

Palliative Care in Melbourne, Australia

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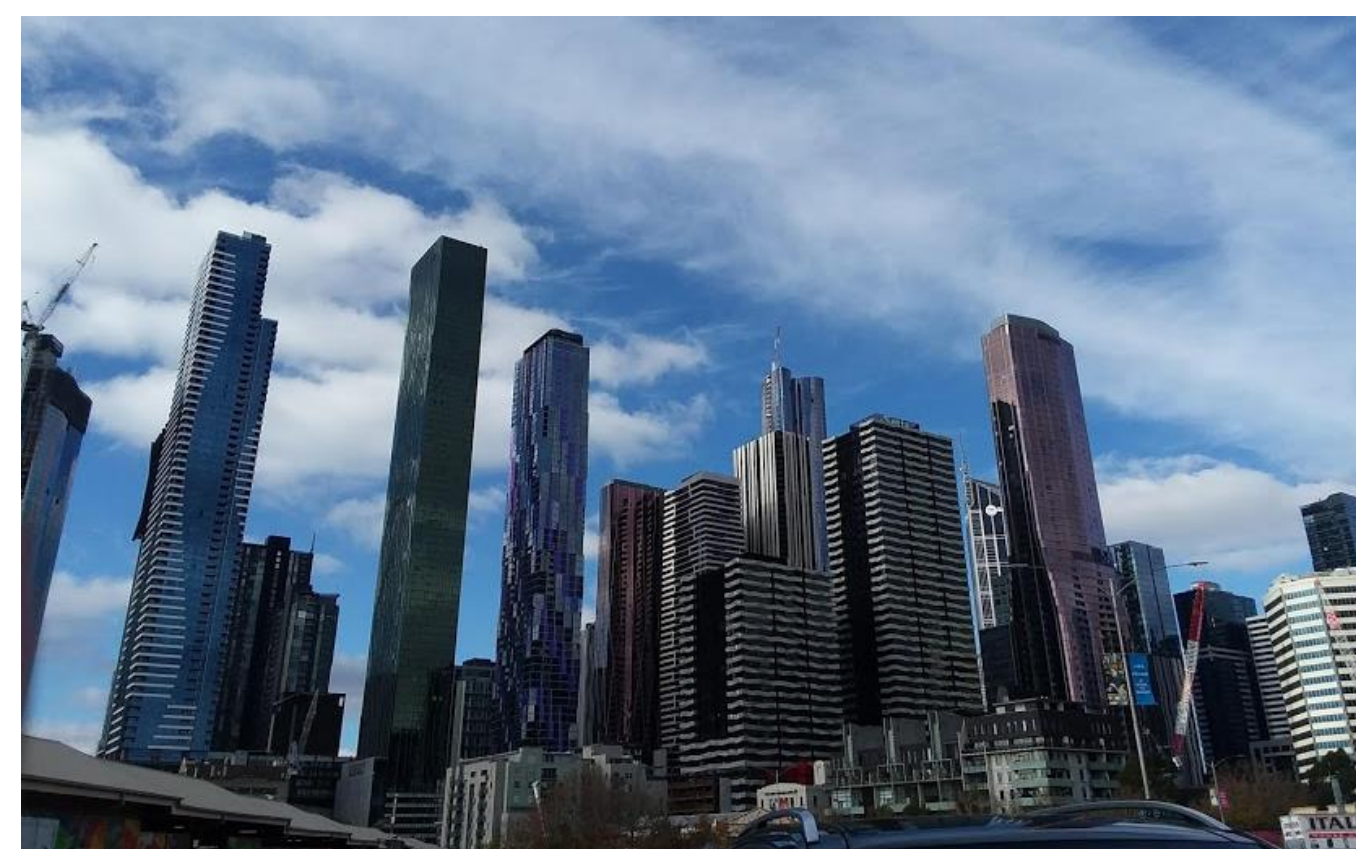


Melbourne, Australia

Melbourne, Victoria is the second most populated city in Australia, with around 5 million people calling it home.



