

Media Release

4 August 2016

Building a community of care for people at the end of their lives

A new collaboration between Palliative Care Australia (PCA) and The Groundswell Project (Groundswell) will bring together world leaders to advance the Compassionate Communities movement in Australia. Supported by the Australian Government, PCA and Groundswell will host a Compassionate Communities Symposium in February 2017.

Compassionate Communities is an international movement that aims to support communities to recognise the needs of people who are approaching the end of their lives, and develop initiatives to support them during this important stage of life.

PCA CEO Liz Callaghan is delighted to be part of this initiative that will bring together community leaders from local government, not for profit organisations and community groups to develop ways to support people at the end of their lives.

“A public health approach to palliative care recognises that dying, death and bereavement are inevitable parts of life. While medical support for these members of our community is vital to ensuring that they maximise their quality of life until the end, we need to recognise that dying is not solely a medical event.

“There is a growing older population that do not have the same family supports that once existed. They may not live close to family, may be divorced or unmarried and may become increasingly socially isolated as they become frail and their health deteriorates.

“Developing community capacity and enhancing social networks can make a real difference to supporting people at the end of their lives,” Ms Callaghan said.

The Compassionate Communities Symposium keynote speaker at the Symposium will be Dr Julian Abel, a palliative care consultant in the UK, who recently co-authored a NHS guidance document to help communities develop support networks at the end of life.

This guide outlines the four building blocks that underpin the movement, which are compassionate and resilient communities; public awareness; practical support; and the role of volunteers.

“We are excited that we can work with other thought leaders to progress the Compassionate Communities movement in Australia” said Groundswell Executive Director Jessie Williams.

“This will be the beginning of a concerted national effort to build a more contemporary approach to the community support surrounding people at the end of their lives,” Ms Williams said.

The [Compassionate Communities Symposium](#) will be held in Sydney on 20 – 21 February 2017.

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