

VICTORIAN COUNCILS: SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES AROUND END OF LIFE PROJECT

Key Messages for Communication

2017

This document outlines the key messages for the Victorian Councils: Supporting Communities Around End of Life Project. These communication messages (designed for the project Reference Group) provide key descriptions of the project to assist in introducing this new project to stakeholders.

Project definitions and descriptions

For the purposes of this project:

- *End of life* refers to the period of time around dying and death and the impacts of this on the dying person, their family and their wider social and community networks
- *Community development* refers to a process where community members come together to generate solutions and take collective action that addresses common problems or advances common strengths in the community. Community wellbeing often emerges from this type of collective action taken at a grassroots level.
- *Age-friendly communities* refers to communities where policies, services and structures related to the physical and social environment are designed to support and enable people to ‘age actively’ – that is, to live in security, enjoy a good quality of life and continue to participate in society even as life draws to an end.

The Project

The project is funded by the Department of Health and Human Services for three years to:

- a) build the organisational capacity of councils around end-of-life
- b) build community capacity in end-of-life support through local government structures and networks,
- c) improve community understanding of healthier approaches to death, dying and bereavement, and
- d) evaluate the effectiveness of this approach.

Project Messages

- The overall aim of the project is to explore how local government can be involved in building the capacity of communities to better accept that dying is a part of life and encourage more Victorians to actively participate in caring and supporting people at the end of their lives at home and in their community.
- The project is designed to start a process of change within the community with a focus on older age groups (with the intention that over time, the whole community can be involved).
- A community development approach will generate local responses to end of life by communities for communities. The role of local government is to stimulate, facilitate, coordinate and provide opportunities for communities to come together around end of life issues.
- Through the community development work of local government and involvement in preventive health activities, this initiative seeks to increase community knowledge, skills and involvement around the social dimensions of dying, death, loss and bereavement.

The project context

Victoria's Palliative Care policy context

- In 2016 the State government put in place Victoria's End of Life and Palliative Care Framework which outlines, amongst other things, how end of life experiences can be improved for those requiring palliative care by having options to die at home through improved social and community support. The Victorian Councils: Supporting Communities around End of Life Project (the project) has been funded to contribute to the priorities in the Framework.

Public health context

- The project takes a public health approach to end-of-life. It is informed by the principles and practices of public health, health promotion and community development where health is better understood in a broader community context. The project will engage with key stakeholder organisations to achieve project outcomes at a state-wide and local level.

Local government context

- Local government is the level of government closest to community. Councils work with community organisations and agencies, local service sectors, businesses and community services and most importantly with individual residents in their municipality. All councils have a role in health planning and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing plans are a logical place to include strategies for responding to end of life issues.
- Within a community development context councils are well positioned to build the capacity of local communities around end-of-life that responds to and supports local needs.

The role of councils and support for project implementation

- Councils may consider a range of approaches with a primary focus on creating sustainable, community-led, community development initiatives.
- Councils will draw on their existing and extensive networks, particularly with community organisations and their ageing communities, to support development of local end-of-life initiatives.
- The project will build on existing formal and informal care networks to improve end of life outcomes for Victorians.
- Becoming involved in end of life issues offers opportunities for councils to contribute to new partnerships and connections that will expand the reach of end-of-life initiatives across Victoria.
- The project sits comfortably with an age-friendly communities approach and with existing council commitments to their ageing communities through positive ageing initiatives and support for people in their homes.
- The project will take into account the diversity of communities within each local government area.
- Councils will be supported by project partners La Trobe University Palliative Care Unit and the Municipal Association of Victoria to develop initiatives around end-of-life support in the community.

The relationship between demonstration projects and the overall project

There will be two demonstration projects (one metro and one rural) operating between September 2017 and September 2018 to explore, inform and develop the potential role/s and approaches of local government in building community capacity around end of life. All councils, not just the demonstration projects, will have access to information and resources to support implementation of the project in their municipality.