

Care and comfort crucial at life's end

BY MICHAEL QUINN AND RICHARD WILLINGHAM

AFTER a lifetime attending those in need, retired paramedic Alan Young, is now terminally ill and needs some of that care himself.

"I think I was a goodambo; I had a lot of empathy for people, treated them right and cared for them," he says. "Now people are doing the same for me. That makes me feel like I mustn't have been too bad a sort."

With six months until his 80th wedding anniversary and a little longer to his 70th birthday, Young is setting goals and, with Banksia Palliative Care in vanhooe making the most of his remaining time.

"They're very concerned about our welfare at Banksia," he says. "Their aim is to make sure that what time you've got is comfortable, both physically and psychologically."

For Young and his wife Margaret (pictured) palliative care is all about having support, never feeling alone, and living out your life at home with loved ones.

More than 40,000 people, young

PETER WEAVING



Lewis it's a passion. Lewis has lived in the Fairfield area for 74 years and has volunteered in the Austin Hospital's palliative care unit for seven.

"I enjoy it," she says. "It is very busy and crowded, but you can sit and have a chat with the patients while they get their treatment. It is very important."

Volunteer coordinator Jennifer Christensen says volunteers offer vital companionship to patients.

"We bring the community into the hospital; it sees us to normalise the activity," she says.

"We are the only people who don't come and poke, prod or cause other discomfort."

The hospital serves a diverse community, and Christians' hopes more volunteers from multicultural backgrounds will come forward.

"It will better serve the patients because they will have people familiar with language, culture and religion," Christians says.

"The broader the range of people we've got, the better companionship and support we can provide."

• **This week's National Palliative Care week.**

and old will need palliative care in Australia this year. Banksia Palliative Care will help more than 500 of them.

Serving the Banyule, Nillumbik and Whittlesea areas with a small group of staff and help from volunteers, Banksia is typical of the handful of community care centres around Melbourne.

Although palliative care is a tough assignment, for volunteers like Dorothy