

Gold Coast 3rd Annual Palliative Care Conference 2024 Allied Health and Nursing

Inspiring Continuous Learning through Practical Application

Saturday 15th June - Presenter Biographies



Dr Jessica Maskell, State-wide Clinical Lead SPaRTa Grief and Bereavement
Grief and Bereavement Care: how do we best provide support to those who need it?

Dr Jessica Maskell (BSW, B Pub Hlth, PhD) is the state-wide clinical lead for Grief and Bereavement with the Specialist Palliative Care Rural Telehealth Service (SPaRTa). Assistant Director of Social Work at Gold Coast University Hospital. Dr Maskell has over 20 years' clinical social work experience working in paediatric and adult services in public hospitals both in Australia and the United Kingdom and more than 8 years in Operational Management managing a large team. Dr Maskell has led numerous quality improvement and change management projects and is currently responsible for the implementation of the SPaRTa Grief and Bereavement Model of Care. She has over 10 peer-reviewed publications, has supervised PhD candidates and has presented at National and International Conferences.



Merryn Gray, SPaRTa Gold Coast Grief and Bereavement Care Coordinator
Grief and Bereavement Care: how do we best provide support to those who need it?

Merryn is a Senior Social Worker currently working as the Grief and Bereavement Coordinator for the Specialist Palliative Care Rural Telehealth Service (SPaRTa) GC Hub. Merryn has over 10 years of experience as a Social Worker for Gold Coast Health and has worked in a diverse range of health care fields including Neonatal Intensive Care, Maternity, Chronic Disease, and General Medical. In 2021, she transitioned to the Palliative Care Community Team, where she discovered a profound passion for supporting and empowering individuals and their families faced with a terminal illness.

Merryn's commitment to grief and bereavement care is fueled by her dedication to improving services for rural and remote Queenslanders. She is passionate about fostering a cultural shift in how we perceive and engage with grief and loss, aiming to help foster compassionate and understanding communities.



Katherine Richards, Team Leader Specialist Palliative Care, Gold Coast Health

Compassionate Communities

Katherine Richards is the Team Leader for the Gold Coast Health Specialist Palliative Care Service. With a background in Occupational Therapy, Katherine has experience working in palliative care, oncology, acute hospital and rehabilitation settings, along with governance, education, and capability development. She is passionate about optimising best practice service delivery and ensuring equitable access to palliative care for consumers across Queensland.



Maria Callaghan, Older Person's Health & Palliative Care Manager, Northern QLD Primary Health Network (NQPHN)

Compassionate Communities

Maria Callaghan is a registered nurse, midwife, and migration law graduate whose passion is to build compassionate communities. She currently works at Northern Queensland Primary Health Network as the Older Person's Health and Palliative Care Manager and as project lead for the Greater Choices for at Home Palliative Care. Through her advocacy and hands-on engagement in building compassionate communities from Weipa to Maroochydore, Maria has worked with families affected by life limiting illnesses. Maria led the establishment of the North Queensland Compassionate Community Health Connectors Network, under the Compassionate Communities movement, training more than 380 health community connectors to help people access the services they need as they age, are near the end of their life, or who those who are grieving loss in 14 regional communities. Similarly, Maria trained more than 250 lead connectors at 9 communities in Central Queensland, Wide Bay and Sunshine Coast. Trained health connectors help establish a wrap-around informal support network for families affected by life-limiting illnesses so they can access the services they need. Maria currently chairs the North Queensland Palliative Care Interagency Steering Committee, which brings together peak bodies, government departments, service providers, and compassionate health connectors.



Dr Alana Gall

Embracing First Nations Traditional Medicines to provide Culturally Safe Palliative Care to First Nations Peoples

Dr Alana Gall is a proud Truwulway woman, a Pakana (Tasmanian Aboriginal) from the north-east coast of Lutruwita (Tasmania, Australia). Dr Gall is passionate about Indigenous peoples' holistic health and wellbeing, globally. She believes that the wellbeing and identity of Indigenous peoples are strongly centred around strong connections to Country/land, culture, spirituality and each other.

Dr Gall is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow, in the National Centre for Naturopathic Medicine, at Southern Cross University, and an Honorary Research Fellow at both the University of Queensland and Menzies School of Health Research. She is Vice Chair of the [World Federation of Public Health Associations](#), [Indigenous Working Group](#), and the [Vice President-Elect](#) (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) at the [Public Health Association of Australia](#). Dr Gall is also the Indigenous Traditional Medicines representative in the TCIH Coordination Council for the TCIH Coalition of [The People's Declaration for Traditional, Complementary and Integrative Healthcare](#). At Southern Cross University, Dr Gall leads a research program that centres around First Nations Australians traditional medicines, with the aims of [protecting and preserving these medicines](#) for future generations and improving accessibility for all First Nations communities across Australia.

