

Calvary Hospital Hobart project removes stigma around dying



Health Minister Michael Ferguson launched the "Exploring Death, Dying and Palliative Care" DVD at the Nagle Centre, St Mary's College in June. He is pictured with Little Company of Mary Healthcare chairman John Watkins, left, Sister Juliana Coulson from Little Company of Mary Sisters Australia, St Mary's College year 12 student Lucy Bauermeister, palliative care patient Virginia De Groot, Mission Calvary Hobart director Belinda Clarke and St Mary's College careers coordinator Angela Mitchelmore.

A COMMUNITY engagement program has given high school students from the greater Hobart area an insight into palliative care and how to treat terminally ill patients, as well as those who are dying.

The six-week program partnered St Mary's and Guilford Young College vocational education and training (VET) nursing

school students with palliative care patients through Calvary Hospital Hobart and Palliative Care Tasmania.

It culminated in a 13-minute DVD entitled "Exploring Death, Dying and Palliative Care".

The DVD was launched by Health Minister Michael Ferguson on 29 June at St Mary's Nagle Centre.

Speaking at the launch, Mr Ferguson said: "Through the eyes of students we learn how we may improve community understanding of the impact for people who are approaching the end of life."

One of the patients involved in the program, Virginia De Groot, generously shared her experience of having a terminal

illness and the challenges she faced in discussing the subject with her family.

Mrs De Groot and her family attended the launch of the DVD, along with students and health and palliative care leaders from Tasmania and interstate.

Conducted on site at Calvary's St John's hospital, the program saw students document their learning

journey through creative journals, drawings and a video diary blog.

St Mary's year 12 student Nadia Dandolo said the program taught her it was "OK to talk about death and dying."

"There is no need to feel awkward or scared about bringing up the conversation," she said.

"People need to be educated and have a

better understanding of palliative care.

"The conversation needs to happen, no matter how hard it is, as the more knowledge people have, the easier it will be on those who have a terminal illness and their families."

St Mary's principal Helen Spencer said the program was an incredible opportunity for students

to engage with end-of-life care in a clinical and educational setting.

"Not only did it provide skills for their VET course, it gave them experiential understanding of the Catholic perspective of the dignity of human life," she said.

The program was co-funded by Palliative Care Tasmania and Calvary Hobart.