

Carer Support Service The Caring Times

Ballarat, Golden Plains, Moorabool & Hepburn Shires



Grampians
Health
Ballarat

ISSUE 15 – JULY 2024

Welcome to our Winter Edition!

This month we are shining our light on our amazing admin team, who are the backbone of our service. They are the ladies answering the phones, paying the bills and whatever sits in between. They keep us on track. It is very likely you have spoken with these wonderful ladies already, or that you will be soon.

My name is **Linda** and I have been working with the Carer Support Service/Carer Gateway for 8 years now. I have 2 sausage dogs, Honey and Archie, and they keep me actively on my toes when I am not playing Netball or busy in the gym.

I am the Finance and Administration Officer at Carer Gateway – Grampians Health and have the pleasure of talking to the Carers on the phone every day. I organise the purchase orders, vouchers and process the invoices.

Please remember, if you ever need assistance, we are happy to help wherever we can.

I am **Rose**. I look after the phone calls, data reporting, bookings of Carer Star appointments and inactivation of files. Some months, we book more than 100 Carer Star appointments.

I have a long history with Carers. In March 2000 I moved to Ballarat with a degree in Information Technology. Due to scarce opportunities in Ballarat, I couldn't find a position that would fit my degree. I turned my energy and persisted in finding something in a field I always wanted to work in, Health. I dropped my resume to what used to be known as Ballarat Base Hospital. Within a few weeks, I managed to secure a position at what was called Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre / Carers Choice in July 2000 until 2003. I then returned to a rebranded Grampians Carer Support Services / Carer Gateway in November 2021.

When I speak with you, I want you to have a positive experience. I understand the caring role can be stressful, draining and limiting, but I want you to know you're not alone. If you get stuck and are unsure of how to process your struggle, remember we are only one call away.

Hi, my name is **Tracey**. I am the Marketing, Communications & Engagement officer for Carers. Most of you may know me from all the emails I send! My role here is to organise events to provide social & educational opportunities. It is something that I love to do & I work hard to try to provide as many opportunities as possible.

I have been working for Grampians Health (Ballarat Health Services) for 25 ½ years.

I first started working with the Carers program back in 2004 before taking time off to create my little family of 4 boys.

In my spare time, you will likely find me at the basketball stadium watching my boys play or during winter at the footy field too!

We have 2 beautiful dogs that I talk about far too often A labrador named Carl & a Cavoodle named Doug.

If you haven't been to one of our events, please be sure to do so and come say hi!



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Events coming up:

| | What are we doing | Who is it for | Where |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|------------------------------------|
| July | | | |
| 4 th | Q&A Session (Eyres House – Dementia specific Planned Activity Group) | All Carers | Online |
| 4 th | Rainbow Morning Tea | LGBTQIA+ Community | Local cafe |
| 11 th | Young Carer school holiday event – Gnocchi Masterclass | Young Carers | Carboni's |
| 18 th | Pathways for Carers | All Carers. Meet at 9:45am at Pipers for a stroll around the Ballarat Botanical gardens & a free morning tea at Pipers | Pipers by the Lake |
| August | | | |
| 2 nd | Q&A Session (Travellers Aid) | All Carers | Online |
| 15 th | Pathways for Carers | Carers meet at 9:45am at Pipers for a stroll around the Ballarat Botanical gardens & a free morning tea at Pipers | Pipers by the Lake |
| 16 th | Memory Mingle luncheon | Carers of people with memory problems and the person they care for | Ballarat Golf Club |
| 22 nd 29 th | Difficult Decisions workshop Facilitator: Counsellor, Mary O'Mara | For Carers who are looking at permanent care for the person they care for (<i>2 part workshop</i>) | Online |
| September | | | |
| 5 th | Q&A Session (Disability Liaison Officers – Grampians Health) | All Carers | Online |
| 19 th | Pathways for Carers | All Carers. Meet at 9:45am at Pipers for a stroll around the Ballarat Botanical gardens & a free morning tea at Pipers | Pipers by the Lake |
| 24 th | Young Carer School Holiday event – Art class with Mel | Young Carers | Barkly Square: Neighbourhood house |

If you are interested in any of these events, please contact us on phone (03) 5333 7104 or email carers@gh.org.au to register your interest.

Our business hours are 9:00am – 5:00pm Monday – Friday

Are you an LGBTIQ+ Carer?

