The Kindness Pandemic Facebook group (600,000) members. The webpage was called "Grieving in Isolation" and included contacts, artwork and things to support when someone is grieving and what to do if you are grieving.

All Barwon Health palliative care volunteers received a letter of thanks and a chocolate treat in the mail in appreciation of their service. Volunteers in South West Healthcare sent a poem of thoughts and reflections to their volunteers.

Patient story:

Joy Hedley and her team of sewers donated their time and talent to the palliative care service at South West Healthcare. Handmade quilts were made, each individual and colorful. A community palliative care patient was admitted for end of life care. One of the quilts in various shades of purple was given to the patient. Purple being a favorite color made the patient's face light up. The patient died 5 days later wrapped in her blanket as per her wishes. Joy and her team continue to make quilts

and also beautiful colorful bags for patients' belongings to be placed in and given to loved ones after death.

The Advance Care Planning clinic at Barwon Health commenced in 2016, continues to be utilised. The clinic is held at Andrew Love Cancer Centre, in University Hospital Geelong. In addition, a new Advance Care Planning role has commenced three days each week at the McKellar Centre. This new role is a resource available to support the palliative care program.

Training on facilitating Advance Care Planning for Community Palliative Care Nurse Specialists occurs during orientation and refresher courses are offered throughout the year by the Advance Care Planning Team, Barwon Health. Mandated training on Advance Care Planning occurs in the palliative care services throughout the South Western sub region for all Palliative Care Nurse Specialists. However, these training courses are now held virtually in the interim whilst we are going through COVID -19.

Barwon Health has commenced quality improvement project aiming to increase the number of Advance Care Directives (ACD) completed for patients engaged with the program. The project utilises volunteers to assist clinicians with the administrative aspects of completing an ACD and is ultimately aiming to ensure that either a documented ACD or goals of care conversation has been undertaken to inform care ensuring that it is in keeping with patient wishes at all aspects of the trajectory. This project has been operating for over 12 months and significant improvement in the number of Advance Care Directives completed along with enhancements of the confidence of the palliative care team is evident.

Advance Care Planning as a key process in providing a palliative approach forms part of the education provided to aged care and disability services by the two Palliative Aged Care and Disability Support Nurses in the region. Residential Aged Care Facilities in general require ongoing support and education on 'having the conversation'.

Several activities were held across the region for National Palliative Care Week and Dying to Know Day albeit modified to comply with the requirements associated with COVID-19 when appropriate. As part of National Palliative Care Week Barwon Health released series two of the podcasts "Room 64" which Vision Australia broadcast to 500,000 listeners www.Barwonhealth.org.au/podcasts along with being available in all of the normal places people access podcasts. Small edible gifts and morning tea were provided to staff across the region. Barwon Health held a virtual Death Café which was sponsored by King's Funerals who also provided a hamper to raffle. This event was very well attended with 28 participants, feedback suggested similar themes would be well received in the future. The partner of a staff member at University Hospital Geelong, Michael Barley, died in April, 2020. Michael was a poet and author and he wrote a poem about dying a few months before he died. This was such a rare opportunity to have the voice of the dying person creatively expressed and we are forever grateful to Leo, Michael's partner for this opportunity. The poem was shared amongst the palliative care program team during National Palliative Care Week.

*"On the after-life threshold
A smokey dancer slips a snug arm
round my waist and holds me close—
ivory fingers firm on the fey twill*

*We waltz and twirl handsomely
A spiral of vapour
around the dim antechamber*

*filled with toy-top pairs
spinning in dark finery
Whirling away from cares,
the sunrises, sleeps and dreams,
the loves, whispers ...secrets*

*My ethereal companion squeezes my waist
gives me a nod, a dark bow—smiles back
at our foggy breaths and slips away as
mica-silt through the sea of black taffeta*

*Souls of those holding close to life
hide in the grey zone—they
flap and moan as
The Furies flutter, nigger and clutch;
Always reaching out unnervingly
Always phantoms from another world
sent by Erebus into this one
to wrinkle out the unwilling*

*Death lives, eternal, infinite
An unwelcome finality
An aching stitch of absence
in the pale porcelain ribs of
those left behind”*

*Michael Barley
3rd January 2020*

South West Healthcare filmed two short videos for National Palliative Care Week. One was in partnership with Emmanuel College, Warrnambool and the second video was entitled “Showcasing our Approach to Palliative Care”. Western District Health Service held an afternoon tea in memory of patients that had died on their palliative care program in the previous 6 months.

Dying to Know Day 2019 was celebrated by Barwon Health by holding a Death Café in Geelong. Forty people attended this event which was sponsored by King’s Funerals with positive feedback from all who attended. Western District Health Service held an information session for staff with End of Life Care Doulas.

