

MERCY MATTERS

DECEMBER 2022

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Look back on a magical evening of remembrance

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**Mercy
Hospice**

Te Korowai Atawhai

Lights to Remember 2022

At sunset on 1 December, this year's Lights to Remember once again burst into life in the grounds of Mercy Hospice, giving hundreds of people the opportunity to dedicate a light

and leave messages to their loved ones.

And what a difference with last year's launch when all that was possible was a video recorded launch from staff due to Covid restrictions. This year

was all about people gathering together in the grounds of Mercy Hospice to remember and celebrate the connections that matter most. It really was a magical, profoundly moving experience for all involved.





You can visit the lights in the grounds of Mercy Hospice on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday until Christmas Eve, between 8pm and 10.30pm. This means there's still time to dedicate a light to a loved one and leave a message of love and gratitude. Simply visit [LightsToRemember.co.nz](https://www.lightstoremember.co.nz)



Remembering together

In November, Mercy Hospice was privileged to host our annual remembrance service: The Space Between Us: Maumaharatange Memories.

Like Lights to Remember, this year's service was hosted on-site so that people could attend in person rather than the 'live-streamed' event that went ahead last year due to Covid.

This was another beautiful and profoundly moving event

filled with blessings, prayers, reflections, and personal testimony, capped by the inclusion of the lighting of Mercy's remembrance candles. These candles signify a literal spectrum of emotions and intentions for all our loved ones.

Thank you to those who were able to attend and experience this wonderful occasion. And as always, thank you to Mercy staff Lorna, Hera, and Louise T. for being such wonderful hosts and participants.



Photography courtesy of Lorna Affleck



Dr Carol McAllum is the Director of Quality and Partnerships at Mercy Hospice. She is a palliative medicine specialist and continues to work as one of our senior doctors in the Inpatient Unit and the community. Thank you, Carol, for making time in your busy schedule to talk with us about your palliative care philosophy and how you view and respond to loss.

Where there is loss, there is gain

Could you tell us about your experience of loss and its impact on you as a clinician?

You know, I'm now 40 years into being a doctor, so experiencing loss is something that's changed or matured in me over time. I know more now because I know what doesn't work. I like growing older. In the same way, if I think about your question, I don't see loss on its own. I actually see gain. Where there is loss, there is gain. I see living life in many different ways and dying is a natural part of living. There's so much to gain being close to people who are dying or experiencing loss. It's something that enhances connection.

I heard a remarkable story while I was on duty over the weekend. I'd been told by two nurses that there was a tūi outside. It came tapping at one of the windows of the Inpatient Unit. It was outside and tap, tap, tap, it wanted to get in. No luck. So, it went around to another window. Tap, tap, tap. It looked like it

wanted to get in. A little while later, somehow it's inside, having found its way into the main foyer. It flies straight into a patient's room, hopped about on the floor and the table next to the patient. The lady in the bed says "Ah. That's my brother." And the tūi left through a window in the patient's room. Later, again it was seen tapping on the window, and it came in a second time! So, something was happening with the tūi and this lady. I do feel that while some things are lost, other things are going on. Something is gained. It's just that we can't always articulate it or see it.

Another time, I was with a patient and their family, and I could see that the time was getting closer to the last breath. Something, I'm not sure what, made me want to tell the family that although it looks as if your parent is unreachable in this coma-like state, there is still living and there are still things going on for them. They may look as if they will never rouse again, and that they are not aware of us. But all of a sudden it looks like they want to get up out of bed, or want to go somewhere, or they might

open their eyes, look at you, close their eyes and then take their last breaths. A little time passed, and I returned to the room and noticed that the lady had died very peacefully. A family member turned to me and said, "She opened her eyes and looked at us all, then closed her eyes and took her last breath". Now, I don't know if she was listening to what I'd said earlier. And how often does that happen? Well, it happens often enough for me to share that story. It's a bit of magic.

So, there's a whole amount of loss going on in that moment, but in this case, that image of their loved one making that seemingly intentional eye contact then was humbling. I could see that they were really touched. In that moment there was an unmistakable profound connection. Something was happening.

Around loss there's a lot of sadness, a lot of tears. It's like an injury that takes healing and leaves scars sometimes. These scars might fade with time but never go away. But there's something that's rich that can remain. Where there is loss, there is gain.

