



Calvary Bethlehem needs your support to help patients stay connected

December 2023

“Calvary Bethlehem’s Staying Connected Program creates real time connections for our patients in Hospital and ensures they are seen and heard by their families and friends in Victoria, across Australia and the rest of the world” Nicki Jackson, Program Lead

Dear Friend,

For people living with a life limiting illness, communication and social connection can be significant challenges that impact all aspects of their daily life. Our aim is to help our patients “stay connected” with family and friends during their stay with us.

The Calvary Health Care Bethlehem (Bethlehem) Staying Connected Program is part of our Living Well Program and was initially established in 2020 for our patients in direct response to the challenges of social isolation presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. While the program proved beneficial in addressing the increased need for social and emotional connection during the early stages of the pandemic; the program has also demonstrated long-term reach for patients at risk of social isolation.

The key program objective is to provide patients with practical and meaningful support to enhance social connection, coping and wellbeing while in hospital. It also aims to build capacity and resilience by teaching digital literacy skills which can be utilised after going home. This contributes positively to health, enabling patients to access the necessary technology to engage in the vast array of services and opportunities for connection now available online.

Our Staying Connected program seeks to improve the quality of life of our patients and reduce suffering by offering daily practical support to enable those with a life limiting illness to socially connect with their family, friends and community through the technology and training we offer them. “From making a video call with an overseas or interstate relative, to using ‘You-Tube’, we are continually delighted to see our patients discover new ways of staying connected with family, friends and community.” says Bethlehem’s Program Lead Nicki Jackson.



Brothers Chris (left) and Travis (right) speaking to their sister Jen living interstate, assisted by Allied Health Assistant Juliette



Bethlehem Allied Health Assistant (AHA) Henry Choi shares his thoughts about the program:

In the Staying Connected program, I've had the opportunity to support patients by using different types of communication technology with them so they can keep in touch with their friends and family. Being away from home, such as being in Hospital can often be socially isolating, and this program helps patients to keep connecting with people important to them.

Bethlehem's Staying Connected is a team effort comprising Nicki Jackson as Project Lead, allied health assistants Juliette Catherall and Henry Choi, and a team of dedicated 'tech support' volunteers.

The team assists with providing individualised activities as well as daily support with a variety of 'tech' tasks such as: Wi-Fi access, setting up video calls/FaceTime calls, assisting with downloading apps, setting up email accounts, improving basic accessibility functions on personal devices (such as enlarging text on a patient's phone) and connecting patients to external groups and activities in the community.

Bethlehem volunteer Brother Duy Tran shares: My volunteering experience in the Staying Connected Program has been enriching and fulfilling. I've been privileged to be part of the program from its early stage when Victoria was in strict COVID lock-down and patient visits were not allowed or limited. The program definitely has Calvary Spirit: innovation and creativity for the wellbeing of our patients. Helping patients "staying connected" in all aspects: socially and mentally using technology (Wi-Fi, iPads and Apps) to contact families/ friends, playing games and doing digital arts has being fun, educational and at times challenging, recalling the Wi-Fi issues at our old site in Parkdale.

The team also encourages patients to engage with Bethlehem initiatives, accessible from their bedside using iPad technology. This includes the popular 'Friday Lunchtunes' livestream concert performed by the Music Therapy team and 'AAH!' our online Arts And Health resource, which showcases a carefully curated range of free online events and activities such as performing arts, visual arts, exhibitions, bibliotherapy (which is a creative arts therapy that involves storytelling or the reading of specific texts) and more.

Chris and Travis, two brothers with Huntington's Disease, both from different parts of regional Victoria, have been able to keep in touch with their sister in Queensland via regular FaceTime calls supported by the Staying Connected team. Without the right equipment and support from the staying connected team, Chris and Travis would not be able to engage online due to the physical barriers of Huntington's disease which results in difficulty controlling the fine movements required to use electronic devices independently. The siblings have been able to connect regularly via video calls during their inpatient stay, reliving childhood memories,



"The Staying Connected program, helps patients to keep connecting with people important to them"

Henry Choi Allied Health Assistant



chatting about their favourite foods and catching up on family matters. The program has also sparked their interest in re-connecting with other siblings and friends, with Travis giving an emphatic "YES!" when asked if he'd like to engage in more video calls.

