

CARERS NT

CONNECT

MAGAZINE 2024





ABOUT CONNECT MAGAZINE

CONNECT Magazine is a bi-annual magazine produced by Carers NT featuring the latest news and events by the organisation.

ABOUT THE COVER

On this cover of CONNECT Magazine, we spotlight Carers NT Chair Gail and her husband, Bill, a couple whose enduring love shines through in Gail's heartfelt journey of caregiving. Her story is a moving testament to resilience, compassion, and love.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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MESSAGE FROM OUR **CEO**



Welcome to the first edition of Connect for 2024!

It's been an incredibly busy and transformative time here at Carers NT, as our team has navigated a period of significant changes across the social services landscape. There have been, and continue to be many reforms happening across Aged Care, NDIS and the Integrated Carer Support Services (Carer Gateway) programs. Carers NT has been at the forefront across all of these reform processes with myself and the team proactively advocating for carers and their families in the Northern Territory. As always, we've also been out in the community, engaging with carers, organising events, and celebrating the spirit of togetherness that defines our organisation.

Some recent highlights have included: Our community outreach program which took us to many remote locations including Gapuwiyak, Galiwinku, Ngukkur, Groote Eylandt, and Milingimbi, where we welcomed over 80 new carers. A special shout-out to Lynne and Kieran for their dedication, and to the EA Regional Council Aged and Disability Service team for their support in helping us reach remote Indigenous carers across the NT. Our community outreach program has been a huge success and we are hoping to build on this great program later this year. Watch this space for more details in the next issue!

In March, we celebrated International Women's Day with the City of Darwin. The day was filled with music, a city walk led by the Darwin City Brass Band, and engaging conversations at our information stall. It was a joy to honour the achievements of women in our community.

The MIDAWARR Day Out at Gove Peninsula Surf Life Saving Club was a fantastic event, bringing together the aged and disability sectors for a day of fun and community. Thanks to Anglicare NT, ARRCs, and the Nhulunbuy office of NIAA for making this event a success.

Our Young Carers Picnic Day at SWELL Palmerston in June was a delightful day of relaxation and bonding for our young carers. The NAIDOC Week celebrations at the Wulagi Wellbeing Center, featuring a touching Welcome to Country and performances by our Tiwi Island clients, were a beautiful tribute to Indigenous culture.

I want to extend heartfelt thanks to our incredible staff, our board and our corporate sponsors who make all this possible. Carers NT is more than just an organisation; it's a vibrant community. We look forward to continuing our journey of supporting and uplifting carers and their families across the Northern Territory. Onwards and upwards we go!

Steve Vitone
CEO, Carers NT



MY JOURNEY AS A **CARER**

Anybody can become a carer at anytime, for a whole myriad of reasons. This includes members of our Carers NT board as well. The below story comes from the Carers NT Chair, Gail Marsh and in it Gail shares her personal journey as a carer with her late husband, Bill.

My beautiful man Bill Marsh was my partner for 31 years and my husband for 25 of those years. He was my best friend and I was his “mate”. We lived across most centres of the NT where Bill’s NTG position took us. We raised the kids and we both worked hard to achieve what we have in life today.

Bill was an avid golfer and played at least a couple of times a week, so when he gradually lost interest in his beloved sport, I was a little confused, but was soon to find out why and what was lurking in the future.

Bill had been unwell since having surgery two years previously, he just never was himself again.

I can remember it well, he would come home from work and complain to me that his memory was going, I would try and reassure him that he had a lot of work and sometimes we just do forget things when we are too busy.

As time went on his forgetfulness became more obvious to the point where I was beginning to worry.

For the first time in 31 years Bill forgot my birthday, but our daughter, Andrea, had taken care of that for him with gifts and flowers for me on the day. Andrea, however, had to prompt Bill on the day to wish me Happy Birthday and give me the gifts.

For a lot of years, I have worked in the aged, disability and mental health sector in the NT. I had been the Manager of the Alzheimers Australia office in Alice Springs for a couple of years and worked in the Darwin office as well, so I was quite well versed and aware of dementia and Alzheimers disease.

This was not like that!

When we went to the doctors they advised that Bill had suffered a stroke, so that might be a connection, I was reasoning this might be Vascular Dementia.

MY JOURNEY AS A CARER

As the days, weeks and months went on, things for Bill were getting worse, he could no longer write or use his computer, which was very frustrating for him. He could no longer drive as he became lost on a couple of occasions. The medical doctor had to cancel his licence as it was no longer safe. An absolute blessing for Bill was that he became unaware of all the losses within his life he was encountering, which may sound harsh, but it made it so much easier. He would have hated the person he was becoming.