In my former life as a general practitioner, I looked after people for a period of years. And of course, as we get older, we lose things: the sharpness of our thinking, our dexterity. But there's gain in other ways; a gain of moving towards a reconciliation of a wholeness, of acceptance, which not everyone wants, but it's amazing, especially in young people, maybe children, people in their 20s, 30s. They're often more calm or reconciled or 'whole' than their family members or friends around them. I see those who are dying console those around them. Something that is lost forever endures.

What's been the effect of witnessing these gains on you?

It's probably kept me going. There's a touch of magic. It's a buzz, oh my, that happened! Remember the lady I mentioned earlier, who hadn't been communicating and suddenly opened her eyes, looked around at her family and then very peacefully took her last breath? Well, when the family talked about this, their eyes lit up as they described what she did. They said "Oh, she did this!". Now that's something special. They've got an energy; something that'll stay with them forever.

I remember another relatively young couple at Mercy. She was in her late 40s as was her partner. I saw them not long after she'd died and her partner was still with her, and I said, "How are you?". He said, "I was given a gift". "Oh yes?" I said, "tell me more". He told me that the nurse on duty that night had come in and seen that there had been some changes, and that death was probably going to happen in the next half hour or so. The nurse said "I think this is going to happen soon". He said he

became wide awake, the dog hopped on the bed, and they were fully alert and present as they stayed with her. For him, it was the greatest gift to be given that time with her. So he went away with sadness, yes, but also a gift. It's not all about loss. Some things are lost, but some are gained.

I see a lot of grace too. For the person who is dying, I have seen them literally reach out and console their family members and friends: it's a real role-reversal. Not everyone, some people fight to the end. But I've seen a lot of grace and that is so touching. It's a transfer of energy, that's what I see. Some people don't want to know that their life is short, and they want to deny it, but you can only deny something you know. So, loss of some things is inevitable, and it's transformed into something else.

What practical things help you to deal with loss?

So, loss, as we understand it is about loss of function, social connections, cognition, independence, possibility, identity, roles in the family. For me, there's an inevitability about it, so our challenge is how can we make it the best for this person, and I think a big part of that is listening. What I find is I might be asked to see someone, and I'll be told about all the real dramatic life events that this person has experienced, many, many sad stories. I'll be apprehensive when I go in but the best way for me to deal with it is to go and sit down and listen. That's the most peaceful thing I can do.

For me not to confront the loss is more distressing than confronting the loss and doing

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that alongside people. So, I'm a real 'joy germ'. For example, I might meet someone who says 'I might never be able to walk again', and I'll say 'I think you're right', and I'll sit beside them and say 'that's really lousy.' And we'll sit in the silence together and see what comes up. And that's holding other peoples' loss. Helpful for them, but also helpful for me. Sometimes you do everything you can, and then there's the chance to just sit with them. I know people will be sad. I know there will be healing. And I know there will be remembrances. Things will find their place.

What gets you through experiences of loss?

Sharing. There's nothing in my era of becoming a doctor that encouraged me to share my

experiences, acknowledge my weaknesses or ask for help. You find yourself thinking, I have to hold it all in and the buck stops with me. But I know that if I share things with people, it's so much better. Even a little bit with a friend or colleague is helpful. Doctors are a funny breed, we're all about responsibility. Nurses are good at communicating with each other; they have their own networks.

Just over the weekend I noticed a group of nurses talking about how it was for them looking after a patient who needed 'turning' in their bed. It was just good to hear them talking about their struggles. Their talking was like when we anoint a wound; it assists with the healing.

Sometimes I invite myself in to help the nurses. If they need an extra pair of hands turning

a patient for instance, I'll say "Will I do? Can you coach me about what to do? You'll need to tell me." I think as I've got older, one of the things I do to cope, more and more, is I do what I feel makes sense or feels comfortable to me, so I'm treating me by being beside the nurses, by witnessing what they witness, so that I know what they're dealing with. This also helps me with making decisions about pain management.

I'm also someone who likes walking by the beach, completing jigsaw puzzles, putting on my music or listening to a podcast. I'll happily enjoy those things for a couple of peaceful, quiet hours. It helps to restore me. Light and water, that's what really helps.



