



Media Release

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Talking about death and dying important

Encouraging Australians to talk about death and dying is essential as the population ages and more pressure is placed on health services, says Palliative Care Australia CEO Liz Callaghan.

She said the subject of death was often avoided by Australians, who understandably fear the unknown.

“While it’s scary to talk about death and dying, it’s vital we do. If we don’t talk to our families and friends about what we want when facing the end of our lives then they have no information, no guidance, on which to base decisions they may have to make on our behalf.

“There is an increased interest in the discussion thanks to Andrew Denton’s Di Gribble argument and we applaud him for bringing it to the fore. While we take a different view to Mr Denton he is right to say we need to discuss this topic openly and have an informed conversation.

Ms Callaghan said palliative care offers patients and their families support, pain and symptom management and whole of person care as they face the end of their lives.

“We want Australians to become advocates for those closest to them and ask for palliative care early.

“Anecdotally we know some patients do seek euthanasia when first referred to a palliative care specialist, but after receiving care these requests end.

“Everyone is entitled to a good death experience. What we know is that Australians often don’t know what this looks like, having been removed from death. Few of us interact with a dying person until we are older and it is a harrowing and challenging time. Palliative care can help families through that process.

“Australians do not always get access to palliative care – where you live can impact its availability. There are also concerns about adequate resourcing to provide pain and symptom management to patients in the community – which is where most Australians want to die.

“PCA believes these issues are where we need to be focussing the debate around death and dying in Australia – ensuring everyone has access to high quality care as they face their final days.

Media contact: Frith Rayner, Palliative Care Australia 0400 45 99 88