Bill would move around the house day and night quite often not stopping to rest or sleep, his brain was just confused. The most frustrating thing for both of us is that the medical profession were not quite sure what was happening to him. Bill still had some insight at that stage which caused him a lot of grief and anxiety as he was always a perfectionist in his professional life, his personal life as well as our much loved garden, everything was always polished and perfect.

Bill was a Senior Project Manager for Department of Infrastructure here in Darwin and was highly regarded in his workplace for his knowledge and professionalism. As the situation digressed Bill had to take leave from his job as he could no longer cope. His work colleagues and mates visited Bill on a weekly basis, they were amazing, they kept coming throughout the whole journey even into Palliative Care, I was so grateful to those guys who showed Bill unconditional love and support.

Within weeks he had deteriorated, I was trying to stay positive for both of us but mostly for him, to give him hope. He became more dependent as each day began, I became his fulltime carer very quickly, he had lost the ability to do everyday tasks.

Bill was diagnosed in March 2014 with a rare and rapid brain disease and passed away on 31st August 2014, it was that quick! We could not believe what the medical profession were telling us, "Bill has a rare brain disease and there is no cure!" What!

Our journey was, that one day I was Bill's wife and his mate of 25 years and the next day I was his fulltime carer.

This disease was so fast, we couldn't keep up.

I cannot emphasise enough the support we received from Carers NT as well as other government and non-government organisations, without that support our journey would have been much harder. They know how to assist when the going gets tough, and tough it was, and day by day it got tougher.

The respite hours just to go to the shop or the doctor was invaluable. Our daughter Andrea was always there helping and just spending time with her much loved dad, but she was doing it tough too. So, giving her a break from the caring role was important as well. Before Bill deteriorated Andrea would take her dad to various plant shops just to be in a different environment from home.

Once Bill stopped walking that was no longer possible unless he was in a wheelchair.

Bill moved in the Palliative Care Unit 6 weeks before he passed away. The staff there are just amazing, they have a holistic approach which supports the patient and the carer/family members.

Like anyone caring for someone you love, it is an absolute pleasure to ensure your loved one has the best care they can have and they deserve. I feel that Bill had that, everyone involved did their absolute best, however, it just wasn't enough.



My beautiful man is at peace now, after fighting so hard, I miss him terribly each and every day. I think of him always; little things remind me of him always. I am comforted knowing he is not suffering that dreaded disease any longer and he is no longer living in his confused world.

It was an honour to care for my husband, it was a difficult journey, but I know in my heart that he would have done the absolute same for me.

New beginnings I am telling myself!

I sit in my home surrounded by beautiful memories and memorabilia of Bill, I am convinced my best friend is around me always.

Bill was a huge Jimmy Barnes fan, so hopefully he is banging out a few tunes in heaven with the volume up high! Kai San being his favourite.

This is a brief overview of my caring journey, being a carer should never be underestimated, it is a 24 hour job and it is a hard job, no scheduled smoko breaks!

Becoming a carer can present itself when you least expect it, never take your life and health for granted!



Celebrating Cross-Border Collaboration: Carers NT's Global Impact on Aged Care Training

What an exciting time it is for all of the team at Carers NT!

This year, we've taken big strides in building bridges between Australia and Timor Leste, especially in the world of aged care. Just a few months ago, on May 15, 2024, Carers NT had the honour of welcoming a distinguished delegation from Timor Leste's SEFOPE (Ministry of Training and Employment) to our Darwin office and the Wulagi Aged Care Centre. This visit wasn't just a formal affair—it was a fantastic opportunity to share knowledge and strengthen ties across borders.

The Timorese delegation, including key figures like Programme Advisor Juliot A.X Belo and Vocational Training Director Leandro Bernardo F. Vicente, came to learn all about how Carers NT operates its top-notch aged care services.

The visit was part of the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) Scheme, which focuses on developing skilled workers in the Pacific region, including Timor Leste.

Chris Hayward, Carers NT's Deputy CEO, and our Senior NDIS Coordinator Ajay Santosh played hosts, guiding the guests through the ins and outs of providing exceptional care. They even held a roundtable discussion with the NT VET Community of Practice, courtesy of the NT Department of Industry, Tourism, and Trade. This was a perfect platform to swap ideas and chat about future projects to boost the skills of Timorese professionals.

