

MEDIA RELEASE



Palliative Care Australia Inc.

Level 1, 21 Napier Close, Deakin ACT 2600 | PO Box 24, Deakin West, ACT 2600
t: 02 6232 4433 | f: 02 6232 4434 | w: www.palliativecare.org.au | e: pcainc@palliativecare.org.au



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Myth busting for World Cancer Day

Palliative Care Australia is calling for more community awareness and education this World Cancer Day to improve knowledge and challenge some of the misconceptions held about cancer and palliative care.

'We need to get better at talking about death, dying and terminal illness,' said Dr Yvonne Luxford, Chief Executive Officer of Palliative Care Australia. 'Our reluctance to have these discussions is a real barrier to accessing health and palliative care services.'

'One of the myths I want to see us tackle on World Cancer Day is the idea that talking about dying gets you there quicker. This is just not true, in fact talking about dying it gets you there *better*.'

Cancer accounts for approximately 30% of deaths in Australia. According to the latest international figures released in the [Global Atlas of Palliative Care at the End of Life](#) last week, the Western Pacific region has the highest percentage of adults (41.5%) and children (14%) in need of palliative care for a cancer diagnosis.

'That is a lot of people who would benefit from access to palliative care services,' said Dr Luxford. 'It is vital that oncologists, and all health professionals, have mandatory education in palliative care throughout the course of their careers.'

The words 'palliative care' have become associated with the end of life, leading people to fear this term and believe it must mean they are near to death. In fact, palliative care is appropriate early on in a diagnosis and can be used in conjunction with curative treatments.

'I would urge everyone to watch the short video [Kaye's Story](#). This is a beautiful and moving portrayal of the benefits of palliative care for someone living with cancer and their loved ones,' said Dr Luxford.

Speaking about her diagnosis of peritoneal mesothelioma, Kaye said: 'It's a frightening, lonely place to be and all of a sudden with palliative care around me, I feel secure and safe and I fully understand that they will be supporting me through this last period of my life.'

'It's essential we dispel some of these commonly held misconceptions about cancer and palliative care so that we can help improve quality of life for people living with and dying from cancer, their families and carers,' said Dr Luxford.

Palliative Care Australia assisted with the review of the Cancer Council's *Palliative Care and Living with Advanced Cancer* booklets. These are both available to order by calling 13 11 20 or downloading online at <http://www.cancercouncil.com.au/publications/understanding-cancer-book/>

For more information about common myths in palliative care, visit the World Hospice and Palliative Care Day [website](#).

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Contact: Claire Maskell Gibson – PCA National Communications Manager – 02 9239 2906/0406 258 722

PCA is the peak national organisation representing the interests and aspirations of all
who share the ideal of quality care at the end of life

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