

# Gerry's journey

## Charters Towers – Prostate Cancer

Gerry is a 79 year old man who is diagnosed with locally advanced prostate cancer, which has impacted his activities of daily living. He lives with his wife and has one son who is an interstate truck driver based in Charters Towers.



### PRIMARY CARE

Gerry is very embarrassed talking to the nurse about the blood in his urine and nearly falling over at night going to the toilet. He sent his wife in to buy a urinal bottle from the pharmacy. Gerry is not looking forward to travelling to Townsville to talk to more doctors about it. He doesn't understand what they meant when they said PSA.

### SPECIALIST APPOINTMENT CHANGE

Gerry's son has difficulty organising time off to drive his parents 1.5hrs to Townsville for investigations and appointments with geriatricians, urologists and radiation oncologists. The bus doesn't match up with his appointment times.



### SUPPORT SERVICES

The social worker helps Gerry apply for community services through My Aged Care. He receives support with transport but declines for anyone to come into his home. Gerry's friends are worried. They help as much as Gerry will allow them.



### HOSPITAL ADMISSION

Gerry is admitted to Charters Towers Hospital several times with dehydration and pain. Telehealth appointments with radiation oncologists and geriatricians are organised by the nurses. The doctors complete an Acute Resuscitation Plan with Gerry. His wife is scared, she doesn't know if this means he will die soon. Gerry doesn't want to talk about it. Gerry and his wife do not know how to explain what is happening to their son.

### SPECIALIST PALLIATIVE CARE

During an admission to Charters Towers Hospital, Gerry is referred to Specialist Palliative Rural Telehealth service (SPaRTa).

### ADVANCE CARE PLANNING

Over a few months, the SPaRTa team and community health nurse help Gerry to share his wishes and what matters most to him.

### IN HOME SUPPORT

Gerry can see his wife is becoming more frail. He accepts services for domestic assistance, nursing support and personal care coming into their home. Contracted community nursing for palliative care in the home is organised by SPaRTa.



### FINAL WISH

In between Gerry's many admissions to Charters Towers Hospital, his son takes him to the pub for one last drink with his mates. Gerry is the happiest he has been in months.

### GRIEF & LOSS

Gerry dies at the hospital with his wife present. She doesn't want to leave him.

#### Key Themes:

- Charters Towers is 135km from Townsville
- Transport options are limited and can be difficult for some people to access/use
- Advance Care Planning is not one conversation
- Adjustment associated with loss of independence

#### Potential issues/barriers:

- Referral late in the diagnosis
- Workforce shortages and skillset across all services
- Recognition of symptoms associated with prostate cancer care
- Wife's ability to visit regularly and be present for important discussions



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