This visit wasn't just a one-time thing—it was a celebration of a growing partnership aimed at fostering talent and delivering top-quality care. Carers NT, along with the Australian and Timorese governments, are committed to building long-lasting relationships that benefit both nations.





Adding to the excitement, Carers NT's dynamic duo, Chris Hayward and Yugesh Soni, the Executive Manager of Finance, were invited over to Dili for the inaugural 2024 Timor Leste - Australia Economic and Business Conference. It was a great moment for Carers NT to shine on an international stage, sharing their insights on the PALM Scheme and exploring new opportunities for collaboration. Chris made a great presentation and spoke with passion about the range of service that Carers NT provides and the opportunity for Timorese to work here in Australia.

One of the highlights was meeting His Excellency Francisco Kalbuadi Lay, the Vice Prime Minister of Timor Leste.

The conversation was all about the future of aged care and how both countries can work together for better training and job opportunities. It was clear from this meeting that Carers NT's influence is expanding beyond the Northern Territory, making waves across the region.

Carers NT's efforts are a wonderful example of how collaboration can lead to big wins in healthcare and employment. They're not just making a difference locally but also contributing to a global movement towards better care and stronger communities. Here's to more partnerships, more learning, and more celebrating shared success!



What a great NT Executive team led by Chris Hayward (Deputy CEO) and Yugesh Soni (Executive Manager of Finance) who spoke before His Excellency Francisco Kalbuadi Lay, the Vice Prime Minister of Timor Leste, at the inaugural 2024 Timor Leste - Australia Economic and Business Conference. It was a great moment for Carers NT to shine on an international stage, sharing their insights on the PALM Scheme and exploring new opportunities for collaboration. Chris made a great presentation and spoke with passion about the range of service that Carers NT provides and the opportunity for Timorese to work here in Australia.

AGED CARE TEAM MEMBER INTERVIEW

SUMAN SAPKOTAS



Why I am Passionate About Working in the Aged Care Sector

I was born and raised in Nepal, a country where family values and respect for elders are deeply ingrained in our culture. Growing up in a joint family, my childhood was profoundly shaped by the presence and influence of my grandparents. With my parents often busy at work, my grandmother became my constant companion. We went everywhere together, and through those shared experiences, I developed a deep emotional attachment to older people.

In 2017, I moved to Australia to pursue a Master's degree in Professional Accounting. While I successfully completed my studies, I found that my true calling lay elsewhere. The emotional bonds I formed with my grandparents and other elderly members of my community never faded. Instead, they grew stronger, guiding me toward a career where I could honour and support the elderly, just as I had done in my youth.

This passion led me to undertake a course in aged care, equipping myself with the necessary skills and knowledge to serve the elderly effectively. In August 2020, I joined Carers NT as a support worker. My dedication and commitment to providing compassionate care were recognised, and by December 2020, I was promoted to Senior Support Worker.

Today, I am proud to serve as an Aged Care Coordinator in Darwin, a position I have held since August 2023. This role allows me to combine my professional skills with my deep-seated respect and empathy for older people. Every day, I strive to ensure that our elderly clients receive the care, dignity, and respect they deserve.

Working in aged care is not just a job for me; it is a fulfillment of a lifelong commitment to honouring and caring for our elders, inspired by the love and lessons from my own family.

Katherine Seniors Expo

The Katherine Seniors Expo 2024 was a highlight this 2024, where we joined forces with over 40 organisations to celebrate our seniors. Our team members, Bonnie and Andrea, did a stellar job engaging with attendees and sharing information about our services. It was a wonderful opportunity to network and showcase the support available to Territorians. A big thank you to everyone who stopped by!



Darwin Seniors Expo

Another busy day for Andrea and Bonnie for answering all of your questions and hearing your carer stories. They were happy to receive much interest during the event!

Events like these make it always inspiring to connect with so many caring individuals in our Senior Care community in Darwin.



Day Respite in Wulagi

Happy to see clients unwind! Carers NT offers three cozy respite houses in Darwin - two in the suburbs and one in the serene rural area. These spaces are perfect to unwind, interact and a safe space.

Respite care can allow both carer and the person they care for to take a break. With group activities designed to boost independence and re-enablement, both carers and who they care for can recharge.

YOUNG CARERS

Young Achiever Award Gala 2024

Every year, the Office of Disability proudly sponsors the Young Carers Award at the Northern Territory Young Achiever Awards. This award honors the outstanding contributions of young people under 30 who dedicate themselves to caring for someone with a disability, illness or is frail aged. Their selfless work often greatly enhances the lives of those they care for, fostering independence, confidence, and overall well-being.