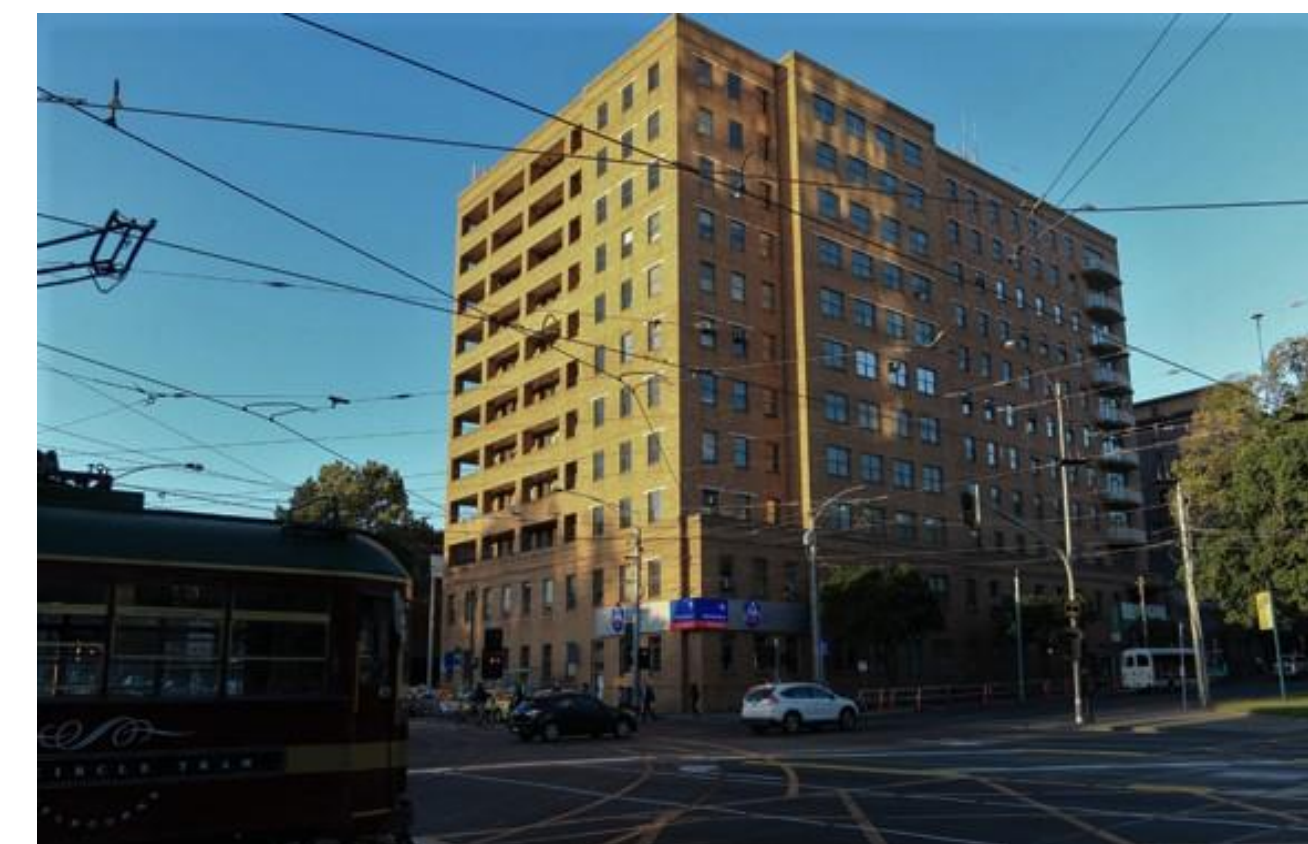
Melbourne has grown significantly in recent years due to international immigration, making it a multicultural city. It is also located on the country land of many Aboriginal tribes including the Wurundjeri and the Kulin Nations.



St. Vincent's Hospital

St. Vincent's Hospital is a Catholic hospital located in the center of Melbourne. The hospital accepts both public and privately insured adult patients. Due to the location of the hospital, the majority of the patient population are of a lower socioeconomic status.

The social work department partnered with the Allied Health teams throughout the hospital which included Aboriginal Health Liaisons, addiction specialists, pastoral care, and mental health specialists. I was placed on a palliative care ward in the adult public hospital. My patients received treatments for symptoms due to chronic illness, or end of life hospice care.. I was also able to provide social work services on other wards, like the emergency department, general medicine, oncology, and the stroke unit.



Skills Developed

- Collaboration within a multidisciplinary medical team
- Assessment and intervention
- Analyzing patient data
- Medical documentation
- Prioritization
- Managing grief and loss
- Professional presentation skills
- Advocacy
- Locating services for patients and families
- Engaging with diverse patient groups
- Planning and directing family meetings

Outcomes

My time at St. Vincent's allowed me to engage with diverse patient populations and advocate for dignity during end of life. My key accomplishments include:

- Literature review on Australians experiencing homelessness and hospital-based interventions
- Quality assurance presentation
- Case presentation on ethical dilemma in patient care
- Planned and facilitated two family meetings
- Management of full patient caseload by week 12

Reflections

Working with patients and their families so close to the end of their life is humbling. I felt honored to provide services for families and patients and help patients fulfill their dying wishes. End of life care is challenging, but rewarding work.

I appreciated learning about the difficult history for Aboriginal people from Aboriginal Health Liaisons at the hospital. It caused me to reflect on systems of power and oppression in the US, especially as a result of colonization.

Melbourne is an incredible city and Australia is a beautiful country!

Advice

- Global placements are challenging! Be patient with yourself.
- Educate yourself on the history of social workers in Australia, especially with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
- Careful with your assumptions about what Australia "should" be like as a developed nation
- Explore Melbourne and eat lots of great food!



Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Office of Global Activities for funding and coordinating my placement. I am also grateful to the Social Work Department at St. Vincent's for befriending me and helping me grow as a clinician. Finally, I thank the multidisciplinary team on 6E for welcoming and encouraging me from day one.