Most services in the region supported Palliative Care Victoria in their “Palliative Care it’s more than you think” campaign by submitting a short video. The video submitted by Barwon Health received more than 15,000 hits <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AzPH8JHUDoc> and the Interim CEO of Palliative Care Victoria arranged a link up with Clinical Nurse Consultant Melanie Davies, Barwon Health and the Geelong Advertiser. Melanie highlighted the importance of palliative care in the community and promoted the meaningful ways in which palliative care changed people’s lives.

Time to take closer look at palliative care

A campaign is aiming to increase awareness around the profound work of our palliative care workers.

In conjunction with National Palliative Care Week, Palliative Care Victoria is celebrating workers with the “Palliative care, it’s more than you think” campaign.

Barwon Health palliative care clinical nurse consultant Melanie Davies’s role involves looking after people who have a life-limiting illness in their homes, helping manage symptoms and providing end-of-life care.

“This is something way more than a job, it gives so much back,” Ms Davies said.

“I think, as a whole, people still have the perception palliative care equals only end-of-life care and people access it only in the last weeks of life. But it’s much more.”

“In some cases, patients received palliative care for years”, she said.

Ms Davies contributed a video to the campaign, sharing a story of using virtual reality to take a teenage brain cancer patient to Paris for her birthday.

PCV interim chief executive Annie Revell said the aim of sharing these stories was to highlight the importance of palliative care in the community, while promoting the meaningful ways in which palliative care changed people’s lives.

PRIORITY 2: Engaging communities, embracing diversity

- All communities and groups have access to end of life care and planning
- Improved engagement with community leaders to enable them to connect their communities to end of life care
- Communities understand the services available for end of life care and bereavement support

Barwon South Western Region Palliative Care Consortium and its member services have excellent links with local government, community health and primary care partnerships. Local government links are most commonly with Home and Community Care programs, which are most relevant for palliative care services. All consortium member services have community health as part of their health services, which supports excellent relationships.

Barwon Health, Colac Area Health, Western District Health, South West Healthcare and Portland District Health have volunteers working within the services and these together with clinical staff act as ambassadors in the community helping to ensure people with life-threatening illnesses receive information about the Palliative Care services available to them within the Barwon South Western region.

In rural and regional communities, knowledge of palliative care and supportive services for people with life-threatening illness is often higher due to a high degree of stability across medical practitioners and palliative care providers.

Educational strategies have included a significant amount of palliative approach education provided to community nursing, community and residential aged care staff and residential disability staff across the region in the last financial year thus increasing community awareness and understanding of palliative care.

The Barwon South Western Region Palliative Care consortium website lists services, their locations and their services available across the region www.bswrpc.org.au. Information is also available online from Palliative Care Victoria, Palliative Care Australia and the Department of Health and Human Services.

“Aboriginal Cultural Awareness for Staff” and “Aboriginal Cultural Awareness for managers” education continues to be mandated for all staff and managers of Barwon Health as part of their Reconciliation Action Plan 2015/16. The smaller services in the region also provide Aboriginal Awareness education to their staff and engage with local Aboriginal Cooperatives.

A fabulous example of developing links with community-based groups is demonstrated through the work, which has commenced between Barwon Health Palliative Care and the Geelong Regional Libraries. The two organisations have collaborated to introduce Virtual Reality technology into the Palliative Care Unit with a view to supporting patients to utilise the technology to assist with pain management, relaxation and to travel to places they will not get the opportunity to do outside of the virtual reality space.

PRIORITY 3: People receive services that are coordinated and integrated

- People experience services that are coordinated and designed locally
- The primary, hospital, palliative and aged care sectors connect effectively to respond to care needs
- Early discussion, referral, planning and coordination occurs

All specialist palliative care services in the Barwon South Western Region are very closely linked with community nursing services, private hospitals and private community care providers, aged care and disability service providers. All palliative care services in the region have developed and maintained close links with BRACAS.

Links include:

- St John of God Hospital and Epworth Healthcare Radiation Oncology in Warrnambool in the South West sub-region
- St John of God Hospital in Geelong and Epworth Hospital in the Barwon sub-region.
- Through the Palliative Aged and Disability Support Nurse program links have been established with public and private residential aged care facilities and public and private residential disability services across the Barwon South Western Region.

An After-hours model in all six palliative care services across the Barwon South Western region provides all community palliative care patients and carers access to specialist palliative care telephone triage advice via Caritas Christi Hospice ensuring 24 hour/7 days per week access to specialist palliative care support.

All specialist palliative care services in the region have links with at least one and often more community nursing services. While specialist palliative care telephone triage is available to all patients/carers in the region, nursing visits after-hours are not available across the whole region. Availability of visits is dependent on the capacity of the Community Nursing service providing care in a particular area. There are outlying areas where after-hours visits are not feasible or safe predominantly due to lack of mobile phone coverage or because of the significant distances staff on call would need to travel resulting in an inability to respond to other calls. For some smaller services who were able to provide after-hours nursing visits previously have experienced challenges due to staffing issues. All Community Nursing services, regardless of size, work proactively with the relevant Specialist Palliative Care service to develop contingency plans for patients who are in the terminal phase to provide a nursing visit where possible. Health professional review is also provided by Ambulance Victoria on occasions when a community nursing visit is not possible after hours.

