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Media Release

Peak Body Identifies Key Recommendations to Improve Bereavement Care in Palliative Care and Calls for Critical Funding

The COVID-19 pandemic has had significant consequences for Queenslanders from across our state as border shutdowns, house and facility lockdowns, and vulnerable population age groups isolating mean that access to palliative care services was limited for many.

Over the past 18 months, it has become highly challenging for patients to connect with their loved ones at the end phase of their life and for loved ones to participate in funerals or other post-death rituals. As bereavement is a critical component of palliative care, Palliative Care Queensland consulted with stakeholders from our community of care to understand the needs, current status and opportunities for improvement in bereavement care throughout Queensland.

The result is **Palliative Care in Queensland 2021: Bereavement Care**, a report which identifies the key challenges and offers five key recommendations for positive change. Developed over eight months, the report consulted with consumers, interviewed stakeholders, and analysed policy documents and Queensland Inquiry submissions to create a holistic and comprehensive overview of bereavement care in Queensland.

Palliative Care Queensland CEO Shyla Mills outlined the report's purpose, "Grief is a normal part of life, and bereavement support is an essential component of palliative care. These two facts are sadly often forgotten and, as a result, bereavement support is not always available to those who need it."

"Grief often starts from the moment when someone is diagnosed with a serious illness (known as anticipatory grief) and continues well after someone dies. Everyone's grief journey is different, but that doesn't mean people do not need access to experts, supportive teams and compassion communities. This report and its recommendations are the result of many voices sharing their experiences and identifying improvement. This report is for policymakers, service funding bodies and others to ensure that bereavement care is not forgotten in relation to palliative care."

The reports five key recommendations are:

- Recommendation 1: Undertake a service audit and gap analysis to support the development of a resource that can provide a central hub for bereavement service and supports, information and referrals
- Recommendation 2: Review the processes used to identify people who need specialist bereavement care
- Recommendation 3: Support health professionals and services providing bereavement care in Queensland to have greater access to the latest research, training and information about contemporary models of bereavement and bereavement care
- Recommendation 4: Support policy and service development in relation to bereavement care for disaster and pandemic management, conduct a Statewide survey of the general public to understand more about the experience of grieving during COVID-19
- Recommendation 5: Provide ongoing public education and awareness in relation to bereavement care

About Palliative Care Queensland

Palliative Care Queensland (PCQ) is a leading charity and independent peak body representing palliative care providers, consumers and their families and those with an interest in palliative care in Queensland.

PCQ was established in 1988 and is a membership-based organisation, supporting the individuals, families, carers, community members, as well as specialist and generalist health care professionals working with Queenslanders experiencing serious illness, dying, death and grief. Collectively, the PCQ membership body holds tremendous knowledge and wisdom about the challenges the sector faces and the opportunities those challenges can bring. PCQ is a founding member of Palliative Care Australia.

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In addition, Palliative Care Queensland has identified a desperate need for funding to develop a statewide bereavement support program.

"The report's five key recommendations are just that: recommendations. They are not a silver bullet to address the challenges facing bereavement care. However, they are building blocks that everyone involved in the community of care can use to set the future direction of bereavement care in palliative care."

"To address the shortfall in bereavement care and to create supports and networks across the state, we are calling for \$5m in funding. Given that every Queenslanders will die, every family will experience loss, and every member of our community will grieve, we believe that the funding required, less than a dollar per year per Queenslanders, is an investment that is not only necessary but affordable."

"We have analysed the challenges, identified the opportunities and calculated the investment required to support Queenslanders experiencing bereavement. We now call on government and the wider community of care to help ensure that bereavement care in palliative care allows Queenslanders to live, die and grieve well."

A copy of the report is available for download here: <https://palliativecareqld.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Palliative-Care-in-Queensland-2021-Bereavement-Care-Report-web.pdf>

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