



PalliativeCare
AUSTRALIA

Media Release

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Palliative care workers challenged to change Australia's cultural taboo around dying

Australians avoid talking about dying, resulting in difficult deaths and significant impacts on those left behind and the palliative care sector has been challenged to step up and change that culture, by Palliative Care Australia (PCA) CEO Liz Callaghan.

Closing Australia's largest palliative care conference today Ms Callaghan said dying in Australia was a hard business, made harder by families and loved ones difficulty in talking about end of life wishes.

"In the sector we know families struggle to talk about death and dying, how they want to be remembered and how they want to leave this world. We know that the health system, with its focus on interventions and saving lives, can work against a peaceful death. So it is up to us, up to you, to change it.

"You can talk about death, dying and bereavement. You do know how to raise the issues of end of life care, how to discuss choosing or turning down medical interventions, how to speak to someone about putting an advance care plan in place. We need your skill set. We need you to start those conversations. In schools, in community centres, at death cafes."

Ms Callaghan said PCA has a remit to break down the last taboo in Australian culture, but will need everyone in the sector pulling together to do it.

"We have listened to international speakers telling us about the dying being marginalised by society, the value of social media in creating a community around those caring for the dying and what we need from Government to develop our sector.

"Some of the responsibility to change these things also falls to us. We need to make talking about dying easier for Australians – so then people aren't marginalised, so people working in the field have a broader network of people to talk to and the Government is prepared to enter into conversations with us.

"My challenge to you all, for the next two years until we meet again as a sector, is to go out into your communities. To talk to people of all ages and stages about death, dying and bereavement and to do your part in breaking down the barriers for palliative care. Without that our fight to be fit for the future is that much harder," she said.

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Ms Callaghan is available to interview prior to her speech this afternoon.

