

South West Compassionate Community Network branches out to Busselton

Community



Busselton resident Toni Jacobsen is part of a small team of volunteers making our community a more compassionate place to care, die and grieve within.

Ms Jacobsen is a volunteer with the Community Connector Program, an initiative of the South West Compassionate Communities Network.

The program is supported by the West Australian Country Health Service and links trained volunteers with families or individuals who are caring, dying or grieving.

Through the program, Ms Jacobsen was given specialised training last year and is now supporting three Nannup residents and their families in a variety of ways.

"I have a background in aged care and management so I know the unique value of community support for those who are nearing end of life, carers and those who are grieving," she said.


"Hopefully this program will help our community to increase its death and grief literacy and make sure that some people have support when they need it most.

"It's not only a valuable service for those being supported, as a volunteer I feel greatly rewarded to be able to help in a tangible way."

The Community Connector Program will be celebrated and promoted at the inaugural WA Compassionate Communities Forum in Bunbury on Saturday, August 7.

South West Compassionate Communities chair Samar Aoun is a Professor of Palliative Care Research through La Trobe University and the Perron Institute for Neurological and Translational Science.



 South West Compassionate Communities Network chair professor Samar Aoun is proudly promoting the Community Connector Program which links volunteers like Toni Jacobsen with those who are caring, dying and grieving. Image supplied.

Professor Aoun's research underpins the program and is being integrated into public health care policy and planning globally to foster more community-driven support systems.

"This program fills a vital gap for those who are dying, those who care for them and also up-skills the community to better support people through grief," she said.

"Our predominantly Western culture can mean that people fall through the cracks and they don't always have the community support and connection they need at end of life and after a death.

"Only 10 per cent of people will have complex grief that requires professional intervention, the rest of the time our community can step in and offer that support.

"Through this program, we encourage people to put their hand up for support and foster this approach to community-based palliative care which also takes the pressure off the public health system.

"Connectors like Toni are integral to this program, they go into homes, reduce social isolation and connect the family to the wider community who can help in a variety of ways.

"They might organise a load of firewood, walk the dog, fill out paperwork or just have a chat over a cup of tea."

Tickets for the forum on August 7 are now available through the Bunbury Regional Entertainment Centre. There is also a range of Dying to Know Day activities surrounding the forum.

This includes an open day at the City of Busselton and Death Cafe where people can find out all about end-of-life planning, services and options offered in the region.

To find out more visit comcomnetworksw.com.