

The House with Two Yellow Trees

Note: the names of the individuals used in the below personal reflection have been substituted to maintain privacy.

In the suburb of St Ives there is one curious house with two yellow trees in front of it. Curious, as I say, for this house is not an ordinary home. People who live here come from various walks of life, sharing a very diverse and rich cultural background. They care and support each other, and they consider themselves as family, but they are not related. However, they share a very unique bond that allows them to tackle all the ups-and-downs they may encounter along the way. Their relationship is unheard of and they have various stories that are worth sharing in this world. Beautiful stories all of us need to hear, but for now we will share a very special story about a unique friendship and act of love at its best, of Sarah and Kate.

Sarah and Kate came to the house with two yellow trees not too long ago. They are a lovely couple who have lived most of their life together in their home at Queens Park. As Kate shared to us, they met while they were at university, where Sarah was studying information technology while Kate was in research. They had so much fun and joy in their friendship, but life is not all about the good stuff and not too long ago they were both diagnosed with Dementia. Despite this, Sarah and Kate never ceased to continue to care and love for each other. However, as their journey with dementia progressed, living in their wonderful home did not seem to be an option for them. Thus, they had to search for a new home and found the house in St Ives with the two yellow trees.

This yellow tree home is a Group Home for people living with dementia like Sarah and Kate.

In this home they were welcomed by the homemakers for who they are, cared for and given all the support they needed in their journey. They are enabled to blossom in the house for they were able to continue to experience all they used to have in their lives. Kate was able to care for Sarah in her own special way while Sarah on the other hand was able to see how happy Kate is and listened to all her compliments to us at all times, but since cannot talk much she would just rolled her eyes and then gave us smile as her way of telling us that "this is Kate". Sarah loves Kate so much and she always wanted Kate to be by her side and the two are inseparable. They both enjoy their walks outside the house and if they are not having walks they love to see a movie, listen to good music and most of the time Kate sings and dances while Sarah watched all of it as it happened.

However, Sarah's journey with dementia progress sooner and Kate found herself by Sarah's side while she was palliating. Kate would cry most of the time and she always told Sarah she didn't want her to go because she will not know what to do without her. This is a very difficult time for everyone in the house, but Sarah's last few days were the hardest to see for both Kate and the homemakers. One Friday, while Sarah was in her bed there was one moment when Sarah opened her eyes and smiled to see Kate by her side holding her hand. This moment made Kate so happy, to see Sarah open her eyes again and this brought tears to the eyes of one the homemakers. It is a brief moment but a memorable one. The following days get harder and harder. Kate, upon waking up, would directly go to Sarah's room to make sure she was comfortable and looked after. It was amazing to behold for the homemakers how much Kate loves Sarah, and that dementia cannot even stop her from caring and making sure she made Sarah feel loved.

However, every journey has its end, and this came one Sunday morning. It was a fine and warm day, Kate doing her usual routine after waking up and was beside Sarah. The latter is not looking too well but she is comfortable in bed. Kate knows she will leave us anytime soon but kept on saying to Sarah not go since she will be alone without her. The homemaker supported Kate in this very difficult time, but Kate needed more from her long-time friends. It is a good thing on that day their friends came to visit. Sarah knows the time has come for her and she let goes while Kate was with Carol and their friends around her. Sarah left everyone in a very peaceful manner knowing Kate will be cared for and loved as she loved her to her very last breath.

In the end, the love shared by both Sarah and Kate prevailed despite their dementia trying to let them forget things, but it is amazing the heart remembers what the brain might forget. This is one of the many story all the homemakers from Group Homes Australia Benaroon were privileged to witness and will treasure in our hearts.

Written by Benaroon Homemaker Ariane Lavares with significant input from her team at the Benaroon Home, Group Homes Australia.