



Media Release

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Palliative Care Australia publishes guiding principles for health professionals about voluntary assisted dying

Palliative Care Australia (PCA) has today released a set of seven principles which guides health professionals providing care to people living with a life-limiting illness ahead of the Victorian Voluntary Assisted Dying scheme beginning on 19 June 2019.

PCA CEO Rohan Greenland says the document, [*Voluntary Assisted Dying in Australia: Guiding principles for those providing care to people living with a life-limiting illness*](#) is national in scope, designed to sit alongside enacted state legislation where it exists, organisational ethical frameworks and professional codes of conduct.

“We know that voluntary assisted dying poses many ethical, personal and professional issues for health professionals, care workers and volunteers who are providing care to people living with a life-limiting illness.

“One of the recommendations from the PCA Board Delegation’s study tour of Canada and the US in late 2018 was that PCA provide national leadership by developing a set of guiding principles to support health professionals in this area. We developed these principles through comprehensive consultation with our membership and key health professional organisations across Australia.

“The two key reasons for developing the principles are to ensure that appropriate care is provided to people living with a life-limiting illness at all times, and to ensure that respectful and cooperative relationships between health professionals are maintained.

“While the practice of palliative care does not include voluntary assisted dying, as palliative care doesn’t hasten or postpone a person’s death, people exploring voluntary assisted dying options must be able to continue to receive palliative care,” said Mr Greenland.

The seven principles of equal importance and in no particular order are:

- People living with a life-limiting illness are supported and respected whether or not they choose to explore or access voluntary assisted dying.
- People exploring voluntary assisted dying will not be abandoned
- Respectful and professional behaviour towards colleagues and co-workers regardless of their views on voluntary assisted dying
- Effective communication is an important part of quality care
- Ongoing development of knowledge, skill and confidence is required to provide competent and safe care to people living with a life-limiting illness
- Self-care practice is a shared responsibility between individuals, colleagues and organisations
- Continue to learn from evidence and evolving practice to drive quality improvement in voluntary assisted dying

“While these guiding principles are aimed at health professionals, we expect that health service organisations, medical colleges, universities and governments will find them useful when developing their policies and procedures regarding voluntary assisted dying.

“We acknowledge and respect the diverse views of the palliative care community, just like the broader community, about voluntary assisted dying. PCA believes the legalisation of voluntary assisted dying is a matter for the community and governments.” said Mr Greenland.

For more information about Victoria’s Voluntary Assisted Dying Scheme visit

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/hospitals-and-health-services/patient-care/end-of-life-care/voluntary-assisted-dying>

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