Photograph of tui courtesy of Chris Harris

Let's talk about grief

Louise Thompson, one of three counsellors at Mercy Hospice, talks to Mercy Matters about the challenges of experiencing grief and loss, especially around those big annual holidays, the benefits of counselling, and a surprising look at the challenges and gifts that grief can offer us all.

Can you tell us how long you've been with Mercy Hospice, what your role is, and what you enjoy about it?

I am currently in my 11th year here at Mercy, and the role I have is Counsellor & Bereavement Coordinator. What I love about my role is being able to be there and support those that need and /or who want support. My passion for my work was born out of my own tragic losses in which there was no support offered. Sometimes it is a long and lonely journey trying to figure out and make sense of your emotions on your own.

How does Counselling fit with the provision of palliative care to patients and their families?

Counselling fits well with the provision of palliative care as it's all about comfort and support for the patient and their family members. For the most part, our patients are supported by their families, that's why the care incorporates the family. In essence we care for the whole person.

When does it become necessary for Counselling to be part of the care provided by Mercy Hospice?

Counselling support is offered

to all Mercy Hospice patients and their families if they feel that it would be helpful to their situation. We all experience life and death differently and for all involved it is a significant and major life event. For the most part, people manage this process with the support of family and friends. There are times when people need to speak with someone who is not family for several reasons, for example, the anticipation of a patient coming to the end of their life can be very difficult. As human beings we have only ever known life and so there is a process that takes place along someone's journey in learning how to say goodbye bit by bit. For some, having a safe space to express their heartache and fears of what may lie ahead can be very useful/helpful.

Significant events like Christmas and milestones such as birthdays and anniversaries can be really challenging for people living with loss and bereavement. Why is that, and if you're a concerned relative or friend, what can you do to help?

The first year is historically the toughest, as you approach these first milestones without your loved one. It is challenging in so much as people have not had the chance to rehearse this previously, they are needing to navigate through uncharted territory. Grief can intensify in the background at upcoming milestones, often causing an increase in anxiety/stress. To offer support for someone is to be there for them, to listen and allow the person's story to be shared and witnessed. To be



able to sit with the uncomfortableness of seeing and hearing another's heartache.

Is grief, whether it's about personal bereavement or coming to terms with permanent change, something that needs to be treated or eliminated, or is there another way to approach it?

Grief comes packaged differently for some. A few may need ongoing specialist support, whilst others manage with friends, family and at times counselling support. But for the most part, apart from a few exceptions, treatment or elimination doesn't happen. Whatever we experience in our lives becomes part of our story and works to inform us of what may be important to us. Grief changes us as we look to navigate a different life without our loved one in it. One thing that it can do is enhance our compassion for one another. Our own suffering recognises and empathises with those experiencing

challenging and difficult times. It also gives us insight into what we may not want to replicate in the future. People get amazed at what they are and have been capable of, finding strength in sorrow.

One of the most useful ways to work with grief is to appreciate its impact and how it may be playing out in your life. Grief affects all of who we are, socially, spiritually, mentally,

emotionally, and physically. To be patient and kind with ourselves can sometimes prove to be a challenge.

I have found over the years that our pain needs to be acknowledged and worked with. Being kind to ourselves can mean being gentle with how we talk to and about ourselves. Our feelings are our feelings, and we are allowed to have them.

What do you think grief offers us as people and as a community?

Grief offers growth and awareness of a deeper level that has grown in our lives. In time, tolerance and compassion for others happens when you hear their stories and connects you to yours. All in all, I feel that the experience of grief can offer a more compassionate and supportive community.

Mercy Hospice offers its patients a **FREE** Life Story Service

Absolutely everyone, without exception, has a story worth telling. And while sharing your story might sound daunting, unnecessary, or like you're blowing your own trumpet, we believe everyone deserves the opportunity to feel heard and to leave their closing thoughts, reflections, and messages with the people that matter.

Introducing Life Story: a free service from Mercy Hospice.

How does it work?

Since 1997, Mercy Hospice has offered a service that has enabled patients to tell their stories. They understand how important it is to listen deeply, respectfully, and to ensure that stories appear in patients' own words and in their unique tone of voice. They know that a life



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I was initially a little reluctant and couldn't see what meaning (a Life Story) would carry for anyone else. I now thoroughly recommend this process to anyone, irrespective of whether they are ill or not. The process of narrating is a wonderful journey of reviewing, clarifying, and above all finding meaning in what each of us probably view as a simple and unexciting life.”

