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Media Release

Peak Bodies Identify Key Recommendations to Improve Spiritual Care in Palliative Care

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed significant pressure on health systems and communities of care across Australia, resulting in border shutdowns, house and facility lockdowns, vulnerable population age groups self-isolating and volunteers being restricted from palliative care services.

Palliative Care Queensland identified that the COVID response had resulted in the reduction of access to spiritual care supports available during this time, as the majority of Queensland spiritual care in palliative care is provided by volunteers, and many volunteers are in the vulnerable population age group that were self-isolating.

This has had a significant impact on access to spiritual care, a core part of palliative care and one identified by the World Health Organisation as being inextricably linked to the quality of life for patients and their families.

Palliative Care Queensland, the Spiritual Health Association and Meaningful Ageing Australia collaborated to bring together leaders in Queensland Spiritual Care in Palliative Care in networks; undertake a Queensland Spiritual Care in Palliative Care consultation activity; promote Spiritual Care in Palliative Care through education and awareness-raising initiatives and consider opportunities to embed spiritual care in palliative care policy.

The result is **Palliative Care in Queensland 2021: Spiritual 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 spiritual care in palliative care.

Palliative Care Queensland CEO Shyla Mills outlined the report's purpose, "Working with our partners, we have created a report which takes a complete view of spiritual care in palliative care, and identifies five key recommendations for improving services, supports and access."

"Spiritual care is viewed as an essential service provided as part of palliative care services. In Queensland, spiritual care is provided to support places (organisations, services) and the people (patients, family, staff) by supporting the meaning, purpose, rituals, ceremonies and much more associated with serious illness, dying, death and bereavement."

"As such, it is vital that access is provided to spiritual care. We would actively encourage health professionals, support and service providers and policymakers to promote spiritual care in palliative care through education and awareness-raising initiatives and consider opportunities to embed spiritual care in palliative care policy and service provision."

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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The reports five key recommendations are:

- Recommendation 1:
Create opportunities to raise awareness and understanding of the role of spiritual care and spiritual care services
- Recommendation 2:
Increase standardisation in training and supervision
- Recommendation 3:
Improve spiritual care in palliative care resourcing
- Recommendation 4:
Invest in best practice and evaluation
- Recommendation 5:
Promote the role of spiritual care in palliative care during a pandemic

"The report's five key recommendations are just that: recommendations. They are not a silver bullet to address the challenges that COVID has placed upon spiritual care. However, they are building blocks that everyone involved in the community of care can use to set the future direction of spiritual care in palliative care. PCQ and our partners have analysed the challenges and identified the opportunities. We now call on the wider community of care to help ensure that spiritual care in palliative care allows Queenslanders to live, die and grieve well."

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

For more information about PCQ's Spiritual Care project, visit <http://palliativecareqld.org.au/spiritualcare/>

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