

ACCESS TO EXPERT PALLIATIVE AND END OF LIFE CARE ADVICE FOR EVERYONE

Sunday 15 August 2021

The Victorian Government has made a commitment to supporting those living with life-limiting illness and those who support them by funding Victoria's first specialist palliative and end of life care phone service.

The Palliative Care Advice Service (PCAS) is free and confidential service for anyone seeking information, guidance or support to help them live with, and make decisions about, life-limiting illness. The service is for everyone.

Associate Professor Brian Le, Director of the Parkville Integrated Palliative Care Service, said that palliative care is often misunderstood as care only at the end of life. It is actually about improving quality of life for people and families living at any stage of life-limiting illness, irrespective of age.

"We know that palliative care can also increase life expectancy for those diagnosed with a life limiting illness," Associate Professor Le said.

PCAS can assist callers to navigate the palliative care service system, to find information about caring for someone, and to consider what they may need to think about and plan for.

For clinicians PCAS can provide the right advice and care through guidance with symptom management, medications and decision making.

Manager of PCAS, Esther McMillan-Drendel said that a "single point of access to specialist information for the general public and healthcare workers is a first of its kind for palliative care in Victoria".

"Helping to find the right local service, or providing clinical guidance, has the potential to change the outcome for the person on the end of the phone, no matter where they live in Victoria," Ms McMillan-Drendel said.

"PCAS has the ability to assist a person with life-limiting illness and their carers to feel more confident to make decisions about all aspects of their care, including the location. The location of care may be home, hospital or managing at home until they can be seen by their palliative care provider or general practitioner."

Gregory Kellogg uses PCAS to support his partner Teresa who has been diagnosed with lung and bone cancer.

"The service has been a great help, especially on the weekend or after hours, where our local medical facilities have been closed. They have provided me with advice on medicine and how to care for her and ensure her well-being and that means more than I can say.

"The information they provide is very personalised. Teresa has a lot of treatment coming up and the service has been very understanding and caring. They also supported me; they have really helped me to continue to care for her. Without them I would be totally lost," Mr Kellogg said.

Delivered by The Royal Melbourne Hospital, the state-wide Palliative Care Advice Service operates from 7am-10pm, seven days a week and can be contacted on 1800 360 000 or www.pcas.org.au.