

In Good Company



Mercy Palliative Care volunteer Brian Young (right) with patient Allan Howlett (left) at Allan's home in Werribee.

Once a week, Mercy Palliative Care volunteer Brian Young visits palliative care patient, Allan Howlett, at his Werribee home to provide companionship and practical support.

Allan does not have a 24/7 carer so sometimes he needs a bit of a break and some company," Brian says.

"That's where I come in." Allan lives with emphysema, which at times restricts his ability to get out in the community.

"It affects what I can and cannot do. If I have a bad day, it is difficult for me to do even a supermarket trip," Allan says.

"When Brian visits, it provides a bit of a break and makes the day go a bit better."

During their weekly visits, Brian often helps Allan with administrative tasks over a cuppa at his home. Other times, the pair get out and about to a local restaurant or the Werribee Park Golf Club and discuss current affairs over lunch.

Allan says he looks forwards to Brian's visits because they allow for some "time out".

"It really helps when you have somebody to talk to. The volunteers provide support that I would not otherwise get. If there is anything I need support with, Brian might know something and may be able to assist me.

"When Brian started volunteering with Mercy Palliative Care, he began by delivering mobility and medical equipment to patients.

The team then asked if he would be interested in visiting palliative care patients in their homes.

He says supporting palliative care patients and their loved ones through an acutely difficult time is a gratifying experience.

“The visits are a positive thing to do. The support is particularly beneficial for carers. You feel for the carers that are doing a 24/7 caring role, and even though I only give up a few hours of my time each week, they are really grateful for the respite support to give them a break from their care responsibilities,” Brian says.

Mercy Palliative Care Volunteer Coordinator Kellie Sandral says volunteers like Brian bring life experiences and a listening ear to patients and families at a vulnerable time in their lives.

“Our volunteers support patients in a number of ways including providing companionship, transport assistance, respite and assisting with biography writing and legacy work. Above all, they bring a sense of normality to our patient’s lives by taking the focus away from the illness,” Kellie says.

Brian says that a little bit of care goes a long way. “Knowing that I am providing assistance that people appreciate — and in lots of cases, really need — is a good feeling.”

This article was first appeared on Mercy Health Australia website. For more information on Mercy Health Australia please visit their website: <https://www.mercyhealth.com.au/>

