

Soulful SISTERHOOD

Lisa Norsgaard was, in the words of her friends, 'a wild girl who lived life to the full'. She made the most of her 50 years, working hard, travelling through Asia and Europe and enjoying the company of her many friends and her precious dog, Elsie.

In 2013, as Lisa was packing for a move to Singapore to work for Barclays Bank, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Lisa didn't let this hold her back, continuing to work and travel. Then in 2018 progression of the disease began to take hold and Lisa moved to Brisbane to be near one of her closest friends, Kirra.

Lisa settled into her Kedron Brook apartment and soon joined the dog-walking, coffee community who frequented Marche du Macaron. New friendships blossomed, particularly with café owners Trish and Bernard, and Kim, a retired nurse who was also part of the café family. Lisa's friendliness and openness about her cancer journey allowed these special friendships to flourish.

Kirra says 'we were the sisterhood of strong and wilful women, there to support her with companionship, trips to specialists and treatments and dog walks to the café'. Along with the hours of conversation and laughter, Lisa's friends supported her in living life to the full. However the time came for Lisa to receive specialist care. Knowing she was too wilful to be compliant in hospital, with encouragement from her friends Lisa agreed it was time for referral to Karuna's in-home palliative care service.

'I'm so glad Karuna became involved with Lisa. She was able to build a rapport with the team and she valued their honesty'. Kim knew Karuna would always have Lisa's best interests at heart.

Karuna's care meant Lisa could remain in her own home, with Elsie by her side.

Trish tells us Karuna gave Lisa '... a huge amount of solace, especially with the spiritual support. She went into hospital 'for a visit to case the place out' and wasn't staying so came back home for a while, supported by Karuna.'



Kirra adds, 'Lisa, while not religious was spiritual and Karuna's underpinning spiritual values resonated with her, providing peace and greater acceptance of her destiny. Lisa was not one to give in to her illness, she was happiest when free and being at home was as close to freedom as possible.'

In the last months of her life Lisa purchased a new car and delighted in taking her friends for rides. Kim says 'Lisa tried everything she wanted to try. With Karuna, her friends and family beside her, Lisa lived well for as long as she could and still managed to cram a lot in. I said to her once, 'look at all you have achieved'.

Lisa brought light and happiness to the lives of those she touched. Trish says she has been reflecting on the impact Lisa had on her and their friendship circle. 'Often, within a group when you lose someone it's like the spider web breaks and everyone just goes back to their own worlds. Yet we've all been able to maintain the connection which is just wonderful. Thank you Karuna for your kindness, care and skilful means'.

*"True friends are always together in spirit."
- L.M. Montgomery*



FROM THE CEO'S *Desk*

We cannot direct the wind, but we can adjust the sails - Dolly Parton

Dear Karuna friends

I hope this Spring newsletter finds you well during these extraordinary times.

The past few months have seen Karuna find new pathways towards caring for our clients and their families diagnosed with life limiting conditions to live well and die peacefully, in their place of choice.

The Board and I remain guided by Australian and QLD government directives in our decision making and risk assessment for Karuna during this pandemic. The safety of our clients, staff and volunteers remain first and foremost in our planning to ensure Karuna continues our work into the future.

It is a testament to our staff and volunteers who remain committed to the mission under trying circumstances. Sadly we have had to postpone our fundraising events for now but look forward to a time when we can host these again. Your messages of support and understanding have been much appreciated during this time.

Our newsletter includes two stories to remind us of the good that still exists in the world. Lisa and Sally lived life

until the end and enjoyed precious friendships with the people who cared for them during the most uncertain and fragile of times. As Ven. Tsultrim tells me in our Conversation article "We experience and draw in the energy of our loved ones into our own heart and that stays with us".

Yet despite the recent challenges, I'm pleased to see the Sangha community around Karuna continue to grow and I hope you enjoy our piece on Ven. Tsultrim. Also, a special congratulations to Deb Turnbull in her new life as Ven. Yeshe Wangmo.

Thank you again for your continued support and interest in Karuna. Until next time.

Best wishes



Tracey Porst Chief Executive Officer



KARUNA *Values*

COMPASSION:
to treat individuals with
kindness and care.

COURAGE:
to have the conversations we
need to have.

DEDICATION:
holistic support for all aspects
of death and dying.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Thank you to everyone who donated to our 2020 Tax appeal. You have helped keep our nurses, counsellors and spiritual carers on the road again this year and helped our team to deal with the challenges presented in these past few months.

INTRODUCING OUR NEW CLINICAL SERVICES MANAGER

Karen Gray.



I am excited to have commenced my role as Clinical Services Manager. My connection with Karuna goes as far back as meeting Pende Hawter who told me about his plan to open a Community Hospice Service. I worked here for a short time in 2000. So for me it is like coming home.

I commenced my Palliative Care nursing career in 1980 at a Hospice in New Zealand. Since then I have had varied roles in the community and inpatient settings, so have witnessed many developments in how we provide end of life care. Regardless, the best palliative care, I believe, always comes down to the most essential element of care, which is being kind and compassionate to ourselves, our clients and our colleagues.