Mansur Zwart

story helps to deepen patients' understandings of themselves and the lives they have lived.

Like a photo album that highlights important moments and experiences, a Life Story can include defining moments or milestones that patients want others to know about. And more than a visual record, a Life Story allows them to talk about different roles they have held, and the experiences connected to those roles. It doesn't have to be all about the past either. Many patients include their hopes and dreams for their loved ones and important things they want them to hear.

Confidentiality assured

Because it's their life story, patients decide exactly what's included and who has access to it. This is why Mercy Hospice ensures that all Life Stories are completely confidential, and any recordings or printed materials are produced only with patient approval.

A simple, three-step process

It all starts with patients meeting their Life Story volunteer and talking about which potential topics they might include in their Life Story. At the end of this first meeting, patients will set up

a time to complete the actual interview. This will feel less like an interview and more like a wonderful friendly conversation, where facts and stories just unfold naturally. Volunteers will be sensitive, respectful, and deeply curious.

A useful point to note here is that the process of capturing Life Stories can take place wherever patients receive care from Mercy Hospice. This could be at home, in the Inpatient Unit at 61 College Hill, or elsewhere in the community. Lastly, after this interview has been transcribed, patients can read the draft Life Story and

if they wish, edit the material before it's finalised and presented in their chosen format.

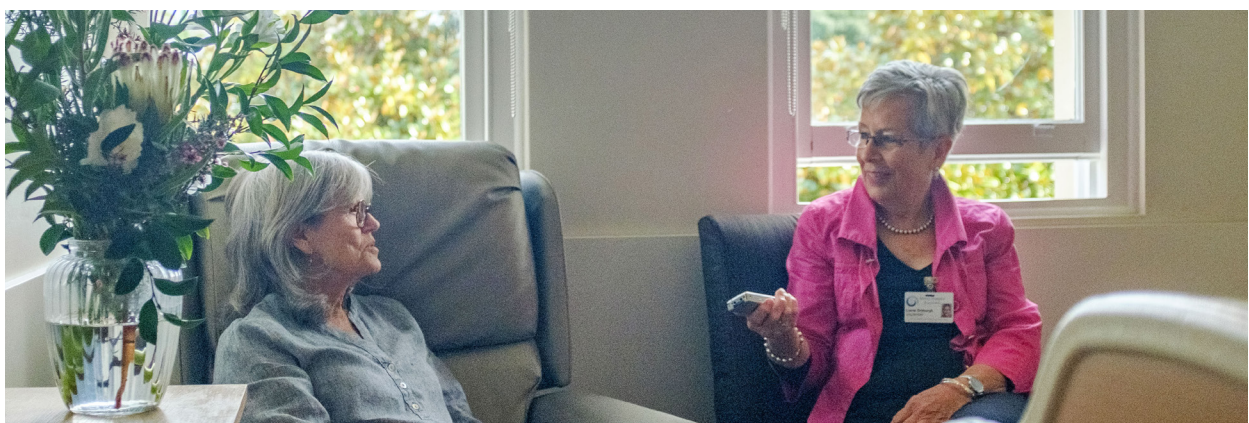
To find out more about the free Life Story service available from Mercy Hospice, please contact our volunteer coordinator on 027 275 9872 or email volunteer@mh.org.nz

You can request one of our brochures, which includes frequently asked questions and more information about how to personalise Life Stories and the format options available.

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Being referred to this service was the best thing. He couldn't stop talking! He found it very therapeutic and as a result had much more acceptance of his illness, in fact he was sorry when the life review process ended. He'd enjoyed the volunteer's company and the process. It is a great service. He was more relaxed and at peace about his illness and more accepting. He always was a great storyteller, and the volunteer was marvellous because he was a bit jumbled, and everything didn't necessarily flow in chronological order, but she helped to make good sense of it. And when the family read it, they learnt an awful lot they hadn't known.”

Marion McGregor



Game, lunch, and laughs at Tennis for Mercy 2022

On Friday 4 November, **Tennis for Mercy** went

ahead under beautiful blue skies and a hot summer sun and raised an absolutely smashing \$22,000!

