



Being home for the holidays is about embracing moments of connection with the people we love.

Receiving end-of-life care at home, or grieving for a loved one during the season, is no different. The holidays can bring precious opportunities for love, connection, and support.

Will you help us care for families during the holiday season and beyond?

Dear Karuna supporter,

More than three years after receiving a life-changing brain cancer diagnosis, Karuna patient Paul is preparing to spend the holiday season with his family. Their plans are not too different from other families. There will be downtime for swimming, and visits to the gym. Walks along the Kedron Brook with his wife, Kirsty, and the family dog, Chewie. And finding time for short getaways with their children, William and Samuel.

These ordinary moments are not something that Paul takes for granted. In 2023, after experiencing debilitating headaches, Paul was diagnosed with a Grade 4 Glioblastoma. A type of cancer with limited options for treatment. His prognosis was just 12 to 14 months.

Hearing that Paul had incurable brain cancer was something that no one in the family was prepared for. With Kirsty's help, he juggled conversations with their children, extended family, friends, schools, and workplaces, alongside conversations about treatment and surgery.

In those first few weeks, the family felt surrounded by kindness. Having vulnerable conversations with their community gave them the time and space to focus on Paul's recovery. It also meant they could be together as a family when Paul started treatment.

Paul received surgery to de-bulk the tumour, followed shortly by radiation and chemotherapy. With treatment, Paul is now stable. His cancer has even improved in some areas.

"Only one treatment protocol is available for this type of cancer, and I'm incredibly fortunate to have responded so well to it," explained Paul. "We know how serious Glioblastoma is, but we're grateful for the time we've had together and for the chance to keep making plans as a family."

Paul was able to leave hospital after his surgery and receive his cancer treatment as an outpatient. Because his tumour did not progress as quickly as initially feared, he gained valuable time to research what he wanted for his future care. This included options for palliative and end-of-life care in his local community.

It was through his research that Paul was introduced to Karuna for the first time. The recommendation came from his care team at the RBWH, as well as the Peace of Mind Foundation, a dedicated brain cancer support charity. As a Lutwyche local, Paul soon realised how close he was to Karuna House in Windsor. On his way to a radiation appointment at the hospital one day, he decided to stop by for a visit.



Paul and Kirsty with their sons, William and Samuel

Since that first meeting, Paul has remained in close contact with the Karuna team. This has allowed everyone to stay updated and responsive to his condition. Although Paul has not needed nursing support yet, he and the family are reassured to know that Karuna is available. If his brain cancer recurs, our dedicated team can help transition his home and lifestyle to suit his changing needs.

Paul has also found comfort in some of the other services Karuna offers. He regularly attends group meditation at Karuna House. And has additional one-on-one sessions with Venerable Gonpo at home. Spiritual care has helped Paul learn practical ways to cope with the physical and emotional stress of cancer treatment.

"The first time I visited Karuna, I was immediately welcomed by a friendly team of nurses, social workers, and a Buddhist monk," recalled Paul. "Regular support from Venerable Gonpo has helped me trust my medical oncologist's advice that my tumour is stable. It has enabled me to take a break from treatment, and focus on spending more time with Kirsty and the boys."

Terminal illnesses can be unpredictable. Changes in pain or symptoms can quickly become overwhelming for palliative patients, and their carers and family members.

Accessing end-of-life care early in the journey can be helpful in times of stress. For Paul and his family, building a connection with Karuna has meant they never feel alone when facing difficult decisions.

Your kind support of Karuna makes early access to end-of-life care possible. Donations from our Karuna community enables our dedicated team to meet the rising cost of admissions, respond to the changing needs of the people we care for, and provides access to services such as counselling and spiritual care.

But in some cases, advance planning is not possible. Many families face diagnosis and loss in the span of just a few weeks.

Peter and his children, Tom and Claudia, are preparing for their second Christmas without their wife and mum, Nicole. The season feels different without Nicole, who always brought the holiday spirit to their family. She was a very bubbly and caring person, who loved being involved with her children and in their community. Peter remembers how the news of her diagnosis affected everyone in their circle.

"It hit everyone like a freight train," said Peter. "She was just diagnosed with Stage IV pancreatic cancer. And then she was sent home from the hospital with a prognosis of three to six months. There was no time for people to process the grief and shock."

Nicole initially started treatment in hospital in May 2025. But she picked up an infection, and chemotherapy had to be paused. She was sent home from hospital on her 51st birthday in June. Only weeks later, she died at home.

When Nicole came home from the hospital, Karuna supported Peter to provide her end-of-life care. The nursing team assisted with pain management and administering medication. They also helped to set-up Nicole's room and bed in a way that would make her comfortable and secure.

Most importantly – Karuna gave Peter the ability to say "I can't do it alone." After a particularly difficult night with Nicole, he called Karuna feeling overwhelmed and needing urgent support. The nurses rearranged their schedule to be able to see them earlier in the day. Their responsive care made a huge difference to Peter and Nicole during a vulnerable time.

"The great thing about Karuna is that they're clinically professional. But there's more to them than just being a clinician," explained Peter. "They're very caring, very warm. They all have their own personalities and special touches. That little bit extra. They would do whatever they could for us, for Nicole."



Nicole and her husband and carer, Peter



Your generosity makes end-of-life care possible for Karuna patients like Paul and Nicole, and their families

Although Peter knows being home was what Nicole wanted, he found it confronting to be her primary caregiver. Her rapid decline meant that Peter's focus had to be on her medical and physical needs. There was little time to think about Nicole's affairs, or their future without her. She also struggled to hold conversations due to the strong medication she was receiving. And needed assistance with tasks like changing position, walking, and going to the bathroom.

"We are very thankful that Nicole was able to have some important conversations shortly after her initial diagnosis," shared Peter. "She spoke to each of our children individually to explain her diagnosis. We were also able to talk about where she wanted to be at the end. She was very clear that she wanted to be at home."

When Nicole died, Peter had to navigate her end-of-life admin alone. This included organising probate, property title transfer, life insurance, and Nicole's final tax return. He also had to speak to schools, banks, utilities, and health and superannuation funds. It was a massive undertaking to make changes and formally recognise Nicole's death.

Peter's experience shows us that while many families have an idea of what care at home will look like, the reality can be different from expectation. It is okay to feel overwhelmed and to ask for help.

Shortly after Nicole's death in July 2025, Karuna began a new partnership with Wellways Carer Gateways focused on offering support to carers like Peter. This service aims to fill the gaps that families may experience when they bring their loved one home. Including financial needs, end-of-life planning, and psychological support.

Your generosity and feedback helps us to understand where Karuna care can grow and improve. So that no patient, carer, or family member feels isolated at end-of-life.

More than a year after losing Nicole, Peter and his children are still finding their new normal. Peter has adopted a flexible work schedule that allows him to be home more often. As Tom and Claudia focus on university and school, he takes care of tasks around the house like laundry and cooking dinner. He wants them to be able to focus on their studies, friends, and lives as much as possible.

One important change Peter has made is having dinner together as often as possible. Their schedules were so different, and so busy. It was not unusual for everyone to eat separately. Now, they all know the importance in finding time for each other.

Your support this year can help our multi-disciplinary team to support patients, carers, and family members. So that they can focus on recognising special traditions, making new memories, and simply being together.

The holiday season undeniably looks different for people facing terminal illness. But love and connection can still be present at home during end-of-life care.

If you are able, please consider making a gift to support those requiring Karuna's care through the holidays and beyond.