Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE26052697

Gowing, Leonie Marion

(1945 - 2023)

Born	19450727, Maroubra New South Wales Australia
Died	20230727, Caringbah New South Wales Australia
Occupation	Nurse, Philanthropist

Summary

Leonie Gowing was a paediatric nurse at the Prince of Wales Hospital, Randwick and the Camperdown Children's Hospital until a debilitating stroke ended her nursing career at the age of 47. A single woman, she bequeathed significant amounts to charities supporting women and children in her will, including to the Australian Women's Register.

Details

Leonie Marion Gowing was born 27 July 1945 at Maroubra NSW, the only daughter of Sybil McLucas, nurse, and Walton Boyd Gowing, taxi driver. She had three brothers, two of whom predeceased her. Leonie attended Maroubra Primary School and on completing her education, trained as a nurse at the Prince of Wales Hospital, Randwick.

She enjoyed a career as a paediatric nurse at the Prince of Wales and Camperdown Children's Hospital. Leonie never married but lived with her parents at Ramsgate, Sydney. They had a close relationship, once touring Australia together in a very small car. Leonie had an eating disorder and was always sensitive about her weight.

At 47 Leonie was diagnosed with a massive brain tumour and soon after her operation had a debilitating stroke, which ended her nursing career. She was living in The Crest Nursing Home in Annandale when she first met her friend, artist Margaret Jewell, who was visiting a relative there. Leonie was then without family support as, following her stroke, her parents had relocated to the Salvation Army Hostel in Arncliffe where they died. In 2010 when The Crest was found to be noncompliant with accreditation standards, Leonie was transferred to the Stella Maris Nursing Home in Caringbah where she was given a room with a sea view. She had always loved the sea and had been a keen swimmer.

Margaret took her out for coffee, the cinema and concerts as Leonie had a beautiful soprano voice and loved classical music. They shared a passion for literature and read and discussed books together. Leonie enjoyed biographies of women and followed the careers of women who had contributed to Australian society in various ways. Margaret described Leonie as articulate, intelligent and known for her grace.

Leonie's values and her passion for helping organisations advocating for the education and protection of women and children is reflected in her will, dated 22 October 2012. Beneficiaries included the Fred Hollows Foundation; Father Riley's Youth Off the Streets; The Sisters of Mercy Australia; CARE Australia; Caritas Australia; ActionAid Australia and the Australian Women's Register. Shortly before Leonie died, Margaret read her a book of women's poetry. Despite being rendered inarticulate by Parkinson's disease and dementia, Leonie registered her appreciation with her eyes. This was to be their last meeting. Leonie died peacefully on 27 July 2023 and was buried at the Woronora Memorial Park, Sutherland NSW. Despite being raised Catholic, Leonie studied other religions in her quest for spiritual growth.

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