Dr Gall has over a decade of experience in research, research translation, community engagement, health education and a background in Nutritional Medicine. She has an extensive and broad knowledge in First Nations health and wellbeing; First Nations Traditional Medicines; qualitative, Indigenous and decolonising methodologies and methods (including [co-design methods/methodology](#)); PROMs/PREMs measure development, and; systematic, comprehensive and policy reviews. Dr Gall pioneered the use of individual yarns with a think-aloud component, called the '[think-aloud yarn](#)', and co-developed the Key Principles to Co-Design with First Nations peoples, which have informed the development of Cancer Australia's [Australian Cancer Plan](#) and will underpin its implementation (p.29, [Cancer Australia Annual Report 2022-23](#)).



Robert Hardy, Director Training and Capacity Building, LGBTIQ & Health Australia

Equal But Not the Same: LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Palliative Care

Rob joined LGBTIQ+ Health Australia in July 2021. He brings 30 years of experience working in clinical and health promotion roles. Originally trained as an occupational therapist, he has worked in acute, rehabilitation and community settings in the areas of aged care, people with HIV, brain injury, intellectual and physical disabilities. Rob has a strong knowledge of the health system and extensive experience working in the public, private (USA) and non-government sectors including international programs in the Pacific. In Rob's current role, he leads a program that aims to build the capacity of the aged care, palliative care and disability workforce to provide LGBTIQ+ inclusive and culturally safe services.



Tracey Norling, Nurse Practitioner, Specialist Palliative Care, Gold Coast Health

Mastering Tough Conversations

Tracey is a Nurse Practitioner in the Specialist Palliative Care Service. Tracey has an extensive background in oncology, haematology, and palliative care nursing. Her focus is on delivering compassionate clinical care, empowering nursing through education, and providing nursing leadership that drives system and quality improvement initiatives and change management.



Elise Maehler, Palliative Care Consultant, Gold Coast Health
Exploring the Patient Journey: A Dynamic Panel Discussion on Multidisciplinary Palliative Care

Elise Maehler is a Palliative Medicine Specialist working with the Gold Coast Specialist Palliative Care Service. In addition to her love of clinical palliative care, she has a special interest in ethics and medical education.



Kathryn Furnell, Clinical Nurse Consultant, Community Palliative Care, Gold Coast Health

Exploring the Patient Journey: A Dynamic Panel Discussion on Multidisciplinary Palliative Care

Kath is a Clinical Nurse Consultant working within the Specialist Palliative Care Community Team at Robina Hospital. Kath has over 20 years' experience in oncology, haematology and palliative care nursing both within Australia and abroad. Kath has worked in various managerial, educational, and frontline roles. Kath's passion for palliative care was realised very early on in her career with a focused interest in the ongoing development of the Community Service through education, research, and collaboration with other teams. Kath is a strong advocate for patients within the community setting, delivering ongoing support and compassionate care to patients and their families.



Rina Di Iorio, Registered Nurse, Palliative Care Unit, Gold Coast Health

Exploring the Patient Journey: A Dynamic Panel Discussion on Multidisciplinary Palliative Care

Rina is a dedicated Registered Nurse with over 7 years clinical experience in the Palliative Care Unit. She has advanced knowledge in caring for end-stage patients' various disease progression and their symptom management. Her passion is to improve quality patient care and advocate for new nursing staff within the palliative care unit. Rina is also part of a Music Therapy Team and loves playing piano for patients and families in the Palliative Care Unit.



Laurelle Stalker, Senior Palliative Care Social Worker, Gold Coast Health
Exploring the Patient Journey: A Dynamic Panel Discussion on Multidisciplinary Palliative Care

Laurelle is a Senior Social Worker in the Specialist Palliative Care Rural Telehealth Service (SPaRTa) at the Gold Coast. Originally from Victoria, Laurelle has extensive experience as a social worker in both the health and community fields, which includes child and family work for child protection and crisis intervention for survivors of sexual assault. She has worked in paediatric and adult hospital settings for many years specialising in oncology, trauma, and palliative care. Laurelle joined the Gold Coast Palliative Care Service in 2022, to continue her passion for delivering specialised palliative care social work to patients and their significant others in the community, and more recently to rural and regional Southwest Queensland, as part of the SPaRTa Team.



