

Walking Alongside: Dr Juliet Fleming Reflects on 18 Years at Nelson Tasman Hospice

After nearly two decades at Nelson Tasman Hospice, Dr Juliet Fleming is stepping away from her role - leaving behind a legacy of compassion, clinical excellence, and deep connection with the people and community she has served.

But ask Juliet how she found her way into palliative care, and the answer is refreshingly simple. "I didn't really know what I wanted to do," she laughs. "I just knew I didn't want to do general practice."

It was a chance encounter, a job advertisement for something called palliative medicine, that set her on a path she had never planned but quickly knew was right. "I'd never heard of it before... but I got the job, and I just loved it. I thought, yes, this is what I want to do."

Juliet's journey eventually brought her from the Highlands of Scotland to Nelson Tasman, drawn as much by family and lifestyle as by opportunity. When she arrived, hospice care here was very different.

"There were only four beds, and no permanent medical staff during the day," she recalls. "It was quite reactive."

What followed was a period of significant development - not just for Juliet, but for hospice care across the region. Alongside colleagues, she helped build a more proactive, holistic model of care: introducing outpatient clinics, strengthening hospital links, and delivering education for GPs and District Nurses across the district and Junior Doctors at the hospital.

"We really pushed education... and developed Health Pathways - a localised online resource available for all clinicians to help deliver palliative care in hospitals, Aged Care facilities and at home, so that palliative care became something much more proactive." Today, that approach is embedded in how care is delivered, supporting people earlier, and often in their own homes.

For Juliet, hospice has never been "just a job."

"It becomes a part of you," she says. "It's my second home, really, my second family."

Over 18 years, it's the people who have made the deepest impression. "Whether it's patients, families, or staff, it's always the

people." She speaks warmly of the team around her, particularly through times of change.

"I am so proud of this team... watching people grow into palliative care, supporting each other, it's been really special."

And it's not just the clinical work that has stayed with her.

"The laughter we have, with each other, and with patients, it's incredible. Humour is much more potent than any medicine I can prescribe."

Despite how much hospice care has evolved, Juliet says one misconception persists.

"That there's only one way out of hospice - in a box," she says plainly. "And that is so untrue." While the inpatient unit at Nelson Tasman Hospice is there at the very end of life for some, most patients come in for short periods of specialist support before returning home.

"The vast majority of people on the hospice service are actually cared for at home... hospice is about living as well as possible." She believes one of the most powerful ways to shift this perception is through those who have experienced hospice care themselves. "They say, 'I wasn't expecting this.' And I say - tell people. Help them understand."

At its core, Juliet says, the philosophy of palliative care hasn't changed. "It's completely patient centred. And every patient brings something new." Her role, as she sees it, was simple and profound. "I saw my role as walking alongside someone and their family to their death and helping to navigate some of the challenges."

And when that journey is supported well, she says, something remarkable can happen.

"Death can be very beautiful. It can be gentle... yes, it's sad - of course it is - but when symptoms are controlled, when people are ready, when the right people are there... it can be the best it possibly can be." This is what she and the team have always strived for.

The emotional demands of hospice care are undeniable, but for Juliet, the work has



always given as much as it takes. "The bucket empties, but the job also fills the bucket," she explains. "It's self-sustaining, because of the rewards you get from making a difference."

Balance has also been key. Spending time with family, sailing, and life outside of work. "You have to live every day the best you can," she says. "Some days are good, some aren't, but you just live your life."

Now, after nearly 20 years, Juliet is ready for a new chapter - though not quite ready to call it retirement. "I think I've still got more to give," she says. "But first, I want to spend time with my family."

That includes returning to the UK to reconnect with loved ones which is something she has missed over the years. She also hopes to spend more time sailing - a lifelong passion.

As she reflects on the future of hospice care, Juliet is clear about what matters most. "It should be a human right to have good palliative care so that we can die well, as well as live well." And while much has changed over her time, that belief has remained constant.

Leaving is not easy.

"My colleagues - they're more than colleagues. They become family," she says. "We've had laughter and tears together... I'm really going to miss them."

But her impact will continue to be felt here, in the team she helped shape, the care model she helped build, and the thousands of patients and whānau she has supported.

Because at the heart of it all is something simple, and deeply human:

"To try and make a difference."

Thank a Hospice Volunteer Today



Te Wiki Tūao ā-Motu National Volunteer Week 14th - 20th June 2026

We are grateful all year round for the support provided by Hospice volunteers. During Te Wiki Tūao ā-Motu National Volunteer Week, 14–20 June, we want to recognise and celebrate the wonderful contribution our volunteers make to Hospice and our community. In keeping with 2026 being the International Year of the Volunteer, it is a timely moment to acknowledge the difference volunteers make every day.

Nelson Tasman Hospice has approximately 440 volunteers.

These figures show the impact volunteers made over the past year:

- 250 volunteers in our retail sector helped generate approximately \$9,000 each to support keeping Hospice

services free for our community.