Barwon Health and Bellarine Community Health provide after-hours visits when required to palliative care patients by community nurses 7 days per week. Hesse Rural Health provide community palliative care 7 days per week to patients in Golden Plains and Surfcoast Shire however, there are insufficient funds to provide after-hours on-call nurse visits. Colac Area Health have a community palliative care nurse on call for after-hours visits for patients who are unstable or in the terminal phase 7 days per week between 8am and 8pm, thereafter community nurses are on call for after-hours visits. Western District Health Service have a community palliative care nurse on call for nursing visits until 8pm,

Monday to Friday. On weekends, a palliative care nurse is on-call for nursing visits from 8pm on Friday evenings until 8am Monday mornings. Visits overnight are restricted to Hamilton, with patients in the regional areas having access to after-hours support from Caritas Christi Hospice and if they require more than clinical advice they are advised to present to their local hospital.

South West Healthcare now provide visits by specialist palliative care staff visit as required 7 days per week to all 3 LGA's in their catchment area. Previously, on weekends it was a District Nurse if they lived in Warrnambool and the rest of the region only had phone support or had to present to the local hospital.

Portland District Health provide after-hours visits by community nurses only if they are already known to the community nursing service. Otherwise, patients in the Portland area are required to present to the Urgent Care Centre.

A seven day a week palliative care service including public holidays was implemented in South West Healthcare Warrnambool and Barwon Health Geelong last financial year. The extended service has significantly strengthened the community palliative care services by providing additional support to patients and their carers enabling them to be cared for and to die in their own home if this is their wish. It has also provided reassurance and additional support to carers who may be struggling to sustain their carer role.

