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*Victorian Councils: Supporting Communities Around End of Life* *Project*

# Terms/definitions

An array of terms, references and expressions are used to describe or discuss end of life. End of life can refer to different things depending on the setting in which it is used. For example, End of Life Care or End of Life Care Planning is commonly used in palliative care and residential care settings when discussing care in the last few months of a person’s life.

End of life for others can mean that period of time when a person is approaching death, while in other settings it refers to anyone living with a life-threatening illness. Many people may also associate end of life with voluntary euthanasia but this is not the focus of this project or the work councils will become involved with.

The *Victorian Councils: Supporting Communities Around End of Life Project* applies a broad definition of end of life. For the purposes of this project the following terms and definitions are used.

**End of life**

**End of Life** refers to the period of time around dying and death and the impacts this has on the dying person, their family and their wider social and community networks. This definition focuses beyond the ‘care’ a person receives at their end of life to include individual, family, carer, and community experiences of dying, death and bereavement.

**Community development**

The project is applying a community development approach with councils as the facilitators of this approach. Community development refers to a process where community members come together to generate solutions and take collective action to addresses common problems or to advance common strengths in the community. Community wellbeing often emerges from this type of collective action.

**Compassionate communities**

The Compassionate Communities Network is an international movement that aims to build community capacity to support people approaching the end of their lives.

‘A *compassionate community*is a community that cares for and supports one another, particularly individuals at end of life and their families and carers. This approach relies on strong partnerships between the dying person, their families and carers, friends, local community, service providers, volunteers, community organisations and government and non-government agencies.’ (Compassionate Communities – A Tasmanian Palliative Care Policy Framework 2017-2021)

**Life-limiting illness**

‘A person with a life-limiting illness may die prematurely. The term is often used for people living with a chronic condition that may seem life-threatening but can continue for many years or even decades.’ (Victoria’s end of life and palliative care framework June 2016)

**Life-threatening illness**

‘This refers to a person with a life-limiting illness who is likely to die prematurely. Often used when referring to children or adults who have an illness with poor prognosis and their life span may be considerably shortened.’ (Victoria’s end of life and palliative care framework June 2016)

**Palliative care**

‘Palliative care is: an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problems associated with life threatening illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification and impeccable assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, physical, psychosocial and spiritual.’ (World Health Organisation 2014)

**Person-centred care**

Person centred care means that the client is involved in all planning and decision making and care is aligned with their priorities.

**Social determinants of health and wellbeing**

‘The social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. These circumstances are shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources at global, national and local levels. The social determinants of health are mostly responsible for health inequities - the unfair and avoidable differences in health status seen within and between countries. The determinants of health include: the social and economic environment, the physical environment and the person’s individual characteristics and behavior’. (World Health Organization)

**Advanced Care Planning**

‘Advanced care planning is the process whereby patients discuss their values, beliefs and personal care preferences. This then guides clinical decision making in the future when the patient can no longer communicate their wishes.

In 2014 the Victorian Government developed and launched a new *strategy Advanced care planning: have the conversation: A strategy for Victorian health services 2014-2018* to assist health workers discuss these issues with and ensure the wishes of patients are honoured.

Advanced care planning is supported within Victoria’s current legal framework, primarily through four acts that give people rights when it comes to medical treatment.

On 24 November 2016 the *Medical Treatment Planning and Decisions Bill 2016* was passed by the Parliament. The Act will give statutory recognition to advanced care directives and will simplify and contemporise laws relating to medical treatment decision making for people without decision making capacity.’ (Victorian Government)

**Recent developments in Victoria to voluntary assisted dying**

‘Following the Parliamentary Enquiry into end of life choices, the Government appointed a Ministerial Advisory Panel to develop voluntary assisted dying legislation for introduction into parliament in 2017.

The Panel – which consists of the best clinical, legal, consumer, palliative care and health experts – has undertaken extensive consultation, engaging with more than 300 stakeholders. The Panel’s final report includes 66 recommendations to Government covering eligibility for the scheme, how requests to access voluntary assisted dying are made and assessed, oversight, and the protections in place.

In July 2017, the Andrews Labor Government announced it will incorporate all 66 recommendations from the Ministerial Advisory Panel’s final report on Voluntary Assisted Dying into a Bill to be introduced into the Parliament in coming months.’(Victorian Government)