

Position Statement on Voluntary Assisted Dying

Our response to older people is formed upon our Christian heritage and is expressed in our Care with Purpose approach.

Care with Purpose is encompassed within the healing ministry of Jesus Christ where we uphold each person's dignity and, in this spirit, recognise in our creation in God that life is sacred from conception to death.

The deliberate hastening of death is incompatible with our commitment to the sanctity of life, dignity of the individual and the uniqueness of each person throughout the entire continuum of life.

Catholic Homes Incorporated does not support Voluntary Assisted Dying and will not provide or facilitate Voluntary Assisted Dying.

In accordance with the policy position of Catholic Health Australia, Voluntary Assisted Dying is not viewed by Catholic Homes as 'medical care'.

Catholic Homes respects individual choices and preferences and acknowledges a capable adult's right to cease or withdraw from medical treatment at any time, and to formulate advance care directives.

This includes the right to refuse or discontinue treatment that is burdensome and will not improve the prognosis of illness or quality of life. It also includes the right to adequate management of pain and other symptoms of terminal illness.

Everyone at Catholic Homes has the right to conscientiously object to any involvement with Voluntary Assisted Dying and employees and volunteers will not initiate discussion or recommend Voluntary Assisted Dying.

Understandably, in facing death, we may experience a range of difficult feelings and emotions; loss of control, fear, grief and hopelessness.

To support residents' security of tenure while respectfully responding to individuals' rights in law, Catholic Homes will not abandon our residents/clients and we will strive to provide the best possible services to ensure a full continuum of care before and after death.

Catholic Homes will work with residents, clients, families and staff to resolve any actual or potential conflicts about goals of care and the types and levels of services provided.

Our response will be one of compassion, and all at Catholic Homes will strive to:

- Deliver holistic care that is attentive to a person's medical, physical, spiritual, psychological and social needs.
- Support and accompany families and loved ones through the death and dying process in a way that provides them with opportunity to find meaning, healing and hope.
- Continue to encourage conversations about death and dying.
- Assist residents and clients in the development of Advance Care Plans that reflect their preferences and choices around treatment and end of life care, noting that Advance Care Plans cannot contain requests or directives about VAD.
- Ensure high-quality palliative care services and end-of-life care options that uphold the sanctity of life while relieving suffering and providing comfort are available to all residents/clients.

As we affirm life and living, Catholic Homes will respond compassionately and respectfully and demonstrate at all times our values which bring meaning, hope and kindness to people's lives.