90 players and non-players enjoyed a fun-filled day of good-natured doubles at Herne Bay Ponsonby Rackets Club and Pompallier Lawn Tennis Club, and later made their way to Mercy Hospice for a delicious

sit-down, gourmet lunch in the courtyard.



Miss Clawdy provided mouth-watering food, Soho Wines filled our glasses, Baker's Delight and No Ugly ensured we had enough snacks and refreshments during the day, and Auckland Carlton

Party Hire was responsible for the beautiful set up for our lunch. To all our ever-willing volunteers for making





everything run so smoothly, thank you! We really couldn't have done this without your support.

Thank you also to, Davis Funerals, for their ongoing sponsorship of this much-loved and anticipated event, now in its 12th year.

Congratulations to the winning duo, Marj Graham and Darren Young who take home the Mercy Cup.

Whether you were on court or cheering them on in the clubhouses, your participation enables our teams of professionals to continue caring for people facing life-limiting illnesses and their families. See you at the next *Tennis for Mercy* in 2023!



Thank you to the following Trusts and Foundations **who have supported Mercy Hospice through generous grants:**

- Akarana Community Trust
- Barney & Patsy McCahill Charitable Trust
- Dragon Community Trust
- Ernest Hyam Davis and Ted and Mollie Carr Legacies
- Four Winds Foundation
- Hospice NZ Grants Programme, supported by Harcourts
- Hugh Green Foundation
- Lottery Grants Board
- Margaret Neutze Legacy Fund
- NZ Community Trust
- One Foundation
- Ralph and Eve Seelye Charitable Trust
- Rua & Clarrie Stevens Charitable Trust, managed by Auckland Foundation
- Society of Mary Order of Marist Priest & Brothers
- The Masfen Foundation
- The Trusts Community Foundation

Your Fundraising Activity Update

Leap for Life.

Take a bow Jorge, Antonia, and Kristina for your incredible bravery. On Saturday 8 October all three made their Leap for Life at 200km/h! Thanks to these intrepid three and fu/nis training, the total raised for this campaign was over \$6,400! Thanks to you and all our supporters, Mercy continues to offer FREE palliative care for Mercy patients and their families!



Young Vinnies Club Sausage Sizzle Sacred Heart College.

At the end of September not one but two superb sausage sizzles were served up by the crew of the Young Vinnies at Sacred Heart College. Thank you so much boys for the \$750 raised! A great result and a wonderful testament to putting the school's values into action.

Auckland Marathon

A huge shout out to Mercy Hospice receptionist, Gene Kiely, and Nelson Madoka from IT Edge Consultants for completing the 2022 Barfoot & Thompson Auckland Marathon and raising over \$5,100 for Mercy Hospice between them. Inspirational!



Taupo Ultra Marathon

And the feats of fitness continue with Darryl Ferenz, who raised over \$3K for Mercy Hospice by running the Taupo Ultra Marathon in October! A truly incredible achievement.

"After losing Mom 12 years ago to cancer, I have always wanted to give back to the amazing team at Mercy Hospice, for the beautiful care and comfort they gave her while she battled through her last days with us on earth. We always knew she was in the best hands to be as comfortable and in the best care possible with the amazing staff. There was always full trust that they would keep the

environment around Mom as peaceful as possible.

Taupo Ultra Marathon has granted me the opportunity to give back by running 100km through the beautiful farmlands and dedicate any donations raised by our amazing friends and family back to Mercy Hospice, so they can continue to give the life changing service to other families as they go through similar challenges with their loved ones."

"The race went really well completing the 100km in just over 12hrs. Proud Daddy



moment crossing the finish line with my two little kiddies as support crew and having my family there to cheer me on. Safe to say the legs are going to be pretty wobbly for a few days."

Fabric-a-brac

Fabric and haberdashery enthusiasts were overjoyed at the end of October with the final go ahead of Fabric-a-brac! The event was organised by Grace Samuelson, included a delicious bake sale, and raised over \$1,000. Thank you to everyone who attended and worked away in the background.