Jen, their sister, who lives interstate said "I really appreciate the time & effort volunteers and staff provide to help families stay connected. It's great to see and talk over FaceTime and have conversations as though we are in the same room. Chris and Travis definitely brighten up with visual contact on staying connected, seeing them smile and have a laugh makes my day. This is such a great way to stay connected with my brothers when I'm not able to visit them. It's also wonderful to hear how engaged they've been with the carers to be more social."

Bethlehem Allied Health Assistant Juliette Catherall, who supports Chris and Travis to connect to their family says: "Staying in hospital can mean big changes to how people spend their time. If we're able to help patients speak to their loved ones, this is one important part of their life that can continue. I have also loved getting to know more about patients and sharing this with others at the hospital, so that we can chat about things that interest them." With the program's great success and its impact on many patients for which there is clearly so much need, we are keen to continue and further develop the program further.

Your support can directly assist our patients. We are aiming to raise \$29,500 by December 22nd to continue this life enhancing work of direct benefit to our patients. It will also allow our patients using the service to stay connected with their family members and friends on Christmas Day.

The additional funding we are seeking will enable us to train more staff and in particular volunteers who will ultimately ensure that the Staying Connected Program will be able to continue well into the future. We need to invest in more equipment, such as iPads mounts, to support easy access to equipment for all our inpatients. Empowering our patients with specialised digital knowledge and skills will help them to live well and achieve a better quality of life.



"If we're able to help patients speak to their loved ones, this is one important part of their life that can continue."

Juliette Catherall, Allied Health Assistant

Can you help our patients by giving a gift to support the continuation and growth of our Staying Connected Program?

Over the next twelve months we want to assist even more patients to retain their important relationships in their communities. No one should ever feel alone, particularly when they are dealing with very distressing circumstances. Our patients need to be surrounded with support, both professional and personal, as they deal with all the challenges associated with their illness.

We know this innovative program assists in improving the quality of life and helps our patients feel seen, valued and connected. Please help us reach our goal of raising \$29,500 by 22nd December.

Your donation will help us purchase equipment to extend the reach of our Staying Connected program. We are also keen to introduce new innovative ideas based on current evidence about how we can contribute positively to health and wellbeing by enabling our inpatients to stay connected with their family and friends, as well as the arts, culture, interests, hobbies, nature and the world outside the hospital walls.

We are seeking your support to purchase new hardware, software and technology apps to further expand this program and provide meaningful engagement with our patients.

- 3 x android tablets to use for apps which require an android system
- 1 x mobile phone and plan
- 1 x virtual reality headset to allow connection with the healing power of nature
- 15 x Text to speech apps to support inpatients with speech loss.
- 3 x tablet accessibility clamps so patients with limited upper limb mobility can access tablets
- Upskilling/training of our Staying Connected team, including volunteers to enable further development of the Staying Connected Program

If you can, we would be very grateful if you could please make your donation today. Please complete the enclosed donation form and return to me in the reply-paid envelope.

On behalf of our patients, their families our staff and volunteers, I would like to thank you. Your ongoing support enables us to continue delivering our specialised care to those who need it most.

Yours sincerely,



Shannon Thompson
General Manager – Calvary Kooyong

PS: If you'd like more information about how you can support Calvary Bethlehem in other ways please contact our Fundraising and Philanthropy Coordinator David Zerman on 0418 346 999



I am writing to seek your support to raise \$29,500 to upgrade our existing and buy new equipment and train volunteers and staff to keep our patients as connected as possible."

Shannon Thompson

Shannon, please use my gift to help patients stay connected!



Please accept my donation of:

☐ \$295 ☐ \$120 ☐ \$75 ☐ My choice \$ _____



Kooyong Precinct
Health Care
Bethlehem

My payment method:

☐ Enclosed is my cheque/money order (made payable to Calvary Health Care Bethlehem) OR

☐ Please debit the amount I have indicated from my: ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard

Card Number:

Expiry Date: /

Name On Card:

Signature:

Thank you.

Please return in the prepaid envelope provided. Donations \$2 and over are tax deductible.

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Please consider sharing your email address so that we can communicate directly with you at the same time as saving on costs and protecting the environment:

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Date of Birth*:

Date of birth is important to help us distinguish between donors with the same name.

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☐ I want to receive your Friends of Bethlehem Newsletter by email to the above email address

THERE ARE TWO WAYS YOU CAN DONATE:

1. Complete this donation form and return in the reply-paid envelope provided
2. Visit www.calvarycare.org.au/about/support-us/make-a-donation

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