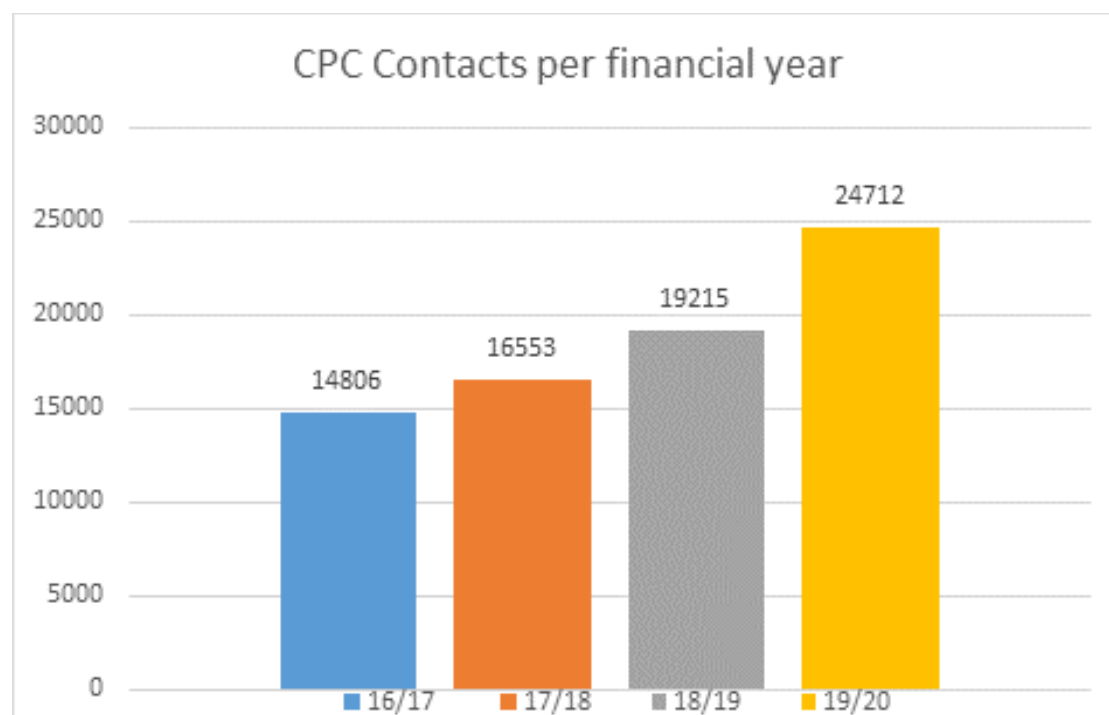


Fig 5. CPC contacts per financial year – Barwon Health

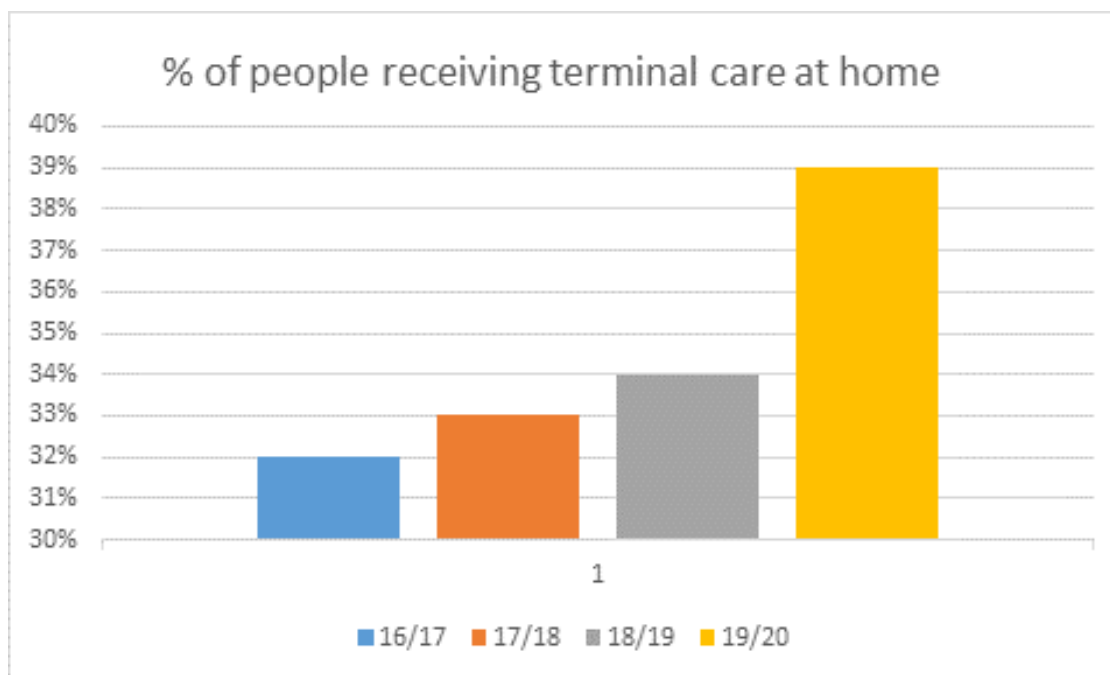


Fig 6. % of people receiving terminal care at home – Barwon Health

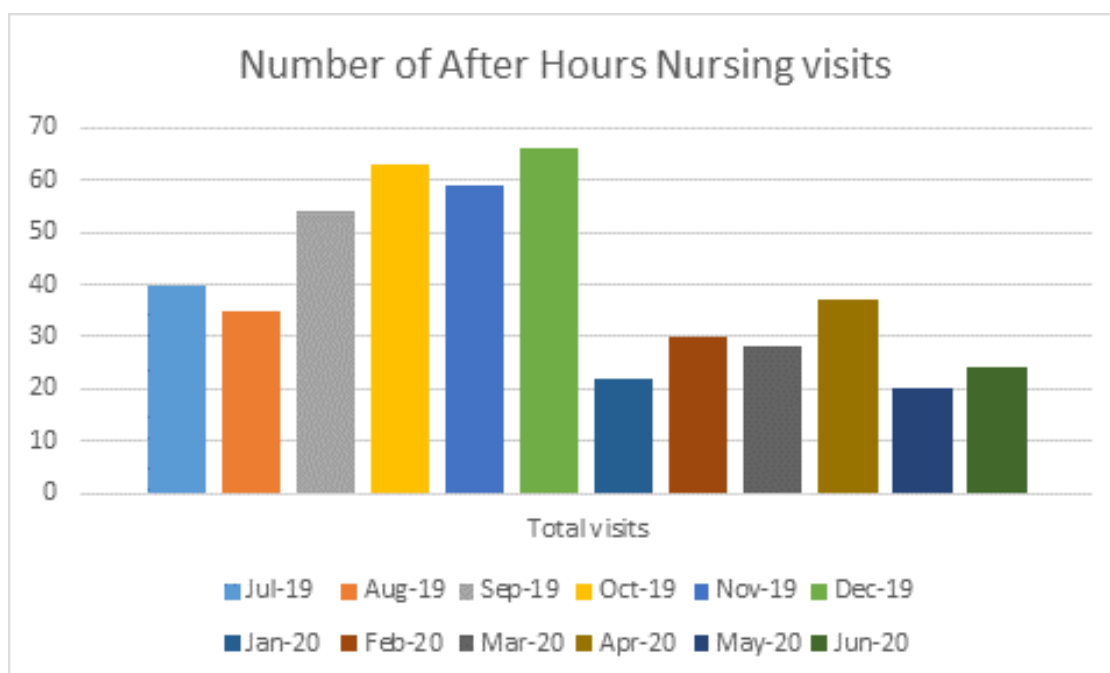


Fig 7. Number of After Hours Nursing visits - Barwon Health

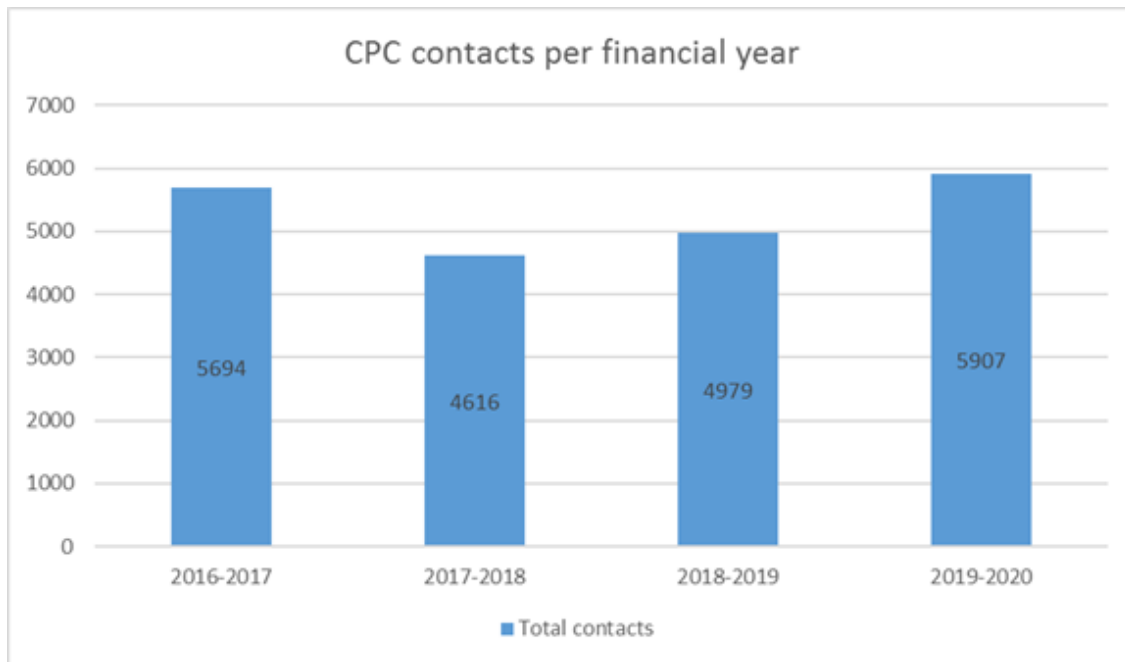


