

SOUTHERN
METRO
REGION
PALLIATIVE
CARE
CONSORTIUM



ANNUAL
REPORT
2025





Southern Metropolitan Region Palliative Care Consortium (SMRPCC)

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All photographs used in this report are credited to SMRPCC staff and were taken in the southern metro region.

Copies of this report can be downloaded from the Southern Metropolitan Region Palliative Care Consortium website at www.smrpcc.org.au.



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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

I am very pleased to present the Southern Metropolitan Region Palliative Care Consortium (SMRPCC) Annual Report for It has been another busy and successful year, ably led by Consortium Manager, Tanja Bahro, and her dedicated team.

We have again contributed to implementing the goals of Victoria's End of Life and Palliative Care Framework in the region through collaboration, information sharing and improvement initiatives.

Our highlights this year included the continuation of a series of regular online training sessions, which are becoming increasingly popular and well attended. These free sessions

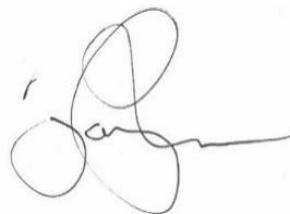
included topics such as the Palliative Approach in Aged Care, Motor Neurone Disease and related topics. As an online format, there is more accessibility to allow an interactive forum that keeps the sector connected and up to date clinically.

As part of our 3-year strategic plan, we continue to engage with General Practitioners (GPs), with Community Palliative Care — General practice visits which provide training to GPs on selected topics such as pain management.

Clinical Forums continue to be a successful method of members coming together to not only to network but also hear from experts on specific topics related to palliative care.

Tanja is on 12 months long service leave, and we welcome Ms. Alina Hinton Tooley, who will be covering this role until July 2026.

I would like to thank the Department of Health in continuing to fund the SMRPCC which supports ongoing collaboration in the region and allows for innovative projects to improve palliative care service delivery.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Janet Phillips". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Janet Phillips, SMRPCC Chair
CEO Peninsula Home Hospice

THE CONSORTIUM

The Southern Metropolitan Region Palliative Care Consortium (SMRPCC) is an alliance of all publicly funded palliative care services in the region and associate member agencies with an interest in collaborating regionally on issues around palliative care.

Voting Members

- Alfred Health
- Calvary Health Care Bethlehem
- Peninsula Health
- Peninsula Home Hospice
- Palliative Care South East
- Monash Health

The Southern Metropolitan Palliative Care Consortium collaborates with the regional palliative care services, approximately 160 Residential Aged Care services and many other relevant health and community services in the region.

In accordance with the Victorian End of Life and Palliative Care Framework, we support the specialist providers to deliver high

Associate Members

- Bolton Clarke
- Cabrini Palliative Care
- South Eastern Private Hospital
- Southern Metropolitan Integrated Cancer Service
- South Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network (SEMPHN)
- St John of God Health Care

quality palliative care and encourage other services to develop their ability to deliver the palliative approach through relevant information, training and resources. Additionally, we work closely with other consortia, Palliative Care Victoria, Safer Care Victoria and the Centre for Palliative Care.



PROGRESSIVE NEUROLOGICAL CONDITIONS PROGRAM

MND

In the 2024-25 financial year, Jane Turton has continued in the role of MND Palliative Care Clinician and Progressive Neurological Diseases Manager. MND education has continued both face-to-face and online with the Lunchtime Sessions. Jane’s contributions to SMRPCC’s program include:

- Educating more than 204 staff in Residential Aged Care Homes (RACH) and more than 100 staff from Cabrini Hospital and Epworth Hospital.
- Meeting with MND Victoria Advisors bi-monthly to collaborate in providing education and support to service providers in the southern metro region who care for people with MND.
- A focus on providing de-briefing sessions for facilities and care agencies after the death of a person with MND.
- Contributing to state-wide MND Palliative Care Clinician/ MND Victoria meetings.
- Providing successful interactive online training through the *Lunchtime Sessions* and *10-minute PCA Palliative Care Sessions*.
- Creating new training sessions, including ‘MND Managing Pain and Discomfort’ as part of the *Lunchtime Sessions*.
- Being accepted in June 2025 to provide an oral presentation and a poster presentation at the Oceanic Palliative Care conference in September 2025 — both the presentation and the poster are about the great success of the online training sessions.
- Receiving a Nina Buscombe award in June 2025, to assist with the costs of attending the PACTALS/MND Australia Care forum in September 2025.



