

Media Release  
Friday May 14<sup>th</sup> 2010



*Who Wants to Talk About Death and Dying?*  
National Palliative Care Awareness Week 2010 – May 23<sup>rd</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup>

"Quality end of life care, including effective and timely symptom management can only be provided when governments and the community sector work together to educate the general public about death and dying," says Dr Louise Welch, Sunshine Coast Palliative Care Physician and President of Palliative Care Queensland.

"Currently in Queensland, it is possible for the majority of Queenslanders to have a dignified and meaningful death, usually in the setting of their choice, surrounded by the people they love. Palliative Care Queensland has been working closely with the Queensland Government over the last year to review the way end of life care is provided in Queensland, and to ensure that Queenslanders of all ages and diagnoses get the very best possible care, once they have been diagnosed with a terminal illness."

May 23<sup>rd</sup> marks the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> National Palliative Care Awareness Week, an initiative of Palliative Care Australia, the national peak body for palliative care. This year, the message for National Palliative Care Awareness Week is; *'If only I knew. Who wants to talk about death and dying?'*

"One of the greatest barriers to accessing quality care at the end of life is a lack of knowledge and preparation. This year, we're encouraging people to think about how they would like their end of life to be", said Professor Margaret O'Connor, President of Palliative Care Australia. "This is often a difficult conversation to start – but it's important to know there is no right or wrong way to talk about dying. Most people find these conversations difficult."

Demand for palliative care services in Queensland is growing, and according to Palliative Care Queensland CEO John-Paul Kristensen, in some regions of Queensland, referrals to palliative care have increased by 25% per year.

"This is a significant rate of growth for our sector, which was until recently viewed by many as a 'cottage' industry", says Mr Kristensen. "Palliative care however is now a sophisticated product, and provides terminally ill Queenslanders with the expert physical, psycho-social and spiritual assessment and support required to ensure that their individual end of life needs are met."

"We are all too aware that the population is rapidly aging, the burden of chronic disease and the cost of health care is increasing year by year, yet our palliative care workforce is shrinking", says Mr Kristensen. "There is no easy solution. The challenge for Palliative Care Queensland is to continue to work closely with the clinicians and carers at the coalface to ensure that their messages and feedback continue to be heard in Charlotte Street."

"Clinicians at Network Forums around the state report that they are now caring for more patients with fewer resources, and that the care required for these patients is often more complex, largely because they are often referred to palliative care too late."

For more information about palliative care or to find out about the National Palliative Care Awareness Week activities in your region, please contact Palliative Care Queensland on (07) 3633 0096 or visit the PCQ website: [www.palliativecareqld.org.au](http://www.palliativecareqld.org.au). Palliative Care Queensland is the peak body for palliative care in Queensland, representing the needs and aspirations of all who share the ideal of 'quality care at the end of life for all'. PCQ is only partially government funded, and relies heavily on charitable donations to achieve its strategic objectives.

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