Fig 8. CPC contacts per financial year – South West Healthcare

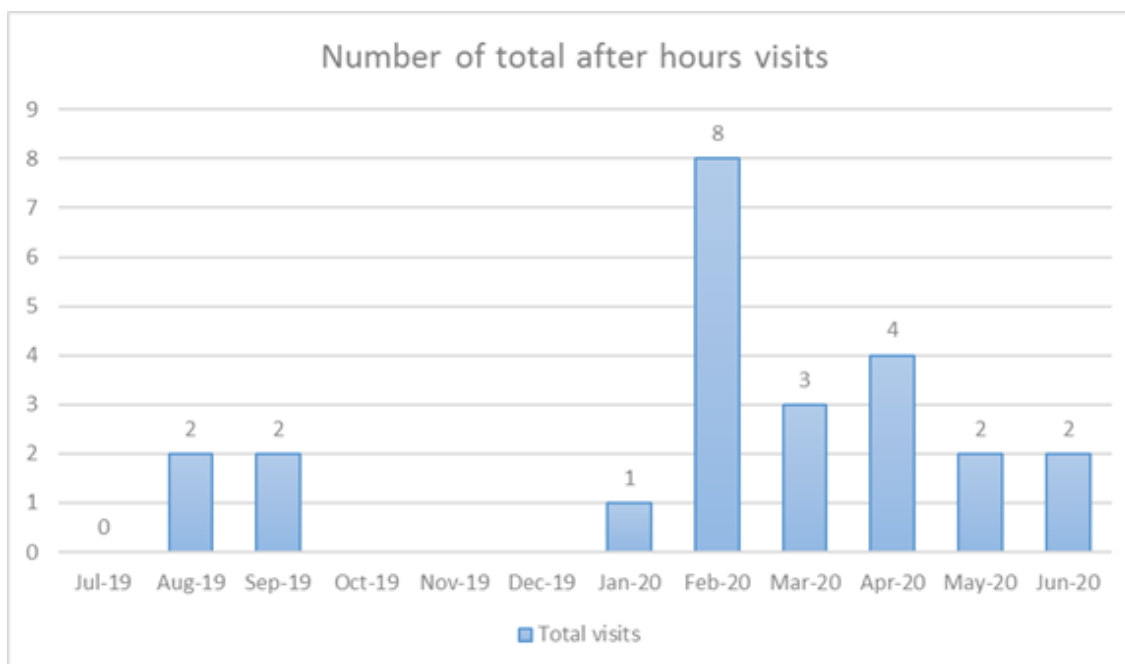


Fig 9. Number of total after hours visits – South West Healthcare (please note Oct, Nov, Dec data is not included, as SWH did not utilise Caritas Christi Hospice during the time of the cyber security attack).