Jane delivering face-to-face session

Parkinson's

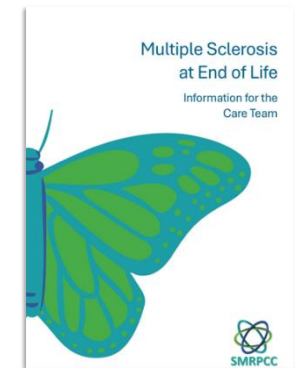
Jane has continued to provide education and support to care agencies and RACHs on Parkinson's at end of life. Jane's contributions to SMRPCC's Parkinson's program include:

- Providing education to 58 staff at RACHs and Cabrini Hospital.
- Attending Parkinson's Australia's conference in Canberra to enhance her knowledge of current management of Parkinson's.
- Starting work on a new resource on 'Managing Atypical Parkinson's at end of life' (due to be released 2026).

Multiple Sclerosis

Following on from feedback and suggestions from facilities after a *Trending Session* on Multiple Sclerosis (MS) at end of life, Jane developed a guideline document to help clinicians better understand end-of-life care for people with MS.

We launched the resource — *Multiple Sclerosis at end of life | Information for the care team* — on 8 May 2025 at SMRPCC's annual Clinical Forum. To download this and other resources, go to [our website](#), in particular the [resources and links page](#).



MS resource

PEM Program

The PEM program (Program of Experience in MND) has been run again this year. Three successful applicants spent two days at Calvary Healthcare Bethlehem in the Statewide Progressive Neurological Disease Service (SPNDS) clinic observing neurologists and allied health staff managing the care of people with MND. The applicants spent a further day at MND Victoria observing how their services also support those living with MND and their families.

Palliative Care in Disability

In early 2025, Jane and Tanja Bahro presented a series of three education sessions on Palliative Care in Disability to over 60 Disability Support Home Managers. The sessions were well received.

AGED CARE

Palliative Care in Aged Care program

In October, the Palliative Care in Aged Care program reached a significant milestone with the completion of a comprehensive needs assessment led by Liz Reilly. This assessment provided valuable insights into the current challenges and opportunities within aged care settings, drawing on the input of an expert advisory group and in-depth interviews with 15 clinical managers across the sector.

The findings informed a set of key recommendations, central to which is the introduction of a flexible "building blocks" model. This model empowers aged care facilities to tailor their engagement with palliative care initiatives based on their unique contexts and needs. The building blocks include:

- System navigation. The consortium can act as a system navigator, like the success of PCAS, who act as a navigator for clinical issues. Facilities need help to navigate all the resources available to them and strategies on ways they can use the resources to implement organisational change.
- A short information bulletin. Sent regularly to facilities to keep facilities updated on all recently available resources and any upcoming events.

- Online training sessions for ENs and RNs. The *Palliative Care Lunchtime Sessions* remain very popular with facilities and meet some of the educational needs of enrolled nurses and registered nurses.
- Weekly online *Palliative Care 10-minute sessions*. These are aimed specifically at PCAs and held at a time during the day that they can attend.
- Online Community of Practice meetings. These will enable facility staff to network with colleagues in other facilities.

Since the report's release, several of these components have already been implemented, and early engagement has been promising. Notably, efforts are underway to establish a dedicated position to further support and coordinate these initiatives, ensuring sustained progress and sector-wide impact.

By taking a collaborative and adaptive approach, the program is strengthening the capacity of aged care providers to deliver high-quality, person-centred palliative care.

Strengthening Primary Care: GP Engagement Project

The GP Engagement Project, supported by funding from South Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network (SEMPHN), has made a significant impact in strengthening collaboration between General Practice and community palliative care services.

This ambitious initiative set out to deliver 36 education sessions across one year, focusing on a broad range of palliative care topics relevant to primary care. These sessions have been facilitated by experienced clinicians from the community palliative care service and tailored to meet the practical needs of GPs and practice teams.