Emily Mitchell, Advanced Palliative Care Occupational Therapist, Gold Coast Health

Exploring the Patient Journey: A Dynamic Panel Discussion on Multidisciplinary Palliative Care

Emily Mitchell is an Advanced Occupational Therapist in the Queensland Specialist Palliative Rural Telehealth Service (SPaRTa) and the Chair of the Statewide Palliative Care Occupational Therapy Collaborative. Emily has had the opportunity to transform her experience as a rural generalist into specialist palliative care services to deliver statewide workforce capacity building strategy along the care continuum. Emily's primary focus is empowering clinicians to deliver values based, locally accessible specialist palliative care services through leading innovative service delivery change management and clinical education initiatives.



Joanna Mangan, Psychologist, QLD Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) Support Service

Voluntary Assisted Dying: 18 months on from Implementation

Jo Mangan is an endorsed Counselling Psychologist and holds the position of Advanced Psychologist with QVAD. Jo has worked extensively in the field of grief, loss and trauma and is passionate about providing care and support not only to members of the community and their families, but also workers in frontline roles, such as palliative care.



**Lauren Carr, Program Lead Ambulance Wish QLD, Palliative Care QLD
*Ambulance Wish***

Currently working at Palliative Care Queensland (PCQ), Lauren is the Program Lead for PCQ's signature Program - Ambulance Wish Queensland (AWQ). Starting in 2020, Lauren worked in a range of different roles for the organisation but found her niche and love for palliative care and compassionate communities through the work with PCQ and AWQ. Lauren is looking forward to the expansion of the program into the Sunshine Coast and Toowoomba region in the coming year and working with the local community and the palliative care sector to raise awareness and education about palliative care in their community.



**Aine McCann, Occupational Therapist, Specialist Palliative Care, Gold Coast Health
*Ambulance Wish***

Aine is an Occupational Therapist and has been working with the Specialist Palliative Care Service for the past few years. Aine loves working in the palliative care space and helping people to engage in meaningful occupations throughout the final stages of their lives, with a special interest in supporting individuals with brain tumours, and their families.



**Samantha Passek, Clinical Nurse Consultant, Specialist Palliative Care, Gold Coast Health
*Ambulance Wish***

Samantha currently works within the Specialist Palliative Care Service on the Gold Coast as a Clinical Nurse Consultant within the SPACE (Specialist Palliative Care in Aged Care Project) and Community Teams. Samantha, originally from Victoria, completed her nursing studies in Geelong and after completing a rotation in community palliative care and during her graduate year developed a deep passion for caring for those at the end of their life. For the past 7 years Samantha has worked on the Gold Coast in both oncology and palliative care. Currently Samantha is enjoying working within the SPACE Team, sharing her knowledge to improve quality of end-of-life care provided within residential aged care homes.



Michelle Philp, Chaplain, Spiritual Care, Gold Coast Health
Self-care and Mindfulness for Body, Mind and Soul

Michelle has been employed by Anglicare for nearly eight years in the role of a Spiritual Carer, at Gold Coast Health. During this time, she has been fortunate to participate in Childrens Memory Day, Kidney Memorial Day and Wave of Light for a number of years. Michelle has been blessed to witness the power of creating space that allow the community to support each other in grief.

She is most proud of 'Tea for the Soul' a program Spiritual Care Services offers to staff at Gold Coast Health. Tea for the Soul is a trolley filled with tea, coffee and treats taken to requested areas by our team. We aim to address bereavement and other emotional needs of our health staff and the risk of compassion fatigue, moral distress, and burnout. Our team take time to 'check in' with staff, build rapport and offer support.

Michelle has spent most of her career working in the area of homeless and family violence in rural areas and now shares this experience teaching with students at Tafe.



Alison Harris, Social Worker, Specialist Palliative Care, Gold Coast Health
Self-care and Mindfulness for Body, Mind and Soul

Alison is a Social Worker with a background as a Registered Nurse. She has been a Social Worker with the Specialist Palliative Care Service since August 2022 primarily based with the Community Allied Health Team.

Alison has over 25 years' experience in the health and community care sectors including ten years working with cancer care NGOs. She has a particular interest in adjustment to diagnosis / prognosis and in the needs of carers.

Alison is an advocate for health and care systems that foster safety, connection, inclusivity and compassion – for patients, for their loved ones, and for staff.

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