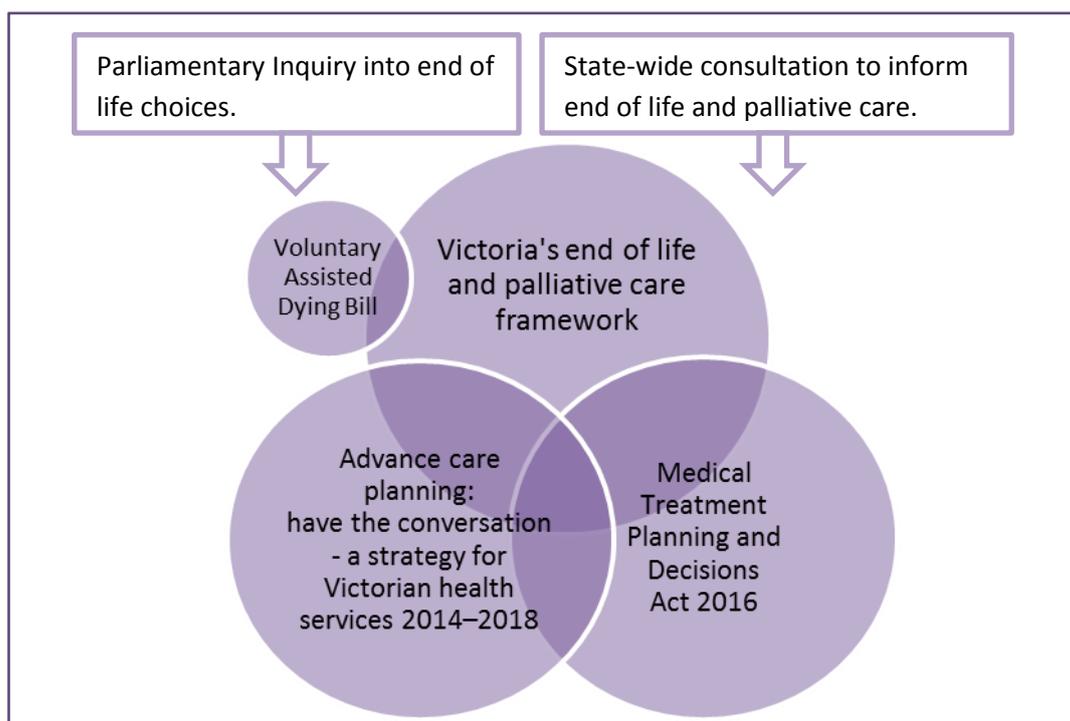


# Victoria's end of life and palliative care framework

Communique no. 1 – March 2017

This first communique is issued by the Implementation Advisory Group (the group) for [Victoria's end of life and palliative care framework](#) (the framework) published in July 2016. The aim is to keep stakeholders and interested groups informed of progress and developments of activities under the framework priorities.

## Context



**Figure 1:** Graphical representation of the framework, related Victorian government commitments and prior input to their development.

## Implementation Advisory Group

The group provides an advisory, advocacy and leadership role to the department and other relevant stakeholders on the implementation of activities to meet the framework's aims. Each meeting focuses on specific framework priorities.

The group was established in late 2016 and first met in February 2017. Membership includes representatives of public, private and regional health services, metropolitan, regional and non-government palliative care services, Council of the Ageing, Leading Age Services Australia, Advanced Care Planning Australia, Victorian Disability Advisory Council, Municipality Association of Victoria, Carers Victoria, Palliative Care Victoria, Ethnic Communities Council Victoria, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria, Health Issues Centre, consumer representatives and Primary Health Networks representative.

## Advance Care Planning

[Advance care planning: have the conversation - a strategy for Victorian health services 2014-2018](#) provides guidance for health services to develop and implement advance care planning. The strategy aims to increase opportunities for people to develop advance care plans and for these plans to be activated. There are many intersecting pieces of work between this strategy and the implementation of the framework. The group intends to collaborate with and compliment the work of the strategy, but not to duplicate it.

## **Inquiry into end of life choices**

The Parliament of Victoria's Legal and Social Issues Committee [<Inquiry into end of life choices>](#) released its Final Report in June 2016. Many of the Final Report's recommendations relate to service improvement for end of life and palliative care. The [<Government response>](#) to this report was tabled in Parliament on 8 December 2016.

## **Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill**

The [<Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill Discussion Paper>](#) was published in January 2017. Feedback on this discussion paper closes 10 April 2017. Responses can be submitted to [Assisteddying.frameworkresponses@dhhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:Assisteddying.frameworkresponses@dhhs.vic.gov.au).

## **Terminology and definitions**

The group discussed variations across jurisdictions in language, definitions and terminology related to end of life and palliative care, which can lead to differences in understanding and practice. The framework defines end of life care as the care needed by people who are likely to die in the next 12 months due to progressive, advanced or incurable illness, frailty or old age.<sup>1</sup> For further information and related definitions see [<Victoria's end of life and palliative care framework>](#). Some activities in Victoria use 'end of life' as the definition for the last days or hours of life.

## **Framework priority 4: Quality end of life and palliative care is everyone's responsibility**

Priority 4 is key to progressing the framework aims and meeting its fundamental goal of improving end of life care for all Victorians. The group discussed several planned projects, including an education program for staff across health, human services, social and community sectors. The program will need to incorporate communication skills and define core competencies for all levels and disciplines of staff. A program will also assist health services to implement the [<National Consensus Statement: Essential elements for safe high quality end of life care>](#).

## **Framework priority 2: Engaging communities, embracing diversity**

Priority 2 aims to ensure that all communities and groups have access to end of life and palliative care and undertake planning to achieve optimal care. The group discussed aspects of the entwined role of carers and substitute decision-makers, particularly for culturally linguistically and diverse groups, and considered the unique needs of the lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) community in end of life care. Programs to work with leaders of groups and communities and to build capacity through local government engagement are being developed.

## **Public awareness and the needs of consumers**

The group raised the idea of a public awareness campaign in Victoria to 'have the conversation' about the end of life and planning for it. Culturally, much of our society doesn't want to talk about death and dying, which often makes it difficult for practitioners to discuss end of life care options and preferences with families. A public awareness campaign could begin to reduce this taboo and stigma.

## **More information**

[www2.health.vic.gov.au/palliative-care](http://www2.health.vic.gov.au/palliative-care) - for health, human service, social and community sectors.

[www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/palliative](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/palliative) - for consumers.

Implementation Advisory Group secretariat, *Victoria's end of life and palliative care framework*.

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**Chair, Implementation Advisory Group,  
Commissioner for Senior Victorians.**

To receive this publication in an accessible format phone 03 9096-0509 using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or email [John.Carson@dhhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:John.Carson@dhhs.vic.gov.au). Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne. © State of Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services March 2017. Where the term 'Aboriginal' is used it refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Indigenous is retained when it is part of the title of a report, program or quotation.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from: National Palliative and End of life Care Partnership 2015, *Ambitions for palliative and end of life care: a national framework for local action 2015–2020*, London.