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, asexual + (LGBTIQ+) carers face the same stresses and pressures as other carers but may also face added problems of discrimination and misunderstanding.

Our Carer Engagement team have been working to provide a safe space for LGBTIQ+ Carers. A space that offers understanding and recognition. We met with Carers over dinner and have been given some wonderful ideas. Our first of these is us funding a Rainbow morning tea at a local café in July!

We hope to have more events happening soon. If you would like to join this group - Please email us at carers@gh.org.au or give us a call on 5333 7104.

Carer Gateway Community Forums

Caring for a loved one can bring joy but some days it can be lonely or a little bit confusing.

The Carer Forum provides a safe, anonymous space to connect with other carers and support each other.

Caring for a loved one is important work. Many Australians dedicate countless hours and a whole lot of heart to their caring role. Some days caring brings great joy, but some days it can be lonely or a little bit confusing and some days you need a break.

No matter how you feel today, every day you can reach out to carers like you for support, guidance, advice, and a laugh or two. The Carer Forum is open online 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

It's where Australian carers can meet others facing similar challenges in their caring roles. Some days you'll need a pick-me-up, one day you'll need some tips, everyday you'll find support and sharing, goodwill and guidance and a Forum filled with friends.

The Carer Forum is not a professional counselling service, it's not a government hotline, it's not a service portal... It's something a whole lot simpler... It's everyday people helping each other everyday!

So jump online today and visit <https://forum.carergateway.gov.au/s/> or scan the QR code to set up your anonymous profile and dive into the discussion groups.



Coaching: Moving towards your goals

Coaching is about taking time out to think about how you are going, how you'd like things to be and how you might take steps toward making that happen.

Through your local Carer Gateway service provider, you can access a coaching service specially designed for Carers and the complex reality of being in a caring role.

With the option of One-to-one sessions with a coach or self-guided coaching online, it can help you to find a balance between your needs, and the reality of your responsibilities as a Carer.

For more information, please call us on 5333 7104 or visit <https://coaching.carergateway.gov.au>

Brian's story: Unexpectedly becoming a Carer



Brian lives in Alfredton with his wife of almost 50 years, Mischelle.

He was thrust into the role of carer when Mischelle was unexpectedly hospitalised, then had to learn to walk again on her return home.

Carer Gateway's services have helped him find his way through.

Brian has been Mischelle's carer since March 2023, when she suffered a ruptured bowel and then medication-induced delirium. This led to a prolonged period in hospital followed by acute care

at home, where Brian found himself in the role of carer.

"My wife spent 93 days in four different hospitals, becoming progressively unwell and eventually delirious," says Brian.

Certain that something wasn't quite right, Brian requested a second opinion.

"A geriatrician assessed her and found that the medication she was taking for Parkinson's was causing delirium. Once the medication was reduced the delirium gradually disappeared and she was allowed home with support from Hospital in the Home for two weeks."

Brian has been with his wife every step of the way. His goal is for Mischelle to become more independent and for himself "to become saner!"

Mischelle's prolonged illnesses and hospital stays and Brian's sudden and unexpected role as a carer eventually took a toll on him.

Brian was given some information about Carer Gateway by a hospital worker and says the services helped to get him back track.

"I was becoming very dejected and mentally impaired going home from hospital crying. When I rang Carer Gateway, the worker I was assigned to, Lisa, was very supportive."

Brian wasn't sure what he needed, or what kind of support services he might be able to receive from Carer Gateway. But together he and Lisa identified that he'd benefit from some online information and help sessions, mental health counselling and support to place his wife in a nursing home for a few weeks of respite care.

"I had a break away for three weeks – a trip to the Northern Territory. Lisa was able to pick me up from my shoestrings and get me back to some normality. Mischelle and I both recently attended a walking group, which was a great marker of how far we've come."

"I very much appreciated the support I received from Carer Gateway and have already referred a friend whose husband is in the early stages of dementia. She is also very grateful for the referral and the assistance she is receiving."

Further information regarding any articles featured in this newsletter is available by contacting -

Carer Support Service Post: P.O Box 199 Ballarat VIC 3353 Phone: 5333 7104 Email: Carers@gh.org.au

Business Hours: Monday – Friday 9:00am – 5:00pm (Closed Public Holidays)