To date, the majority of sessions have been completed, with the remainder to be scheduled and delivered over the coming months. Feedback from both General Practitioners and palliative care providers has been overwhelmingly positive. Participants have reported increased confidence in managing palliative care needs and stronger links between services.

The project has not only enhanced knowledge but has also fostered meaningful collaboration between primary and specialist care — ultimately improving the quality of care for patients with life-limiting illness in the community.



Screenshot from SEMPHN page about the GP engagement program

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The consortium provides training and education opportunities to improve the quality of palliative care in Victoria's southern metro region.

Overall, in the 2023-24 financial year, we provided training to 2,751 participants, almost exactly double the 1,376 participants from the previous year. Some of these were face-to-face sessions, but most were online sessions, as detailed below.

Our online education program has been increasingly successful and was featured in the **Summer 2024 edition of ACCPA Aged Care Today Magazine** (page 81).



*Aged Care Today
Summer 24 edition*

Lunchtime Sessions

We continued and expanded our successful *Lunchtime Sessions* — a series of online training sessions about palliative care aimed at clinicians in the southern metro region.

Importantly, from October 2024 we started working with all the Victorian consortia — the Victorian Palliative Care Network. Working with the larger group has brought a greater depth of information and knowledge to the sessions. In addition, attendance numbers have continued to increase.

We added new sessions, including *Managing Breathlessness and Secretions* and *MND Managing Pain and Discomfort*. The lunchtime sessions ran from:

- **May to August 2024**
- **August to October 2024**
- **October 2024 to March 2025**
- **March to July 2025**

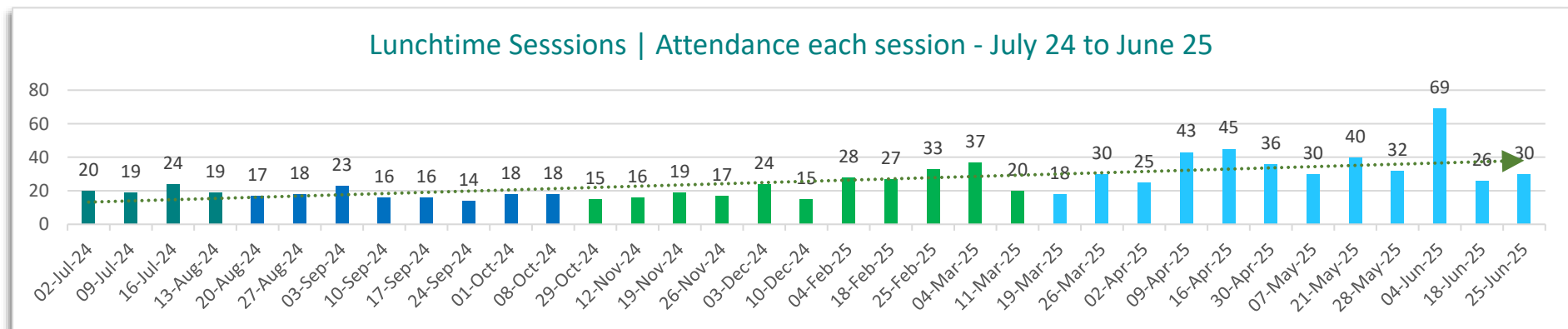
Although held on Tuesdays for some time, in March 2025 we began holding the Lunchtime Sessions on Wednesdays, from 12 pm to 1 pm, to gain access to a wider audience. Attendance at the sessions ranged from a low of 14 at a session in September 2024 to a high of 69 at a session in May 2025. Overall, attendance was higher than in the previous financial year, when attendance ranged from 6 to 45.

We asked attendees to evaluate the sessions. Almost 100% of those who responded agreed or strongly agreed that they learnt something relevant for their work, enjoyed the session and would recommend the session to others. Comments included:

- *All my questions were answered thoroughly. Thank you.*
- *What a wealth of knowledge, thank you, it was very informative.*
- *Very clear information, good practice tips and information.*
- *I am a recently graduated nurse. This training is really helpful for me.*
- *Well-spoken and engaging presenter who shared lots of practical clinical advice, thank you :)*



Lunchtime Session flyers



10-minute PCA Palliative Care Sessions

Background

In early 2024, SMRPCC ran a project to identify the future direction of aged care work. The project was overseen by an advisory panel of significant stakeholders and included consultations with aged care educators and managers. These consultations identified the need for brief education sessions aimed specifically at PCAs.