- For every two patients cared for, we had one volunteer helping across all aspects of the Hospice service to make that possible.
- For every hour worked by an employee, a volunteer contributed a further 20 minutes to support all the tasks that needed to be done to keep Hospice service running.

Beyond the numbers, Hospice volunteers are a vital link in keeping our Hospice grounded in our community. Because Nelson Tasman Hospice exists just for our region, that connection helps build for all of us a compassionate, connected society.

Inspirational, generous, and good-humoured are just some of the qualities that come to mind when meeting our Hospice volunteers. Over the years you will have seen Hospice services change and adapt to meet our community needs. We have many volunteers committed to that journey.

Volunteers willing at short notice to be with a patient so that a whānau member could attend an important appointment. Student volunteers turning up every Sunday for their op shop shift. When sending out an email asking for help with a fundraising event, an immediate

reply often comes back: "Yes, I can do that". Groups of volunteers also help, such as the Rural Women St Arnaud who make wheat bags, syringe bags, other sewed items and help with the Trees of Remembrance at Christmas to support Hospice.

We have volunteers:

- On our boards
- In our Mānuka café
- In our op shops across the region
- Out in our community supporting patients and whānau with equipment, flowers, and time
- From businesses and corporate roles sharing their skills and knowledge
- Carrying out many other roles

If you know someone who volunteers for Hospice, please thank them this June for the experience, skills and time they give to support a Hospice service for us all.

If you would like to learn more about volunteering with Nelson Tasman Hospice, contact - volunteers@nelsonhospice.org.nz

Know us for when

What are your roles at Nelson Tasman Hospice?

I'm an Assistant Manager (fixed term) at the Nelson Tasman Hospice Op Shop on Vanguard four days a week. I am also a volunteer and coordinate the Hospice fundraising event Fabric-a-brac Nelson.

What does a working day look like for you?

My days at Op Shop on Vanguard begin with preparing the store for opening and planning priorities with our volunteer team. This can include receiving, sorting and pricing clothing, bric-a-brac, linen and other donated goods.

In the lead-up to Fabric-a-brac Nelson, my evenings and weekends are spent organising stallholders, sorting and pricing donations, and planning the many moving parts of the event. It's a real team effort, supported by Hospice staff, volunteers, friends, and family.

What have you learnt working at Nelson Tasman Hospice that you didn't know before?

Working with Nelson Tasman Hospice, the most surprising thing for me has been realising just how many dedicated volunteers help make it such a caring and compassionate place. I began a volunteer myself and always felt genuinely appreciated.



Marita Watson-Bol
Op Shop on Vanguard Assistant Manager + Volunteer behind the Fabric-a-brac market

The gratitude shared by colleagues and volunteers creates a warm and welcoming environment. I've learnt that even small contributions can make a real difference, and being part of that gives people a strong sense of purpose and connection.

What's a book or film that you always recommend to others?

I'm a sucker for fairytales, so I always recommend Labyrinth. The combination of Jim Henson's incredible puppetry and David Bowie as the Goblin King is just magical. It's timeless, quirky, imaginative, and one of those films that stays with you long after you've watched it.

Keeping Hospice Care Free Takes All of Us: Community put their Hands Up for Hospice

Throughout May, our community once again showed what can happen when people come together with a shared purpose. The 2026 Yondi Foundation Hands Up for Hospice appeal has now come to a close, and while the events and activities may be over, the impact created continues.

This year's campaign centred around a simple but powerful message: 1 in 3 of us will need hospice. Help us be there for the future. For many people, hospice can feel like something that happens to someone else until it suddenly becomes part of your own story. The reality is that one in three people in our community will require hospice care during their lifetime, and behind every patient is a wider circle of family, friends and loved ones also receiving support. Throughout May, the Nelson Tasman community responded in remarkable ways, putting their hands up to help ensure specialist palliative care remains available for everyone who needs it.

The campaign invited people to Heave, Host, Raise or Donate, and the response was extraordinary.

Across the month 20 teams competed in The Breeze Heave for Hospice on 29 May, High Teas were hosted, 26 public fundraising events took place, including 13 Sprig + Fern quiz and bingo nights, individual and business-led fundraisers were organised, 10 businesses supported Hospice through sales-based fundraising initiatives, Nelson Tasman Hospice colleagues spoke with local groups and organisations about hospice care and countless volunteers, supporters, donors and event attendees gave their time, energy and generosity.

"Hands Up for Hospice is a reminder that hospice belongs to our community," says Tony Gray, Chief Executive of Nelson Tasman

Hospice. "Every event attended, every business that got behind us, every volunteer and every donation reflects people choosing to invest in the future of care for local families. The reality is that one in three of us will need hospice, and the support we've seen throughout May helps ensure we can continue being there when that moment comes."

The campaign also saw the launch of Hops for Hospice, a special collaboration with Sprig + Fern Brewing Co that brought together local businesses, suppliers and communities in support of hospice care. More than just a seasonal brew, Hops for Hospice became a celebration of connection and community, with every pint helping support care for local families.