I have taken on this role knowing I am surrounded by a team of dedicated and professional people and that I am still able to care directly for clients and their families.

I am proud to tell others I work for Karuna as it is heart-warming hearing the positive and overwhelming praise for the care families receive.

IN *Conversation*

Over the course of our newsletters we will be introducing you to the people who help Karuna care for our clients and their families. This newsletter we begin with Ven. Tsultrim.

The Power of Kindness

Tracey Porst, Karuna CEO, chats with Venerable Tsultrim about her life-changing experiences and sharing kindness.

Ven. Tsultrim is a Buddhist nun and has 20 years' experience working with Lifeline and other not-for-profit organisations.

(TP) Tsultrim, you recently joined Karuna as a Grief and Bereavement Counsellor, but you actually have a long association with Karuna right?

(VT) Whilst I have just recently started working at Karuna in grief and bereavement counselling, spiritual care and education I actually have a long association with Ven. Yeshe Khadro (previous Karuna Director), Ven. Chödrön and more recently Ven. Trin-lä. I have also presented workshops on Mindfulness and The 16 Guidelines as part of Karuna's education program.

What does your new role with Karuna mean to you?

My new role means a lot to me actually. One of the most amazing experiences I have had was caring for two nuns at Chenrezig Institute in the Sunshine Coast hinterland while they were dying. It was my privilege to support them but I also had a big mind shift. This was a profound time for me and I learnt so much about myself and the Dharma, so I am very grateful.

That is amazing! I believe your new role also meant a change of lifestyle for you too?

I have lived on and off at Chenrezig Institute for the last 11 years but also in retreat in India and Nepal for much of the last 6 or 7 years. Having given most of my things away, it was an interesting exercise to come back to a 'worldly life'. That meant getting an apartment in Brisbane and filling it with 'householder's stuff' like a washing machine, a fridge and even a bed!

How would you best describe your dual roles as Buddhist nun and counsellor?

Buddhist principles underpin everything that I do. My work in grief, bereavement, spiritual care and education needs a peaceful heart, so this is where it all begins for me.



Ven Lozang Tsultrim

While some people may not resonate with the doctrine of Buddhism, or circumstance, its basis of loving kindness and compassion provides many with a resource no matter what their belief.

How do you help people who are dying come to terms with their situation?

I can help people who are dying to relax around the uncertainty of death. At the time of death it is most important to help people have a peaceful mind, to be peaceful and relaxed, irrespective of what they believe might come next.

In bereavement I try to help people recognise that it is only the body that has disappeared. The heart and the energy, particularly if there was a good relationship, is what continues. We experience and draw in the energy of our loved ones into our own heart and that stays with us. That is a resource we can draw on in the future.

You sum it up so well. Believing in the power of kindness, which is very much core to Karuna's values, how do you think we can all offer kindness?

Kindness is a powerful resource we can all offer each other. It doesn't necessarily have to be a direct act of kindness; we can do it through our meditation and our thoughts, wishing others freedom from suffering and to be at peace and to stop being angry and frustrated.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama says, 'If all we do is practice kindness we will become enlightened.' The trouble is we need to do it full-time, not part-time!

Thank you Tsultrim.

Ven. Tsultrim is hosting a series of workshops for Karuna over the coming months. See *Karuna Workshops* for details. You can also hear Ven. Tsultrim offer words of kindness on our Facebook page.

"My religion is very simple. My religion is kindness." - His Holiness The Dalai Lama

Eileen's LEGACY

'The kids wanted me to leave a bit of a legacy'

My daughter had bought me a journal to fill in about my life a few years ago, but I never managed to do anything about it. When Karuna came out and saw me and mentioned doing my biography, I jumped at the opportunity straight away as I knew the kids wanted me to do something to leave a little bit of a legacy. I was told that usually the biographer comes to the house, but because of isolation restrictions with the Covid-19, we would do it over the phone.

All in all, it's been a relaxing and rewarding experience and we didn't even have to get dressed up for the occasion!

Some of the things I have been able to say in my biography, I have always wanted to say. So it gave me the opportunity to share some special times with my kids. It was also fun spending time selecting the photos with my two daughters and we talked about things we might not have done otherwise.

Yes, for me it's been a wonderful experience and I am so grateful to Karuna for having had this opportunity.



CRAFTERS ANSWER THE *Call*

We were overwhelmed with the community response to our call for Personal Protective Equipment recently.

Current and new crafters rallied to donate fabric, draft patterns, sew and embroider these wonderful garments.

Heartfelt thanks to you all!



CRAFTING A *New Life*

One of our craft volunteers, Deb Turnbull, was ordained as a nun last month. As Geshe Tsultrim said, *"something to bring joy in this challenging world"*. She is now Ven. Yeshe Wangmo

DONATION *Wish List*

Here are just some of the ways your gift can help Karuna care for our clients and families.

