

## **Fact Sheet Five:            Supporting someone to die with dignity**

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Volunteers and health care providers working in the field know that palliative care is about valuing every moment of life. Palliative care workers have respect in the faith, belief system and culture of each individual.

### **Who provides palliative care?**

Palliative care is provided by a team which can include doctors, nurses, counsellors, carers and volunteers.

### **Who refers people for palliative care?**

People are referred by doctors; nurses or other healthcare providers. Sometimes, the people themselves, or their families or friends refer to palliative care; and so do community services, such as home help.

### **Dying at home**

While most death occurs in a hospital, much of the process of dying occurs within the home. The responsibilities of a family caregiver may include personal care, cleaning and meal preparation, shopping and transportation, talking to the person dying, giving them medication and working with a health team.

For family palliative care givers, the physical, emotional, financial and social impact of providing care for a dying relative is made more difficult by issues such as:

- Becoming as housebound as the person dying;
- Managing multiple roles and more responsibilities; and
- Being unable to work as much, this can cause financial problems.

The benefits of home-based palliative care include a sense of normality, choice and comfort for the dying person and for the family members involved in their care.

Death at home is commonly viewed as a more dignified and comfortable experience than death in a hospital. Meeting the needs of families is central to providing good palliative care at home.

### **Dying in hospitals**

Most people still die in hospitals. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people hospitals can seem like alienating, dangerous places. The goal of palliative care in the ACT hospital sector is to work with families to help those who have a terminal condition. In order to reach this goal, the workers in ACT hospitals:

- Include families and others as part of a palliative care team;
- Manage symptoms and pain;
- Provide education and training for families;
- Contribute to the decision making process; and
- Support peoples;

At the Canberra Hospital, there are no dedicated palliative care beds however there is a palliative care team who will assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to die with peace and dignity. Referrals to home-based and hospice-based services are available through the ACT hospital system.

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## **Fact Sheet Five:                    Supporting someone to die with dignity (continued)**

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### **Dying at a hospice**

The hospice in the ACT is called Clare Holland House. The hospice can provide a home-based palliative care service, an inpatient unit, a hospital consultancy service and also a bereavement service.

Home-based palliative care includes home visits, 24 hours on call, and a focus on symptom management, education, some care coordination, psychological and emotional support and equipment.

The inpatient unit has 19 dedicated beds and people can be admitted for symptom management, respite care and end of life care.

There are two types of palliative care approaches included in the hospital consultancy services:

- The Team Approach including medical specialists, nurses, social workers, counsellors, pastoral care, occupational therapy, physiotherapy; and
- Specialist services where palliative care providers work alongside primary care providers (GPs, community nurses, aged care facility) to support the person dying and their families.

There is also a bereavement service that provides information, support and counselling.

### **Places to get help**

#### **Winnunga Nimmitjyah Aboriginal Health Service**

63 Boolimba Street  
Narrabundah ACT 2604  
Tel: (02) 6284 6220

#### **Canberra Hospital Aboriginal Liaison Officer**

Building 3, The Canberra Hospital,  
Yamba Drive  
Garran ACT 2605  
Tel: (02) 6244 2222

#### **Canberra Hospital - Palliative Care**

Capital Region Cancer Service  
Yamba Drive  
Garran ACT 2605  
Tel: (02) 6244 2222

#### **Clare Holland House**

5 Menindee Drive  
Barton ACT 2600  
Tel: (02) 6273 0336

#### **ACT Palliative Care Society**

PO Box 88  
Civic Square ACT 2608  
Tel: (02) 6273 9606

#### **Carers ACT, Belconnen Office**

Ground Floor, Churches Centre  
54 Benjamin Way  
Belconnen ACT 2617  
Tel: (02) 6296 9900

#### **Carers ACT, Torrens Office**

1 Torrens Place  
Torrens ACT 2607  
Tel: (02) 6296 9900

#### **Calvary Health Care ACT**

Mary Potter Circuit  
Bruce ACT 2617  
Tel: (02) 6201 6111

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