Major events across the month brought people together in different ways, from the sell-out Hands Up for Hospice – The Fashion Edition at the beginning of May sponsored by Smart Business Centre, to Fabric-a-brac, community gatherings and local initiatives supported by groups including Fresh FM, Tahunanui Community Hub and Cultural Conversation.

The appeal was also strengthened by the support of the Yondi Foundation as naming rights sponsor, continuing a partnership built on a shared commitment to supporting local people and local care.

The funds raised through Hands Up for Hospice will go directly back into our community and will help

our local team of more than 55 clinicians continue supporting around 210 patients and their families and whānau every month to live well until they die. At the time of writing, we are sitting at \$167,692 raised, every contribution made throughout the campaign is already helping ensure hospice care remains available for local families, now and into the future.

The need for hospice care continues to grow, and so does the need for community support with a projected 50% increase in demand for palliative care by 2045. Hands Up for Hospice may only happen during May, but ensuring care is available for the future is something that continues every day. Because one day, for one in three of us, hospice care may become part of our own story.

To every person, business, volunteer, sponsor and supporter who put their hands up this May - thank you. Together, you are helping ensure Nelson Tasman Hospice can continue to be there for our community when they need it most.



you need us



Megan Peters
Clinical Services Director

What is your role at Nelson Tasman Hospice?

I am the Clinical Services Director.

What does a working day look like for you?

Currently with being the new addition to the team, every day is different. I am getting to know Nelson Tasman Hospice as an organisation, connecting with the teams and understanding the important part they have in supporting patients, whānau and one another.

As the Clinical Services Director I will be a resource for clinical services and support for the teams who show up every day to provide compassionate care.

What do you find most rewarding about the work that you do?

My path to hospice and this role has been shaped by both personal experience and a healthcare career, as a pharmacist prescriber, spent working with and managing patients with life-limiting illness.

Over the years I have seen firsthand how much the people behind the care matter. The opportunity to work with Nelson Tasman Hospice as part of the community felt like the natural place for me to bring all of that experience together.

If you were a colour, what colour would you be and why?

Oh, that's a hard question, so I'll go with my favourite colour - Deep teal green - for its feeling of calm and balance.

Could your business benefit from advertising at Nelson Airport during the busiest travel period of the year?

Would you like to support Nelson Tasman Hospice this Christmas?



27th Nov 26 - 7th Jan 27

For more info, contact fundraising@nelsonhospice.org.nz



Wish List

By donating for specific items, you have a tangible sense of the impact of your gift; whether it be equipment, which is loaned free of charge to families in their homes or placed in our SPCU, or stationery to support our daily business, each item you donate helps make a difference to our patients every day.

- \$115 could cover the cost of a week of personal care and wash products including Sage Comfort shampoo caps - providing clean hair without the use of water, relieving for patients who are unable to wash their hair in the shower.
- \$135 could fund a home visit from a Community Nurse; gifting care, confidence and comfort wherever a patient calls home, be it in the community or within Aged-Residential-Care facilities.
- \$149.50 per item/ \$1,794 one off for 12 anti-fatigue mats needed for our shop colleagues and volunteers to work comfortably processing donations to our 5 retail shops.
- \$550 could cover the cost of a month of patient pain relief and comfort; such as infusion sets for medication and mouth spray bottles.
- \$2,328.47 for a Bailey Access Platform for our shop hub team to store donated items at height safely.
- \$50 Petrol vouchers for our community team, who drive an average of 3,500km each month caring for patients in their homes & aged residential care facilities: providing comfort, dignity, and support. But rising fuel costs pose a threat to our regular services.



Our wonderful volunteer team delivering equipment to patients in the community.

Gift Strength: \$600 one off/\$50 monthly - Help patients, families and children find strength through free counselling when they are in need of support.

Gift Care: \$1,200 - Ensure patients can be cared for at home or in our Specialist Palliative Care Unit, with the specialist support of hospice care.

You can also make a one-off or regular gift to support hospice services in Nelson Tasman.

If you would like to make a positive impact in your community by donating for an item on our Wish List, please contact Ana Fierek on 0272928877 or ana.fierek@nelsonhospice.org.nz. We would love to hear from you.

Thank you to the amazing recent supporters of our Wish List for being part of our compassionate community.

Yes! I would like to support the future of Hospice services in our region.

I would like to make a donation of: ☐ \$10 ☐ \$20 ☐ \$30 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$ _____

I am paying by: ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa

Credit card #

Expiry: ____ / ____ 3 digit security code: _____

Name: _____ Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email address: _____

Signature: _____

Please post completed form with donation to: Nelson Tasman Hospice, 331 Suffolk Rd, Stoke Nelson 7011

Names and addresses are held in accordance with the Privacy Act 1993 and are only used for Nelson Tasman Hospice purposes.

To make a direct credit donation using online banking, please use NBS bank account # 03 1354 0532930 00 Please include your last name and phone number on the two reference lines

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