Sam Bajaj

Thank you, Sam Bajaj, for how much you have supported Mercy Hospice this year. This wonderful watchmaker has a collection box in his store and for small jobs encourages people to make donations to

Mercy Hospice rather than charge them. This wonderful man has helped raise over

\$500 for Mercy in 2022. Visit Sam at 197 Broadway, Newmarket.



For more information and ideas about running your own fundraiser, contact our friendly fundraising team on 0800 888 474 or email getinvolved@mh.org.nz.



Thank you!

Thank you to all our Mercy Hospice supporters including our volunteers. We could not do it without you.



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Hospice New Zealand's
supporters and sponsors



Continuing the impact

A better quality of life is possible for Central Auckland's palliative care patients, and there are lots of ways you or your organisation can make this happen when you turn your compassion into action:

Give a regular gift

A monthly donation provides reassurance to whānau that their loved ones will receive the highest level of care during these uncertain times. You can make your monthly gift via direct debit, from your bank account, or through payroll giving. Visit mercyhospice.org.nz or call 0800 888 474 to donate today.

Give a one-off gift

You can make a one-off donation from your debit or credit card at mercyhospice.org.nz. Call 0800 888 474 or email getinvolved@mh.org.nz to discuss other ways to donate.

Leave a gift in your will

After taking care of your family, please consider leaving a portion of your estate to Mercy Hospice. No matter the size, your gift will ensure that those in our community needing palliative care receive it with the utmost professional skill and respect. To find out more, please contact Renee Pickering on 021 226 2798 or rpickering@mh.org.nz

Volunteer

There are a variety of ways to donate your time to Mercy Hospice, including: providing transport, offering companionship, making phone calls, massage, writing life stories or working in one of our retail shops. Call 09 376 7574 or email volunteer@mh.org.nz to find out more.

Fundraise for Mercy

A fun way to support Mercy is to run your own fundraising event or get sponsored to take part in a challenge. Call 0800 888 474 or email getinvolved@mh.org.nz to find out more.

Support through your business or workplace

There are many ways to support Mercy through your business or workplace; sponsorship, funding critical services and medical equipment, volunteering, payroll giving and much more. Call 0800 888 474 or email getinvolved@mh.org.nz to find out more.

Join Mercy's online communities

Facebook

[@mercyhospiceakld](https://www.facebook.com/mercyhospiceakld)
[@Mercyhospiceshopnz](https://www.facebook.com/Mercyhospiceshopnz)

Instagram

[@mercyhospiceakld](https://www.instagram.com/mercyhospiceakld)
[@Mercyhospiceshopnz](https://www.instagram.com/Mercyhospiceshopnz)

LinkedIn [@company/mercyhospice](https://www.linkedin.com/company/mercyhospice)

To find out more about how you can support Mercy Hospice visit mercyhospice.org.nz

2022-23 DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Get involved with Mercy Hospice!

www.mercyhospice.org.nz/events

December	Farmers Trees of Remembrance (ends Christmas Eve)
December	Lights to Remember
March	Round the Bays

You are receiving this newsletter because of your previous support of Mercy Hospice. If you don't want to receive it in the future or you would prefer to receive a digital version, please contact the fundraising team on getinvolved@mh.org.nz to update your preferences.

4 easy ways to donate



1 Mail this coupon to
Mercy Hospice
61 College Hill, Ponsonby
PO Box 47693, Ponsonby



2 Call **0800 888 474**



3 Donate online at
www.mercyhospice.org.nz



4 Internet banking
BNZ 02 0100 0815020 00
Please include your reference number
and confirm your gift by email to:
donations@mh.org.nz

While cheques are no longer accepted at banks, you still have four donation payment methods to choose from. You can mail the completed form on this page, call us, donate online or complete an electronic banking transaction. If you would like any information about these methods, please call our friendly team on 09 361 5966.

Yes! I would like to make a donation so that every patient feels safe and protected by our highly specialised palliative care.

Step 1 My Gift

My choice \$

Step 2 Donation Frequency

- ☐ One-off
☐ Monthly by credit card

Step 3 My Payment

☐ Debit my credit card (circle):
Visa or Mastercard or AMEX

Card number

Name on card

Signature

Expiry date / CVC
(required)

Step 4 My Details

Title First name

Surname

Date of birth

Address

Email

Phone

Reference

Donations of \$5 and over are tax deductible and will be receipted.
Charities Commission # CC31621