



Meet Dr Wendy:

Dr Wendy is a very skilled specialist palliative care doctor. She has a special way of not just hearing, but truly listening to a patient's needs. And she can translate that into what she, as a specialist, can do to best support those needs.

Not every day do you find someone who is particularly perfect for their role. But with Dr Wendy, we have the right person for the right role.

Dear Supporter,

When a person becomes a Karuna patient, we know they are more than just their clinical needs. We meet their families and carers. We consider their financial, social and environmental situations. And we help to strengthen their support network. So they can face terminal illness in whatever way is best for them. **I don't think it could be done any other way.**

In my role as Karuna's Director of Community Services, I see how the different parts of our team come together to support patients and their families every day. One integral part of our multidisciplinary team is Dr Wendy: Karuna's Medical Officer.

I think everyone needs a Dr Wendy. She is not only a skilled palliative care specialist, but a deeply compassionate one. She generously shares her knowledge to support Karuna's nursing team. Offering guidance for pain management and symptom relief.

And this generosity extends to Karuna patients and their families too. She works through complex situations with care. She is a strong advocate for patients. And empowers their families and carers to better understand their loved one's condition.

A gift today helps keep Karuna's care, including visits with Dr Wendy, free, accessible, and centred on what matters most.

Palliative care has always been of special interest to Dr Wendy. Although she only joined Karuna two and a half years ago, she has been involved with the specialty for almost thirty years.

"In my second year out of university, I started working for a hospital up in Central Queensland. It was a small hospital, and we all contributed to different areas.

But not many people were interested in the patients who were dying. So that area fell to me. And it was an incredibly rewarding experience," said Dr Wendy.

After spending a couple of years in Central Queensland, Dr Wendy moved to Mt. Olivet Hospital (now known as St. Vincent's Hospital). What was intended to be a six-month placement, turned into six years working in their palliative care unit.

"There were two things I really loved about the palliative care unit at Mt. Olivet. The first was looking after the patients. Mt. Olivet was in-patient, and community focused. Patients came to us at the most vulnerable point in their lives. Caring for them was one place where I knew that I could make a big difference.

The second thing I loved was working alongside a team who felt the same way about the importance of palliative care. I hadn't experienced that before. It was eye-opening."

After working at Mt. Olivet, Dr Wendy stepped away from palliative care. She worked overseas, and then settled in Sydney with her family. There she joined a small general practice which allowed her to continue working in the area she loved most: community.

“I’m a much better palliative care specialist for having done general practice. I’m used to looking after people in their communities, in their homes. I have always had a holistic approach to caring for people,” explained Dr Wendy.

“I feel far more confident now, that if one of my patients asked me about something that is not palliative, I would still be able to support them. It gave me a much broader perspective of the whole family, and all aspects of their care.”

Dr Wendy spent seventeen years working in general practice. And then she returned to palliative medicine as a carer herself. After her dad was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. She and her family were able to care for him at home.

During this time, Dr Wendy and her family were supported by a team of palliative care nurses. They treated the whole family with warmth and kindness. And as their connection grew, it also raised an important question for Dr Wendy – **Why am I not doing this too?**

It was a question that would lead Dr Wendy to her role at Karuna. As the medical officer, her goal is to make end of life as easy as possible for patients and their families. This includes behind-the-scenes tasks such as writing scripts for medication, or signing off on paperwork.

It also includes visiting patients at home, or doing telehealth appointments. Both of these options help Dr Wendy assess a patient’s needs, so that we can best support them to stay home. Whether their concerns are related to pain, or other aspects of their care.

Another important part of Dr Wendy’s role is supporting the Karuna team. I have never worked anywhere where someone is so well-respected. The nurses and social workers can call her at any point of their day and ask for advice or support. She is a reassuring presence and has built a strong relationship with all parts of the Karuna team.

While Dr Wendy supports patients, families, and the Karuna team, it is the generosity of people like you that make her role possible. Thanks to your donations, families can access Dr Wendy’s support free of charge. Support that includes a fierce advocate, who truly believes in the benefit of person-centred, holistic care.

“I think we are so blessed, because of the generosity of our donors, to be able to continue to offer a service that doesn’t cost anything.

I’m so proud to say that I work for a not-for-profit. That we don’t expect our patients to pay anything. That we can look after people from all walks of life. Their finances are irrelevant to the care that we provide. I think that is such a privilege.”

Kind regards,
Sue Bambling
Director of Community Services
Karuna Hospice Services

Your generosity helps ensure patients and families receive expert and compassionate care, free of charge.

Your donation today, means no family faces end of life without expert support.

