



Media Release

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People with Alzheimer's need more palliative care support

Dementia and Alzheimer's disease are the second leading causes of death in Australia, but patients often miss out on palliative care as they aren't recognised as having a terminal condition, says Palliative Care Australia (PCA) CEO Liz Callaghan.

This World Alzheimer's Day PCA is calling for better access to appropriate palliative care for Australia's 353,800 people with Alzheimer's and other types of dementia.

"Dementia is different from other terminal conditions because of the long, unpredictable course of the disease, difficult issues around capacity for decision making, difficulties in communication and lack of community understanding of the disease," she said.

Because of complications such as these people with dementia may be unaware of, or denied access to, palliative care services.

"This could result in people living with Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia suffering unnecessarily at the end of their lives. They may also be missing important opportunities to identify their wishes through an advance care plan. This could be done early in the diagnosis and act as a guide for family as they have to make decisions about their loved one's care.

"For those Australians who have Alzheimer's and dementia there will come a time when palliative care can support them as they face the end of their lives. It is important that is recognised and the care made available to them," Ms Callaghan said.

Ms Callaghan said PCA had developed a resource that can be used by families to talk about their end-of-life care wishes before they get seriously sick.

"Palliative Care Australia encourages Australians to talk more about death, dying and their end-of-life wishes by completing the [Dying to Talk Discussion Starter](#). Unless we have those conversations, we could put our families under considerable strain when they have to make choices for us, without really knowing what we want. After all, talking about dying won't kill you.

ENDS

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