Work is ongoing to enhance the regional consultancy services cross the region. In the Barwon sub-region the consultancy service has a Palliative Care Consultant, Registrar and two Clinical Nurse Consultants support to provide patient assessment and management, mentoring, education, service development and support to the specialist community palliative care services and the generalist services in the sub-region.

During 2019/20 Barwon Health, Colac Area Health, Portland District Health, South West Healthcare and Western District Health Service continued to use the Palliative Care Electronic Management (PERM) clinical palliative care software however, South West Healthcare, Colac Area Health, Portland District Health and Western District Health Service will be transitioning to PalCare electronic management system by the end of 2020. Bellarine Palliative Care service are currently in the process of implementing MasterCare electronic management system to replace Unity, the timeframe for this transition has been delayed due to the current climate but is expected to be prior to December 2020. PERM software will only be supported by the vendor until June 2021, therefore Barwon Health are currently scoping alternative palliative care electronic medical record systems.

The St Vincent's/Caritas Christi Hospice after-hours triage contract was renewed in 2019 for three years (2019-2022) and includes all six palliative care health services in the Barwon South Western Region.

Data indicates after-hours support has been less utilised by clients and carers across the Barwon South Western Region in 2019/20. Total After-hours calls in 2018/19 were 1836 compared to 1700 in 2019/20. This may be a clearer result of the commencement of the seven-day week service in Barwon Health and South West Healthcare after more than 12 months since it was implemented.

In total, there are 28 inpatient Palliative Care Beds located in Barwon Health, South West Healthcare, Portland District health Service, Colac Area Health and Western District Health Service.

Clients have access to an appropriate level of specialist palliative care in their region. Community Palliative Care services do not have waiting lists and all referrals are triaged upon receipt utilising an accepted triage tool. Currently services are awaiting the release of a standardised triage tool to be used across the State. Until this tool is available, services are using service specific triage tools.

There is clear information about the Palliative Care services available within the region. Information regarding the capabilities of these services is available from a number of sources including the palliative care services, the health services in which they are based, general practice, medical specialists, local government and community health centres.

PRIORITY 4: Quality end of life and palliative care is everyone's responsibility

- Knowledge is increased across the healthcare sector to provide safe, quality care
- End of life care is consistent across the healthcare system
- Healthcare staff are equipped to communicate and deliver the benefits of palliative care
- Organisations actively support their staff in the delivery of quality end of life care

The work of the sub-regional Palliative Care Teams at each end of the region supports clients/carers and specialist and non-specialist Palliative Care staff thus increasing the likelihood that people will die in their place of choice.

The Palliative, Aged, and Disability Support Nurses in the Barwon and South West sub-regions offer education on the Palliative Approach Toolkit resources, key processes and clinical care domains. The education is provided to RN's, EEN's, EN's and PCW's aged care and care workers in disability services. As well as education, this role also incorporates supporting family members of residents in aged care, providing secondary consultation to staff in residential aged care, attending clinical meetings to support the palliative care needs of residents and provide education to staff specifically around end of life care. In Western District Health Service, a Palliative Care Nurse with an Aged Care portfolio has been providing support and education to Residential Aged Care Facility staff during COVID, utilizing funds from their COVID cost center.

Late September 2019 until January 2020 Barwon South West Region health services were among those affected by a ransomware attack. Scheduled workshops were postponed due to the inability to advertise them electronically. With the impact of COVID-19 in March 2020, many workshops were again postponed and services are currently planning for virtual workshops in the future. The Palliative Aged and Disability Support Nurses are focusing their attention on supporting residential aged care by virtual education sessions, in-services and sharing of information related to the aged care sector from DHHS. Regular phone contact with Facility Managers and Clinical Care Managers offering support, education and de briefing has been well received during this stressful time.

After Death Audits initially developed by End of Life Care Directions for Aged Care (ELDAC) and revised by Gippsland Region palliative care consortia have been conducted in several facilities to date across the region. Information gathered from this quality improvement exercise has identified gaps in care, mainly poor or lack of documentation, failure to recognise signs of deterioration, lack of palliative care case conferences to inform care plans, advance care planning and concerns from family. This data informs a focus for future education workshops and in-services.

The Palliative Aged and Disability Support Nurses incorporate the Program of Experience in the Palliative Approach (PEPA) education with PEPA placements encouraged at all workshops. However, due to COVID-19 restrictions workshops have been cancelled until further notice.

