We are all going to die someday, but how do you want to live until then?

National Palliative Care Week to deal with 'Matters of Life and Death'

National Palliative Care Week (NPCW), returns from 19 May to 25 May 2024. The week marks the nation’s largest annual initiative aimed at deepening people’s understanding of palliative care and encouraging action around end-of-life planning.

In 2023, the NPCW campaign - 'Matters of Life and Death' reached over 2.13 million Australians. This year, Palliative Care Australia (PCA) and its members around the country will take that up a notch, highlighting the real and growing need to educate and empower Australians about quality of life towards the end of life.

“As our population ages and levels of chronic disease increase, so does the demand for palliative care,” says Camilla Rowland, Chief Executive Officer, PCA.

“Our research points to a 50% surge in demand over this decade, doubling by 2050. This alarming data underscores the urgent need for us to proactively address the growing needs of Australians.

“Health reforms over the last couple of years are a good start, but we need both the government and the community to go further if we are to deliver on what is a human right.”

This year’s campaign will highlight the holistic nature of the palliative care that should be available to all Australians. A series of videos will capture the powerful voices of the broader workforce, first nations perspectives and individuals with personal experiences of palliative care - the people at the heart of quality palliative care.

“National Palliative Care Week is an opportunity to open minds and hearts to the profound human spirit that drives palliative care and unlock the knowledge that comes when people and families are challenged by a life-limiting diagnosis that talks about death and dying.”

PCA’s most recent National Palliative Care Community Survey revealed that 90% of Australians believe end-of-life planning is important, but only 40% of people have done anything about it.

Reflecting on this, as part of the NPCW video series, Palliative Care Nurse Practitioner, Peter Jenkin said, “People are death denying, we don't want to talk about it because we are worried it will tempt fate, and I think there is a sense of - it’s *going to happen to someone else, not me.”*

National Palliative Care Week will confront those fears and empower people to have greater control when it comes to ‘matters of life and death.’

Another significant part of NPCW this year, is the official launch of a new symbol for the palliative care sector - the ‘Orange Heart.’

“The ‘orange heart’ has been seen and used universally as a symbol of care and friendship. It is seen as being ‘heart-warming and encouraging’ and used as a symbol of ‘always being there for me’ – values that connect with palliative care,” Ms Rowland says.

“We are encouraging everyone to buy and wear an orange heart lapel pin as a show of support for the people and families receiving palliative care and those who deliver it.”

Orange heart lapel pins will be available for purchase at local events around the country and from the PCA website. Funds raised will support advocacy and policy initiatives that help deliver palliative care to more Australians.

“Connected to the orange heart and our overall aim with National Palliative Care Week is an opportunity to thank and recognise the people who deliver palliative care,” Ms Rowland says.

“Whether you’re receiving palliative care now, or have previous experience please share your story as a way of recognising those people and acts of kindness and care that made a difference. Use the hashtag #MattersofLifeandDeath on social media. Your story has the power to inspire others.”

More information on what the public can do to support the campaign and resources can be obtained from PCA’s website [here](https://palliativecare.org.au/mediarelease/save-the-date-for-national-palliative-care-week-2024/).

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For more information and images, to request an interview, or to receive an orange heart lapel pin to show your support, please contact Gyani Bahety at [gyani.bahety@cre8ive.com.au](mailto:gyani.bahety@cre8ive.com.au) in the first instance, or Ian Campbell at [ian.campbell@palliativecare.org.au](mailto:ian.campbell@palliativecare.org.au)