

## Submission from Catholic Homes

### About Catholic Homes

Catholic Homes is a Christian based, not-for-profit aged care organisation. We have been caring for Western Australians as they age for more than 50 years. Our model for care, 'Care with Purpose', is based on Montessori principles. The aim is to encourage people to remain active and busy for as long as possible and to continue to do the things that bring them joy. As a provider, employer and advocate, we pay special attention to those who are disadvantaged, marginalised or vulnerable within our community.

Through our services we seek to promote and enhance the spiritual, physical and emotional journey of each person. Our innovative approach to aged care has won us numerous awards and this is testimony to our dedicated approach to positive ageing.

From our experience of providing physical, emotional and spiritual care for aged Western Australians, we know that when the dignity of an older person and their loved ones is respected, their quality of life sustained, and appropriate clinical care, allied health services and spiritual care offered, they are more like to die peacefully. We recognise that holistic palliative care goes beyond simple pain management, and requires exploration of many aspects of a person's life and the meaning they make of their circumstances.

### This Inquiry

This second Term of Reference for the Inquiry is

*That the joint select committee inquire into and report on —*

- a) the progress in relation to palliative care, in particular implementation of recommendations of the Joint Select Committee into End of Life Choices;*
- b) the delivery of the services associated with palliative care funding announcements in 2019–2020;*
- c) the delivery of palliative care into regional and remote areas; and*
- d) the progress on ensuring greater equity of access to palliative care services between metropolitan and regional areas.*

Chair of the End of Life Choices Joint Select Committee, Ms A Sanderson MLA, in her foreword to the *My Life My Choices [MLMC] Report* stated;

*"Western Australia has the lowest number of publicly funded in-patient beds per capita and access to specialist palliative care is limited across the state. Access is even further limited in the rural area and almost non-existent in remote regions. In an extraordinary admission, the WA Country Health Service told us 'there is limited oversight, coordination and governance of medical palliative care services across WA Country Health Services'. This, together with the barriers to access across the state generally, must be urgently addressed by the State Government."*

[Emphasis added]

It is clear to us that palliative care opportunities throughout the state, in terms of both numbers of palliative care consultants and bed availability, remains well below community expectations and requirements.

This inquiry is somewhat premature given the focus of the inquiry is the performance of the State of Western Australia in implementing the MLMC recommendations.

### **Equality of Access to Palliative Care**

Palliative care forms a central element of service offered by Catholic Homes. Palliative care is not just about end of life care, the most effective palliative care exists at initial diagnosis where a palliative care plan can be developed to ensure individual requirements are met.

We are concerned that while the WA Government is funding all West Australians for equal access to voluntary assisted dying, it is not attempting to provide everyone with equal of access to quality palliative care services.

To ensure everyone has a true choice and the ability to make an informed decision with family and their practitioner(s) a comprehensive and balanced information package has to be made available to ensure informed decisions can be made.

Palliative within people's homes is significantly under resources and it fall upon carer's to make up the shortfall often with our appropriate rest and respite thus negatively impacting on the carer and the patient.

### **Equality in Funding Models**

We are also concerned that government funding for palliative care accessed in aged care facilities and home care does not match funding for the same services accessed in hospital acute care settings. For example, patients at the Community Hospice in Murdoch are funded under an acute care model, while just down the road patients at the Catholic Homes Comfort Care Centre receive much less funding under an aged care model.

The Catholic Homes Comfort Care service is highly regarded by palliative care practitioners and user groups, yet the service operates at a significant financial lose and may be forced to close in the future unless an appropriate level of funding can be found to continue its operations. Similar palliative care models funded at vastly different levels means that palliative care is not equally available to all West Australians. Equality of access to training, education and services to all residents and home care demands equality in funding.

The Inquiry should recommend that the State Government create an equal funding formula for all patients receiving facility and home care based palliative care.

### **Advanced Care Planning (ACP) and Advanced Health Directives (AHD)**

Confusion still remains over the effectiveness of ACP's and how they should interact in conjunction with AHD's. People's choice of health care must be at the forefront of our aged care system and we would contend that the ACP's in their current form are not fit for purpose. It is also contended that due consideration is not being afforded to requirements of AHD's.

It is imperative that greater information is shared amongst practitioners, families etc. as to what and how AHD's are interpreted. It is the fear particularly amongst home care clients that what they put on paper in their AHD's will not necessarily be carried as they intend. To this end it is vital that GP's, palliative care practitioners and families are aware and converse to ensure people's choice of care is administered as they request.