Barwon sub-regional workshop attendance during 2019/20:

Residential Aged Care Facilities in-services	13 in-services	128 attendees
Disability Services in-services	2 in-services	24 attendees
Education via Zoom or Telehealth	4 in-services	32 attendees

South Western sub-regional workshop attendance during 2019/20:

Residential Aged Care Facilities in-services	10 in-services	112 attendees
PCW/ Disability Services in-services	2 in-services	21 attendees
Education via Zoom or Telehealth	6 in-services	52 attendees

Barwon South Western Region Palliative Care Consortia focuses strongly on providing regional education to specialist palliative care staff and the generalist healthcare providers. This is our third year of “Improving Outcomes in Palliative Care’ a series of workshops utilising the skills and expertise of members of the multidisciplinary teams at Barwon Health and South West Healthcare.

Of the six sessions planned for Queenscliff, Geelong, and Camperdown in the 2019- 2020 financial year, only one was held face to face in Geelong in August 2019 with 25 attendees. Planning is underway to arrange virtual delivery of future workshops to ensure healthcare staff in the region receive continued education and support.

Regular training opportunities are offered to the staff from Multicultural Aged Care Services (MACS) who provide respite services to community palliative care in the Barwon sub-region. In the current climate, training is available on an informal basis delivered virtually.

Monthly education sessions are provided to specialist Palliative Care staff and Community Nurses and are open to public and private hospital staff including health professionals in Bellarine Community Health, Colac Area Health and Hesse Rural Health. Although some of these sessions were cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions, four sessions were held between July and November 2019. Topics included a presentation from The Peace of Mind Foundation, Medicinal Cannabis, Cherished Pets, Reiki Therapy and Paediatric Palliative Care by the Royal Children’s Hospital. With phase 3 COVID restrictions, re-instated plans are underway to continue to hold monthly virtual education sessions

A monthly education program is usually provided to Community Nursing teams on-site. The sessions were offered electronically however, this was declined and are currently on hold. These sessions are provided by various members of the Barwon Health palliative care multidisciplinary team members including Nurse Practitioners, Supportive Care Team and Specialist Community Palliative Care Nurses. Some of the topics this year included Medications used in Palliative Care, Cachexia, Terminal Restlessness, Motor Neurone Disease, Delirium, restlessness and Agitation.

In conjunction with the Primary Health Network, South West Healthcare provide a variety of education sessions on a regular basis for specialist and non-specialist staff from South West

Healthcare, Portland District Health and Western District Health Care. These education sessions are now also being delivered electronically.

The Motor Neurone Disease (MND) Shared Care Worker for Barwon South Western Region provides education across the region to GP's, Specialist Palliative Care, Community Nurses and Residential Aged Care staff on the assessment and management of symptoms associated with MND.

MND workshops are offered regularly across the region. Warrnambool had a full day workshop, Barwon Health community nurses received training on MND and several were held in residential aged care facilities across the region. This education is now being delivered via an electronic platform.

The team at Western District Health Service provided education entitled "Palliative Care in the Era of COVID-19. The team played an active role, recognizing that palliative care is an essential part of the Pandemic Plan and proposed recommendations for Aged Care/Community Care /COVID Ward and as well as delivering education they were also involved with the development of guidelines for management of non-ventilated patients with COVID and proactively promoted the importance of communication in isolation.

The GP Palliative Care Special Interest Group hosts an annual palliative care forum. The theme of the 2019 forum was providing palliative care to diverse and vulnerable communities. Barwon Health Palliative Care staff presented on a range of different topics highlighting some of the challenges accessing and providing palliative care to particular vulnerable and diverse communities and individuals

PRIORITY 5: Specialist Palliative Care is strengthened

- Models of home-based care are effective and efficient
- The specialist workforce is used effectively
- Specialist palliative care is accessible locally

Regional service planning is aligned with the Service Delivery Framework and supported with a signed memorandum of understanding between all the consortium members listed below.

- **Barwon Health**
- **Colac Area Health**
- **Bellarine Community Health**
- **Western District Health Service**
- **South West Healthcare**
- **Portland District Health**

Specialist palliative care community services are placed in appropriately sized population centres across the region, see the list above.

Inpatient Palliative Care Beds are located in the following centres:

Barwon Health, South West Healthcare, Portland District Health Service, Colac Area Health and Western District Health Service

Regional Palliative Care Consultancy Team: Each team is made up of specialist palliative care medical, nursing and/or supportive care staff. One team is located in the South West sub-region and supports the palliative care services at Portland District Health, Western District Health Service and South West Healthcare. The other team is located in the Barwon sub-region and supports the Palliative Care services at Colac Area Health, Bellarine Community Health and Barwon Health.

