

Heidelberg Leader
7 MARCH 2006

Expanded role for nurses

A MACLEOD nurse is one of only eight in Victoria registered to prescribe medication.

Nurse practitioner Julie Paul also can make referrals to specialists and send patients to hospital from home.

This helps patients with cancer and other chronic conditions in the area.

The palliative care nurses were part of a seven-year project by the Nurses Board of Victoria to get the qualification established.

It requires five years' clinical experience and a Master degree, as well as a portfolio showing performance at an advanced level.

Ms Paul has more than 20 years' nursing experience and both she and fellow registered practitioner Karen Conte have worked for Banksia Palliative Care's home visiting service for the past 12 years.

Their role is different to that of a GP.

They prescribe medication only for palliative care patients from a limited range of drugs.

Ms Conte said the increased role for specialist nurses benefited patients.

"We have more contact with patients and being able to write them a prescription saves them having to make a trip to their GP," she said.

Ms Paul said the nurses visited people at home and those in nursing homes.

"It is mainly end-stage cancer patients but we have a lot more people coming through with chronic conditions, including end-stage heart disease and emphysema," she said.