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

Snapshot summary

The *Victorian Councils: Supporting Communities Around End of Life* *Project* is a new collaborative project between La Trobe University Palliative Care Unit (LTUPCU) and the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) funded (2017-2019) by the Department of Health and Human Services.

The project sits within the broader context of:

* Victoria’s Palliative Care Framework
* the unsustainability of current service models in palliative care to accommodate an increasing ageing population and corresponding increase in deaths
* a public health approach to dying, death and bereavement
* the need for a shift in societies approach to dying, death and bereavement, and
* the role of local government as a key leader and facilitator of healthy, inclusive and connected local communities.

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| End of life definitionFor the purposes of this project, 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 on more than the ‘care’ a person receives at their end of life to include individual, family, carer and community experiences of dying, death and bereavement.  |

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.

With end of life being a new area of work for local government, the project needs to primarily focus on:

* Informing and educating councils about end of life, and
* Facilitating and resourcing strategies and activities to build council capacity to create more supportive and engaged communities around end of life.

## Key project steps include:

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| Project establishment | * Partnership development (MAV & LTUPCU),
* Appointment of project team
* Project scoping
* Work plan development
* Appointment of a Project Governance group
* Appointment of Project Reference Group
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| Resource Development | Developing and producing end of life information and resources to educate local government understanding of issues around end of life and their role in working with the community in this space. Information targeted at councils and for use with the community will include fact sheets, a conversation starter guide, PowerPoint presentations, reference lists, a range of practice resources as well as links to other web based resources. La Trobe University will develop a series of ‘HELP’ resources for the community to assist residents and communities in understanding and taking action on how they can offer, ask for and accept help, have conversations about end of life and develop supportive community networks to assist those who wish to die at home |
| Building Council capacity and commitment | Councils will be encouraged to work initially on end of life with their older residents through the aged services and positive ageing teams. The resource materials will support council community development activities which can involve community organisations, older persons groups and agencies, community and neighbourhood houses and interested individuals. Using MAV distribution and social media channels councils will be informed of resources available on the MAV website (some with general access others with members only access). The information will build the capacity of councillors and council staff to actively and confidently work with their communities around end of life. |
| Establish and contribute knowledge through Demonstration projects  | One metropolitan and one rural council will undertake a demonstration project to explore, inform and develop the potential role/s and approaches of local government in building community capacity around end of life. It is anticipated that a third demonstration project in the second half of the project will focus on policy and strategic development for councils around end of life. |

Where possible the project will build on work already achieved around end of life and will encourage councils to link with key resources to facilitate their engagement in the community.

## Project evaluation

The Project will be evaluated by La Trobe University Palliative Care Unit. The evaluation will include collecting baseline data on council’s involvement in end of life and an evaluation of process, reach, outcomes and early impacts resulting from the project.

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