The PCCN-SCV consortia representative is a Joint Head of Palliative Care at Barwon Health and acts as a conduit between the services, and the consortium. A PCCN-SCV report is a standing agenda item at all consortium meetings, clinical leaders meetings and palliative care practitioners' group meetings. The consortium representative is in a position to table issues raised within the region to the PCCN-SCV for review.

Palliative Care service delivery is consistent and evidence based in the region. The work plan of the Clinical Leaders Group has ensured regular review of the ongoing validity of the evidence based clinical tools used by palliative care services across the region and this is a standing item on the Clinical Leaders Group meeting agenda's.

The Clinical and Advisory groups are combined in the Barwon South Western region. The Clinical Advisory (Clinical Leaders) group role statement, terms of reference, membership, meeting format and frequency are reviewed bi-annually. The format is a mix of standing items and continuing work on issues supported by the PCCN, meetings are quarterly. The Agenda standing items are based on the following principles:

- Consortium decisions will be based on good clinical practice
- Facilitate collective problem solving in the implementation of Victoria's End of Life Care and Palliative Care Framework
- Develop resources that promote good clinical practice
- Report on issues raised by the Palliative Care Clinical Network

The region also has a Palliative Care Practitioners Group, which meets three times per year. This group is supported by the consortium and provides an opportunity for broader discussion by staff from all disciplines of issues arising in palliative care more generally, the palliative care software in use in the region, educational opportunities for staff and any specific issues from each of the palliative care services in the region.

All consortium meetings have been held face to face in the Camperdown Hospital however, currently all are being held successfully on a suitable electronic platform.

The utilisation of Telehealth has greatly increased across the region particularly in clinics, medical and nurse assessment of patients in the community where appropriate. Telehealth is also being utilised to connect specialist teams in Oncology, MND, Royal Children's Hospital and local GP's to patients and staff. Barwon Health Palliative Care has received a small funding grant from Western Alliance to research the consumer experience of Telehealth in the context of COVID-19.

Data was collected from a snapshot of a three months period on "preferred place of death" versus 'actual place of death' for palliative care patients in the region.

The results from the six palliative care services in our region are:

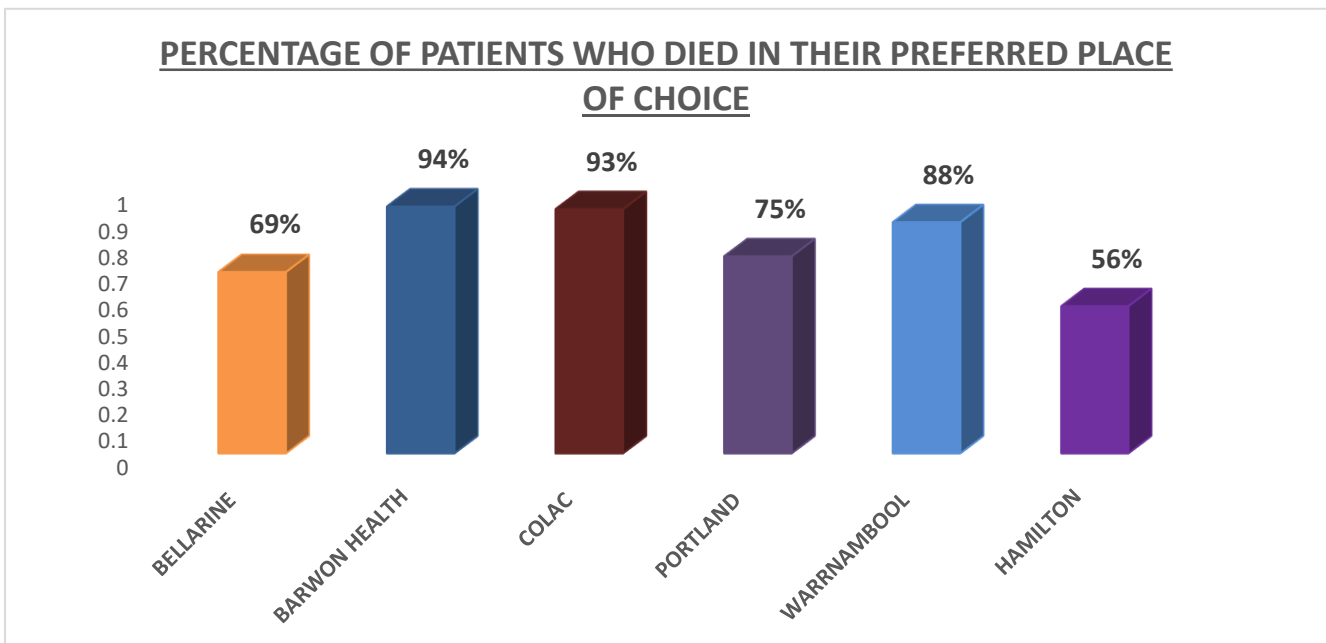


Fig 10. Percentage of patients who died in their preferred place of choice