These stakeholders said that while the SMRPCC online education sessions (50-minute lunchtime sessions) were appropriate and helpful for nurses, they were too long, too complex and at the wrong time of day for PCAs to attend. They stated there was a need for short (10-minute) online sessions at a time when PCAs could attend.

Pilot project

Following discussions with the advisory panel, SMRPCC ran a pilot project to assess the feasibility of 10-minute training sessions designed for PCAs. We ran the pilot sessions over five weeks, providing two 10-minute sessions each week.

Sessions were scheduled for 2.30 pm every Tuesday and Wednesday afternoon. This was the timing suggested by the facility managers and coincided with shift change and crossover of staff.

We consulted with the advisory panel about the content of the sessions to ensure the content was directly relevant to the care provided by PCAs. We selected topics that aligned closely with the practical needs of the staff, with a particular focus on the care required during the last weeks and days of life.

The 10 initial sessions covered critical areas such as mouth care, pressure area care, recognising signs of pain, caring for residents with dyspnoea, what dying looks like, and other essential aspects of end-of-life care.

While the content was not new to PCAs, the concise and focused format provided an opportunity to reinforce and refine their existing knowledge, ensuring they felt confident and well-prepared to provide high quality care to residents at end of life.

Attendance and evaluation

In contrast to the Lunchtime Sessions, we did not ask participants to register. Instead, we used the same Microsoft Teams link for each session. Participants simply clicked on the link to join the session. Attendance at sessions during the pilot series ranged from 25 to 60.

Following each session, we gathered feedback from the participants. Overall, there were 126 separate responses, with the number of responses per session ranging from six to 24.

Of those who responded:

- 98% said they learned something that day
- 100% said they would recommend the session to others

Of the three (2%) who said they didn't learn something that day, two added positive comments and one commented that there was no time for questions in the 10 minutes.

Over the five weeks and 10 sessions, the comments changed from a few at the beginning about how short the sessions were, to comments like:

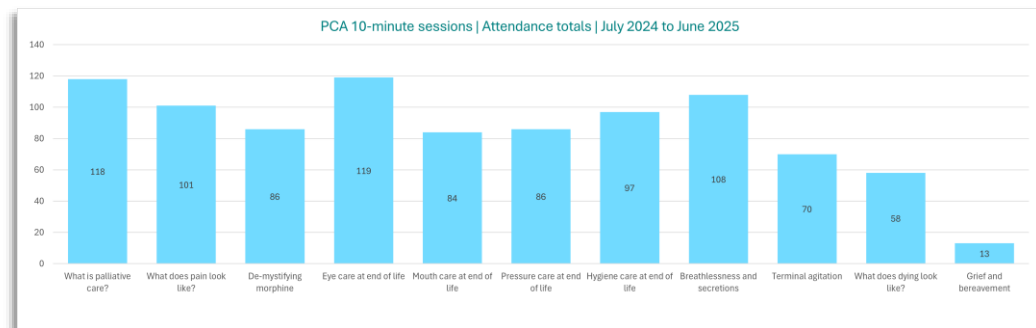
- *Great short sharp session! Really enjoying this training!*

Ongoing sessions

Given the positive attendance and engagement during the pilot, SMRPCC acted on the project's recommendations and commenced running weekly 10-minute sessions for PCAs.

Over the 2024-25 financial year, we ran the sessions four times including the pilot sessions. In October 2024 we started working with all the Victorian consortia — the Victorian Palliative Care Network. As with the Lunchtime Sessions, working with the larger group allowed us to bring a greater depth of expertise to the sessions.

Over the 44 sessions we held from July 2024 to June 2025, we recorded 936 participants. Attendance was often in groups from the same aged care home, allowing participants to discuss the content afterward and fostering a collaborative learning environment.




The image shows four session flyer images for Personal Care Workers, Personal Care Attendants, and Personal Care Attendants (March to July 2025). Each flyer includes the SMRPCC logo, session title, dates, topics, and contact information for Microsoft Teams.

10-minute PCA Session flyers

Trending Sessions

We also continued our popular *Trending Sessions*, focussing on topics that attendees of our other online sessions had expressed interest in.