This year, Khalehla Cartwright from Herbert was recognized as the award winner for her unwavering commitment to her sister, Emmelline, who has Dup15q syndrome. Khalehla's dedicated care has significantly reduced Emmelline's anxiety and nurtured her independence.

Finalists Precilla Campbell, Eritabeta Teiannang, and Paige Laker Baker also demonstrated remarkable dedication, skillfully balancing their caregiving responsibilities with their personal and educational pursuits, while making a positive impact on their families and communities.

The Carers NT staff are always privileged to attend this event, showing their support for the finalists and their families.





Celebrating Our Young Carers: A Year of Connection, Growth, and Fun

We started the year with a boost of positivity at our 'New Year, New You' workshop, where young carers gathered to connect and find inspiration for the year ahead. Led by Breanna Duncan from the Balanced Choice Programme, the day was filled with laughter, games, and support—a perfect way to kick off the year with resilience and growth.

During Northern Territory Youth Week, our young carers got creative at the annual Couch Surfing Event, painting colorful couches while bonding through peer support activities. It was a fun-filled day of art, color-coding, and connection.

The Alice Springs Young Carers Connect Session saw our all-girls group enjoying a day at the greens. Between teeing off and playing engaging games, they explored topics like mental health, self-care, and friendship, making it a refreshing break from their daily responsibilities.

And on 26 June, we wrapped up with our Young Carers Picnic Day at SWELL Palmerston—a relaxed day full of activities where our young carers took time to unwind, have fun, and strengthen their bonds.

These events have been all about recharging, building connections, and celebrating the strength of our young carers. Here's to more memorable moments ahead!



MIND BLANK SERIES CARER'S WORKSHOP



Transforming Carer Support Through Interactive Workshops

From 27 May to 14 June 2024, Carers NT, in partnership with Mind Blank, hosted seven workshops across Alice Springs, Katherine, Darwin, and Nhulunbuy, reaching around 160 participants. These sessions offered tailored support, resources, and strategies to help carers enhance their mental health.

Mind Blank uses interactive storytelling and entertainment to teach participants how to maintain mental well-being, recognise warning signs, and navigate difficult conversations.

Participants of the workshop were particularly impressed by the creative and humorous methods used to present difficult scenarios. As one attendee shared, "The innovative and humorous way they presented difficult scenarios made the content not only relatable but also easier to digest". This unique approach allowed participants to engage with sensitive care topics in a manner that felt safe and accessible.



The workshop also nurtured a strong sense of community among participants. One attendee shared that the most impactful part of the experience was “connecting with others [carers] who truly understand and empathize,” highlighting the vital role of support and shared understanding. These workshops offered a safe space for open discussions, allowing participants to share their stories freely and recognize that they are not alone in their journey.

Mind Blank’s use of theatre as a tool for conversation was met with high praise. One participant noted, “The use of theatre as a vehicle for conversation was very effective.” The inclusion of role-play and interactive discussions allowed attendees to explore real-life scenarios in a controlled environment, providing valuable insights without making anyone feel vulnerable.

The overwhelming success of these workshops has left participants eager for more. Many expressed a desire for additional sessions, particularly in remote communities where resources and support for carers are often scarce. “It would be beneficial to have these sessions more often in other [remote] communities where there’s little knowledge and support,” one participant suggested, highlighting the critical need for widespread access to such valuable resources.

As Carers NT continues to advocate and promote programs and services for the care community, it is important to understand the situation and learn more about their stories. Mind Blank’s transformative workshops and effective communication about carer topics has proven to make a positive impact to the people who attended.

We are looking forward to do more interactive workshops that are informative, relatable, inclusive and accessible to many of our Territorians.

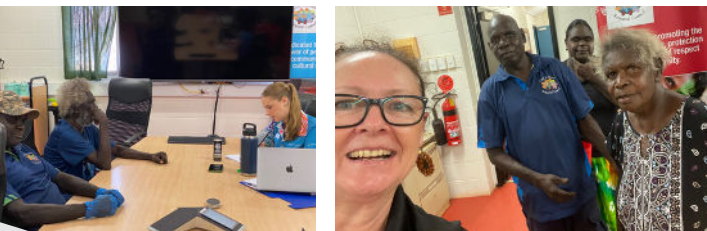
OUT AND ABOUT WITH CARERS NT

Over the past six months, Carers NT has been buzzing with activity, spreading joy, support, and community spirit across the Northern Territory. From workshops and picnics to expos and cultural celebrations, the team has been out and about, making a difference in the lives of carers and the communities they serve. Let's take a look back at some of the highlights!

