

# Death becomes her

EVERLOCH: Molly Carlile received the prestigious Churchill Fellowship to encourage her ground-breaking work on death and dying last Friday morning.

Bursting with excitement, Ms Carlile spoke to the Sentinel-Times just after receiving the honour at the State Governor's dinner in Melbourne.

"I'm really excited about the whole thing; we go on to have a dinner with the other recipients tonight."

Molly will use her fellowship to explore how the arts are being used in health promotion to facilitate community death discussions in USA, UK and Ireland.

With these discussions Molly aims to bring about cultural change to our western practice of shutting out death.

Having already co-written "Funerals in One Day" with renowned Australian play writer Alan Hopgood, pod cast "Death Sesame" and written her own children's book "Dilly Bear's Secret" exploring the issue, Molly knows the power of using the arts as a catalyst for challenging the norm.

"Through the arts you can say things that are not readily accepted in daily life."

"Because it is one step removed, you can use

By Ebonie Lord

tools such as humour to broach difficult subjects so they are less confrontational," she said.

Molly became increasingly aware of our societal misgiving towards death, through her career in the health sector.

Previously working for Coggsland Southern Health and now managing the North West Metropolitan Region Palliative Care Consortium, she has seen the need to help people deal with death and dying through working in palliative care as a nurse and a counsellor.

"We are poorly prepared; we do not have discussions with our children about death and this goes back to the single Celtic approach of not talking about it and that it is something to be feared."

Molly has had to counsel children who are confused when confronted with death and even some adults.

"To those who have never been death firsthand, the grief associated with loss bewilders."

She strongly believes that death should be part of school curriculums.

"We put so much emphasis on messages like stronger, faster and safer but we don't prepare

kids for the one thing we know that's going to happen."

"It should be treated like any other public health issue."

"Death is a part of life and it needs to be normalised."

Molly said the sooner we do this the more we can appreciate life here and now.

One of 25 in Victoria and 120 nationwide, Molly said she had to make it through a rigorous interviewing process when she first applied for the fellowship.

After this she was commissioned into the health stream, short listed as a stair master, then the national board selected her that she successfully won the fellowship on July 3.

The fellowship will allow her to travel to America and attend International Arts in Health Society Conference, then onto London, Bath and Ireland until April.

The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, established as one of Winston Churchill's last requests, provides annual Fellowships for Australians to travel overseas to experience new opportunities, to make contacts with the best in their fields and to bring the experience back to benefit Australia.

Unlike other fellowships

through organisations. The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust is unique as it was founded by the community through donations.

CEO of the Churchill Trust Paul Tye said the 25 Victorian Fellowships are valued at more than \$600,000 and cover a broad range of topics reflecting the fact applicants design their own Fellowships in their field of expertise.

The Victorian Fellowships now have an opportunity of a lifetime to experience the best in the world and to make their mark on Australian society when they return.

"It is a great opportunity and also a grant opportunity."

The 120 Fellowships this year are valued at more than \$2.7 million.

2009 Victorian projects include:

- \* prostitution and trafficking
- \* migrants and refugee integration
- \* policing
- \* management of chronic diseases
- \* reading programs
- \* eco-innovation and
- \* trauma focused therapies for young people in custody

Applications for 2009 Fellowships open from November 1, 2008 and close February 27, 2009.



Molly Carlile has won a fellowship to take her exploration of death in the arts to an international scale.

# Star PEOPLE



## Let's bring death out in the open

By Jane Ross

MOLLY Carlile is on a mission.

She has made it her life's work to encourage us all to talk about that most feared subject - death.

She has written a delightful children's book about it called *Jelly Bean's Secret*.

She has co-written a play on the subject.

With many years' experience in palliative care, grief and bereavement as a nurse, counsellor, educator and policy developer, Molly believes open and honest discussions about "the 'd' word" take the family stress, anxiety and disagreements out of a normal part of life that awaits us all.

She has been exploring lots of different ways of getting us out of our refusal to confront the subject, just to get the discussions going in the community.

Once Molly has our attention, she said she doesn't have any trouble getting us to talk, but it's getting us there in the first place that is the challenge.

To this end, she will travel to the United States, United Kingdom and Ireland next year, gathering ideas to help promote her message.

She will do this through a Churchill Fellowship and she's very excited about it.

Molly is one of 23 Victorians and 120 Australians to have been awarded the honour.

On July 18, she will go to Government House to be presented with her fellowship and that night, she will join other Victorian winners at a dinner where each will present a brief résumé of themselves and their fellowship plans.

She's excited about that too.

Molly's home is in Burwood and many South Gippslanders will remember



**Determined woman:** Molly Carlile has been awarded a Churchill Fellowship that will help in her efforts to have the subject of death discussed openly and honestly in families and society

her from her days at Gippsland Southern Health Service.

She now manages the North and West Metropolitan Region Palliative Care Consortium.

"For me, it was about what's the next step? What could I learn?"

A Churchill Fellowship

seemed the perfect option and Molly has learned to trust that the events and experiences in her life have come her way for a reason.

The centres she will visit next year are those using creative, performance and visual arts to initiate community discus-

sions about death.

Her fellowship will begin in the United States, at an International Arts in Health Society Conference that is aligned with Florida University of Florida Hospital, a non-for-profit centre that specializes in tertiary care for critically ill patients.

"They run an extensive arts in health program," said Molly.

She will follow the conference with a week at that university's arts in medicine training program.

Molly will fly to London to find out more about the Roseneath Life Program which runs a creativity project for hospice users. She is particularly interested in their use of creative arts to help families feel comfortable about discussing end-of-life issues.

After that, Molly will spend time in Bush at the Centre for Death and Society and the Institute of Contemporary Interdisciplinary Art. Her fellowship will be rounded off by spending time with the hospice-friendly hospital program.

"It gets a good taste of

what's happening," Molly explained, adding that Australia is isolated and while modern technology can fill some of the gaps, it's impersonal.

Her aim is to get "a really good handle" on different strategies that can be adopted in Victoria and to connect with a lot of people and maximize that will be useful.

Molly said her focus is to bring the subjects of death and dying "before the public" before they have to deal with this stuff".

"How do we discuss it in a way that is not too threatening and confronting?"

She is hoping that the knowledge she gains will both inform people about the cycle of life and death, at the same time empowering them to be involved in planning for the end of their lives.

"If you have those discussions with the family, then everyone's clear about what you want and that takes away the stress and anxiety."

"This fellowship is an extension of what I've been doing for years."