

# Learning about the palliative approach

**Are you working in health and interested in learning more about palliative care? You could be eligible to go on a special work placement.**

A national program called PEPA – Program of Experience in the Palliative Approach – has been set up in each state and territory. It is funded by the Australian Government through the National Palliative Care Program.

PEPA aims to give people who work in a primary care setting the opportunity to learn first hand how palliative care specialists care for their clients and families. It is open to Aboriginal health workers, nurses, counsellors, volunteer program managers and other allied health workers.

The program offers a placement of up to ten working days at a palliative care service, with all travel and accommodation costs covered, and can also cover the cost of filling the person's position while they are away.

PEPA's National Coordinator, Linda Barrett says the main purpose of the placement is to offer an experience of palliative care. "It's to gain exposure and experience. We're not looking at making people into palliative care specialists. It's to give them an experience of the palliative approach to care, how it uses an inter-disciplinary team, and to understand the change of focus of care."

Most people who work in health are naturally focussed on helping the patient get well, or manage a disability or injury. In palliative care, the emphasis is more on quality of life, comfort, symptom control and the needs of the patient and family.

In many cases, the care of a palliative care patient is given by their own family and local doctor or health service, so the program aims to increase general awareness of the palliative approach. The PEPA program aims to match the worker with a suitable host site, so as well as a good

experience, the person will gain contacts and a network of support for the future.

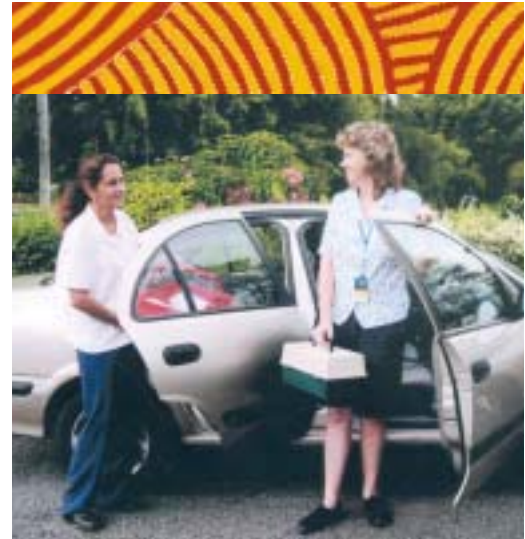
One Aboriginal Health Worker has completed the program, and two more have applied. Kamille Bligh, from the Queensland town of Emerald, did her PEPA placement at Gordonvale Hospital (a Centre for Excellence in Palliative Care, see story page 2), near Cairns.

Kamille was interested to learn more about palliative care, partly because of experiences in her own close family. "I wanted to get more experience, to see what it was all about, and to work in another community with some other community workers and with registered nurses."

"They were very beautiful people, very helpful, and very kind to me. I learned how to support the family and the friends of the patient. The ladies up at the Cairns Base Hospital were wonderful too. They took me through the unit where they do the chemotherapy, and all of that. There was so much to take in!"

In fact, after watching the registered nurses working with the health workers from nearby Yarrabah community, Kamille decided on something she had been thinking about for a while – to go ahead and train as a nurse herself.

The PEPA program will be available until at least mid-2005 and later in some states. For more information, contact the PEPA Coordinator in your state or territory.



Kamille Bligh and registered nurse Denise Reghezini pay a home visit

*For more information about palliative care activities being progressed by the Department of Health and Ageing under the National Palliative Care Program, please contact the freecall inquiry line on 1800 020 787, or visit [www.palliativecare.gov.au](http://www.palliativecare.gov.au).*



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