- **\$22,000** will enable us to buy a car to replace an older fleet vehicle for a nurse
- **\$5,500** will provide end of life care for a client
- **\$1,100** provides personal hygiene assistance for a client
- **\$360** provides three counselling sessions for someone who has reached out to us for help
- **\$150** gives the gift of a biography, leaving a lasting legacy for the client's family
- **\$50** fuels one of our nurses' cars

If you can help with our wish list, please phone Verena on **07 3632 8300** or email **verena@karuna.org.au**



Gifts in Wills are a significant source of support for Karuna's care. In "Include a Charity Week" (7-13 September 2020), we will join IAC and many charities all over Australia to celebrate the benefit gifts in Wills bring to our community.

Are you able to consider a gift in your Will?

Please contact Verena or Hilary on 07 3632 8300 if you would like to know more or visit our website **karuna.org.au**

SALLY'S *Fabulous Sparkle*

Kathy Capper, friend and carer of Sally Phillips, shares her story.

"My gregarious, beautiful friend Sally's six year battle with ovarian cancer was particularly challenging as she lived alone. Her closest family were her brother and an aunt in Victoria, which meant she thrived on her work as a teacher and the company of friends.

I knew of the wonderful work Karuna does through the support given to numerous families in our local community. So when staff at the Wesley Hospital connected Sally with Karuna, I was so grateful. Having seen the quality of care and support available to Sally I was able to reassure her family and friends interstate that she would be well cared for with nursing and counselling support.

Karuna also recognised Sally's need for company and arranged for Kris, a volunteer biographer to chat with Sally about her life. These chats were then translated into Sally's biography, which included photos of people from her life. Photos of people were another of Sally's passions.

The biography titled '*Fabulous*' and *Her Days* was printed about a month before Sally passed away. We read it together many times over the last month and chatted about special memories in the photos.

Sally's biography opened up conversation, reflecting on the challenges of her early life that she'd never really dealt with,



but also reliving many of her happy memories. Even though we had been friends since school days I learnt things about Sally I'd never known. When she was too tired to speak, Sally would sometimes ask me to read her biography to her. I think it helped her realise how special she was, and how worthy of our love.

Kris captured Sally's voice beautifully and her biography gives ongoing comfort to those of us badly missing Sally's fabulous sparkle. Thank you Kris and all at Karuna for your incredible support."

WORDS OF *Wisdom*

From His Holiness
The Dalai Lama

Karuna's Spiritual
Patron



It is important to understand how much your own happiness is linked to that of others. There is no individual happiness totally independent of others.

KARUNA *Workshops*

All workshops will be available via video conference until further notice.

Please visit **www.karuna.org.au/workshops** to book your place or call Karuna on 07 3632 8300 for more information.

Mindfulness in Motion

Join Ven. Tsultrim as she takes you through a unique and practical exploration of mindfulness to help you develop a greater understanding of how we can all choose to be kinder to others and ourselves.

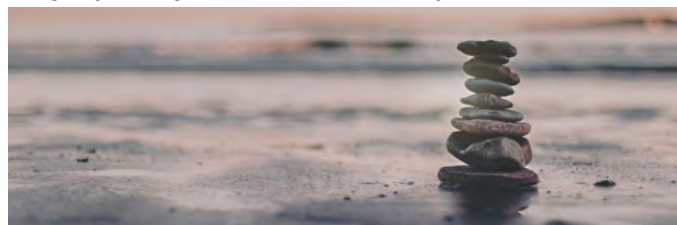
The course will help you:

- turn your everyday thoughts, words and actions into a long lasting mindfulness practice
- build your confidence, and
- build a stronger, more resilient state of mind.

One course will begin on **Tuesday, 1 September 2020, 10am - 12pm** and continue every Tuesday for 8 weeks. And another on **Wednesday, 2 September 2020, 6:30pm - 8:30pm** and continue every Wednesday for 8 weeks.

Course Fee: **\$80**

Image by Neringa Olbutaite from Pixabay



Ven. Tsultrim's secular courses are open to all who professionally or personally wish to respond to life in a more helpful way.

Building Balanced Empathy

Explore the themes of empathy, vulnerability and emotional resilience with Ven. Tsultrim.

In this course you will learn how to empathise from your heart and your head allowing you to relate to others in a healthy, more balanced way.

This workshop will be over 3 weeks on **Saturday 7, 14, and 21 November 2020, 10am - 12pm.**

Course Fee: **\$30**

Living and Dying with an Open Heart - Ven. Robina Courtin

Join us on **Saturday 5 September 2020, 10am - 12pm** for a morning with the very engaging Ven. Robina Courtin.

Ven. Robina has been a nun in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition for over 40 years. Her unforgettable teaching style is imbued with wisdom, energy, clarity and compassion and after the presentation you will never look at living and dying in the same way again.

Facility Fee: **\$30**

Karuna Fundraising Events Update

With the safety of our staff, clients, volunteers and supporters first and foremost, it is with sadness that we have had to cancel the rest of our fundraising events for 2020. This includes our much loved Christmas Market.

Thank you for your understanding; we look forward to the time when we can once again resume our traditional events and activities at Karuna. To stay up to date refer to karuna.org.au.