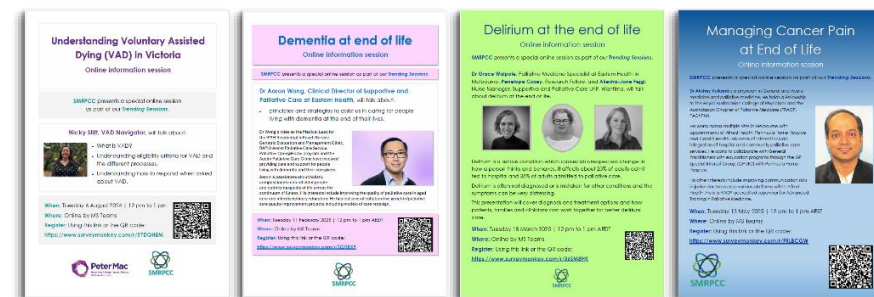
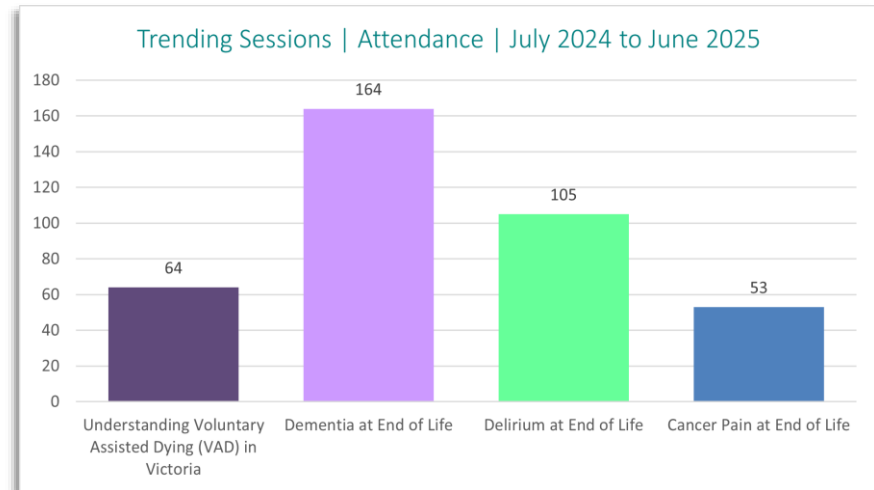
In the 2024-25 financial year, we ran the following *Trending Sessions*:

- **Understanding Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) in Victoria — Nicky Stitt, VAD Navigator | 6 August 2024**
- **Dementia at end of life — Dr Aaron Wong | 11 February 2025**
- **Delirium at end of life — Dr Grace Walpole, Dr Penelope Casey and Aliasha-Jane Feigl | 18 March 2025**
- **Managing cancer pain at end of life — Dr Akshay Kulkarni | 13 May 2025**

Attendance at the *Trending Sessions* this financial year ranged from 53 to a record 164, significantly higher than the previous financial year, where attendance ranged from 28 to 104.

Feedback for the *Trending Sessions* was overwhelmingly positive. Comments included:

- *It was terrific — I enjoyed the trainer's breadth of experience. (VAD)*
- *Thank you for providing such excellent forums to keep people updated and informed. (Dementia)*
- *Dr Wong was an engaging and knowledgeable speaker. Would be very interested in future sessions with him! (Dementia)*
- *Loved the succinct valuable presentation. The time frame made it easier to attend. Thanks. (Delirium)*
- *It was a great session and very comprehensive. (Cancer pain)*



Trending Session flyers

ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Website

In the 2024-25 period, having refreshed the look of the website in previous years, we focussed more on maintenance, aiming to keep the website relevant, correct and easy to use.