Community Outreach Adventures

Our dedicated team has been busy traveling to several remote communities across the NT including Ngukkur, Groote Eylandt, and Milingimbi, connecting with carers and expanding our community. These visits were more than just outreach—they were about growing our family! We're thrilled to have welcomed around 80 new carers from these communities, thanks to the tireless efforts of our outreach Coordinators, Kieran and Lynne, with support from the ICSS team.

We extend a special thanks to the EA Regional Council Aged and Disability Service teams for helping us connect with so many amazing individuals. We look forward to continuing this important work and strengthening these vital connections!



Health Awareness in Ramingining

Health and wellness were the focus in Ramingining, where we hosted an informative session on shingles, just in time for upcoming vaccinations. The Miwatj nurses, Susan and Lana, did an amazing job leading this initiative. It's all about keeping our community informed and protected!



International Women's Day Celebrations

We proudly participated in the International Women's Day celebrations hosted by the City of Darwin. It was a fantastic day filled with music, information stalls, and delicious BBQ sausages! The Darwin City Brass Band led a city walk, setting the perfect tone for a day of community engagement. Thank you to everyone who visited our stall and shared in the celebration of women's achievements.



MIDAWARR Day Out 2024

What a day it was at the Gove Peninsula Surf Life Saving Club for the MIDAWARR Day Out! This event brought together the aged and disability sector across East Arnhem for a day of fun, learning, and community bonding. We had music, dancing, delicious food, and stalls with valuable information. A massive thank you to Anglicare NT, ARRCs, and the Nhulunbuy office of NIAA for their support in making this event a smashing success. The smiles said it all!



Northern Territory History Book Award

On July 15th, Dr. Genevieve Campbell and the Ngarukuruwala Women's Group were honored guests at a reception hosted by NT Chief Minister Eva Lawler for the 2024 Chief Ministers Northern Territory History Book Award. Marie, Jacinta, Frances, and Elaine from Tiwi Island's Carers NT Aged Care Remote Respite had an amazing time and are thrilled to bring home the award for their book, "Murli La: Songs and Stories of the Tiwi Islands."



*Ngarukuruwala Women's Group
with Genevieve Campbell*

**Murli la: Songs and Stories of the
Tiwi Islands**

PALM Scheme Community Event

It's heartening to see the significant development among PALM workers since their first introduction. Local communities have provided positive feedback on how these workers have fostered connections through various activities. These photos from the recent PALM community event at the church capture the spirit of togetherness, where PALM workers enthusiastically introduced themselves and established a communication hub to share updates about the community and the PALM scheme.



NAIDOC Week

Wrapping up this vibrant period, we celebrated NAIDOC Week with a heartfelt lunch at the Wulagi Wellbeing Center. The day started with a beautiful Welcome to Country by Jeanneen McLennan, followed by a delicious sausage sizzle. Our clients from Tiwi Island showcased their weaving skills and sang a touching song about unity. It was a beautiful celebration of Indigenous culture and community spirit.

As we look back on these past six months, we are filled with gratitude for the support and enthusiasm of everyone involved. Carers NT is more than an organization; it's a community. We can't wait to see what the next six months bring as we continue to support and uplift carers across the Northern Territory. Stay tuned for more adventures!



Upcoming Events Carers Week

National Carers Week is an opportunity to recognise, celebrate and raise awareness about Australia's 2.65 million carers. In 2024, National Carers Week will take place from Sunday 13 to Saturday 19 October.

Carers NT would like you to come and celebrate Carers Week with us at our free Family Fun Days, happening at three locations across the NT on Sunday 13 October 2024. Come along and enjoy some fun activities for the whole family, including a delicious sausage sizzle.

DARWIN

Leanyer
Recreation
Park 215
Vanderlin
Drive, Leanyer
11am – 1pm

KATHERINE

Henry Scott
Recreation
Centre Lot 2525
Stuart Highway,
Katherine
11 am – 1 pm

NHULUNBUY

Nhulunbuy
Aquatic
Centre 16
Westal Street,
Nhulunbuy
3pm – 5pm



Carers NT is supported by:
Australian Government Department of Social Services
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For further information on our events and/or services, please
visit our website, social media pages or contact us:

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