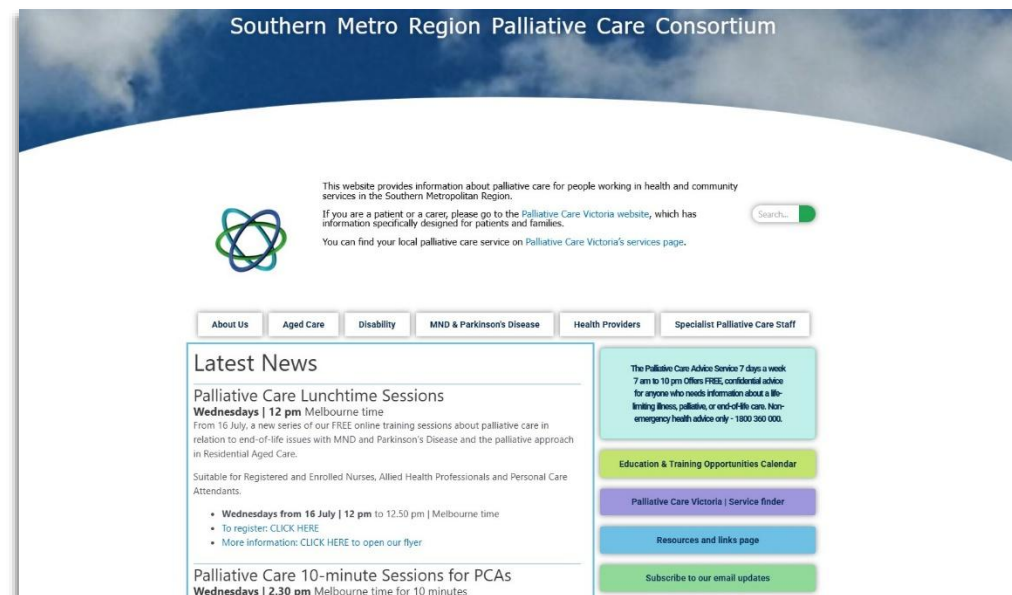
We continued to advertise our Lunchtime, Trending and 10-Minute training sessions, as well as documents we published, in the “Latest News” section on the Home page.

On the Education and Training Opportunities calendar, we started adding education and training opportunities that are accessible not only from the southern metro region, but also from other regions around Victoria.

In the 2024-25 financial year, there were nearly 7,300 page views from more than 3,400 users — a significant increase from the previous year (than 6,500 page views from more than 3,000 users).

The 5 most popular pages were:

- SMRPCC Home
- About Us
- Motor Neurone Disease
- Aged Care
- Resources



Screenshot of SMRPCC website home page

Email Update

In 2024-25, we continued producing SMRPCC’s increasingly popular monthly email update using the online email service Mailchimp. The email update includes information about upcoming events, local and online training opportunities, and useful resources.

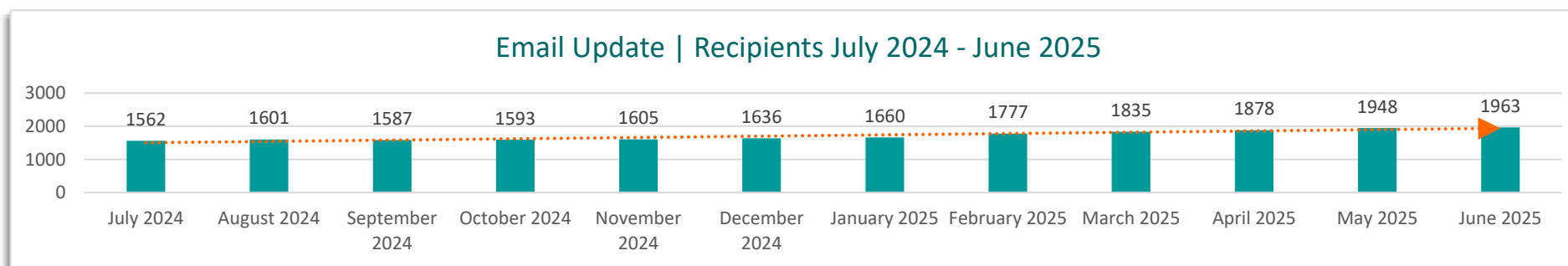
Having used a free version of the service for some years, this year we changed to a paid subscription when the number of subscribers increased above Mailchimp’s limits for the free service.

Subscriber numbers continued to increase this year. The number of recipients each month increased by 400 over the year: from 1,562 in July 2024 to 1,963 in June 2025. Some new subscribers used an online form to subscribe themselves to the email update. Most had registered for one of our online training sessions and when asked, said they would like to receive the email update.

We believe it is likely that the email update is shared by organisations and between colleagues and that accordingly, SMRPCC’s email update could be distributed to more than 2,000 people each month.



Email updates from 2024 to 2025



SMRPCC CLINICAL FORUMS

We held the 2024 Clinical Forum early in the 2024-25 financial year and the 2025 Clinical Forum late in the same financial year.

2024 Clinical Forum

Our theme for the 2024 forum, held in Chelsea on 18 July 2024, was *Consider the Carer*. Carers play a vital role in palliative care, often navigating practical, financial, emotional, and psychological challenges. Speakers included experts from the family violence and elder abuse sectors, as well as services in the region.

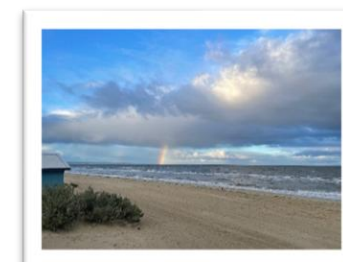
We received 59 registrations for the forum and, 49 people attended. Of the attendees, 37 returned completed evaluations forms – a completion rate of 76%. Participants included a wide range of professions, as identified by those who completed the evaluations forms, with 9 different role types identified by the 37 respondents. The majority (59%) of respondents were nurses, similar to the percentage of nurses who registered for the forum.

Some highlights:

- We re-launched an updated version of our popular resource — **Consider the Carer**
- At the end of the day, 95% of respondents said they were familiar or completely familiar with SMRPCC’s programs compared with 85% at the beginning of the day.
- By the end of the day, there was a 54% increase in respondents who said they had a good or complete understanding of domestic violence and elder abuse.
- As always, there were lots of opportunities to network. Some people ventured outside for a walk on the beach at lunchtime.

Some comments:

- *Well-coordinated and planned, thought stimulating topics, great to communicate with external agency!*
- *Thankyou! Excellent day of information and conversations.*



Chelsea beach, participants at 2024 forum, Consider the Carer re-launch

2025 Clinical Forum

In 2025 we held the clinical forum on 8 May, with the theme of *Understanding and Responding to Trauma at End of Life*. The day included presentations on activities within the consortium, service responses to trauma and special guest speakers: Dr Dianne Clifton and Dr Peg LeVine.

After trying a smaller venue in Chelsea in the previous year, in 2025 we returned to Sandy by the Bay in Sandringham. The venue was spacious, with beautiful views and a comfortable outdoor area. To keep everyone safe, we hired air purifiers, which were placed around the room. These were funded by SEMPHN, who contributed financially to running the forum.

We received 77 registrations for the forum and 66 people attended. Of the attendees, 56 returned completed evaluations forms – a completion rate of 85%.

Participants included a wide range of professions, as identified by those who completed the evaluations forms, with 14 different role types identified by the 56 respondents. While 67% of those who registered stated they were ENs or RNs, about half of the attendees stated that they worked in nursing roles. This reflects a movement from mainly nursing roles to other roles, including management and education.



Sandy by the Bay venue, speakers and launch of MS at End of Life resource

Highlights of the day:

- By the end of the day, there was a 59% increase in respondents who said they had a good or complete understanding of trauma at end of life.
- At the beginning of the day, the number of respondents who said they had spent some or a lot of time networking with their palliative care colleagues in the region had increased from 15 to 40 people — a significant increase.
- The one large screen at the venue was an improvement on last year's two small screens, and it was easier to see the presentations. The venue was comfortable, with beautiful views from the windows of coastal bush, and an outdoor area for those who wanted fresh air during the break.
- We launched our new resource: **Multiple Sclerosis at End of Life**.

When asked to identify key take-home messages, some comments were:

- *Be caring, curious and aware of trauma.*
- *Providing safe care for everyone is important as so many have unknown trauma.*
- *To always consider my clients' past trauma and their history and how to navigate that.*

When asked for any other comments, participants said:

- *Fantastic presenters, thank you!*
- *Really thoroughly enjoyed the forum. A lot of thought-provoking questions for me to reflect on and learn more.*
- *Loved the content today.*



Participants at 2025 Clinical Forum

The SMRPCC acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first inhabitants of this nation and the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we work and live. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging. We want to express our gratefulness for sharing the land, and our sorrow for the cultural and spiritual costs of that sharing.