

# MEDIA RELEASE



**Palliative  
Care  
Australia**

## Palliative Care Australia

Suite 4, 37 Geils Court, Deakin ACT 2600 | PO Box 24, Deakin West, ACT 2600  
t: +61 2 6232 4433 | f: +61 2 6232 4434 | w: [www.palliativecare.org.au](http://www.palliativecare.org.au)

Wednesday 11 March 2009

## Dying well: the promise of better care

Patients requiring palliative care, their families and carers can expect consumer-driven quality improvements in their experiences of specialist palliative care with the launch of a national program from Palliative Care Australia.

Mr Andrew Stuart, First Assistant Secretary of the Ageing and Aged Care Division in the Department of Health and Ageing will officially launch the *National Standards Assessment Program* on Wednesday 11 March 2009 at Old Parliament House in Canberra.

The NSAP is a national framework for continuous quality improvement built on the *Standards for providing quality palliative care for all Australians*.\*

“Specialist palliative care services deliver excellent care. However, today, we cannot in good faith promise that ALL patients at the end of their lives will always have access to care that is customised to their preferences and reliably delivers good pain and symptom control,” said Professor Margaret O’Connor, President of Palliative Care Australia.

“However, with leadership and resourcing through initiatives like the National Standards Assessment Program, the palliative care sector is enabled to continuously improve the care it provides. The sector is also better positioned to use its expertise to assist primary care providers deliver quality care at the end of life.”

“All parts of our health care system can do better. The NSAP is an important program giving the specialist palliative care sector a valuable tool to assess and improve quality service.”

The NSAP is a program designed for specialist palliative care services. It provides tools for services to:

- assess the care they provide against the *Standards*
- analyse the results and identify areas for improvement
- develop and implement a targeted action plan for improvement.

Importantly, the views and opinions of patients, their families and carers about the care they receive are central to the evaluation and quality improvement process.

It is envisioned this model will be further developed to support quality improvement against the *Standards* in all care settings. This recognises that quality care at the end of life is realised when strong networks exist between specialist palliative care providers, primary care providers, acute care providers, aged care providers (both residential and community based), other specialists, families and the community, all working together.

Palliative Care Australia is the peak national organisation representing the interests and aspirations of all who share the ideal of quality care at the end of life for all.

### Launch details

Wednesday 11 March 6pm

Café in the House, Old Parliament House, King George Terrace, Canberra



\* Palliative Care Australia, 2005, *Standards for providing quality palliative care for all Australians*, 4th edition, Canberra.

# National Standards Assessment Program

## Standards matter

### working together to improve quality care

The National Standards Assessment Program is a national framework for continuous quality improvement built on the Palliative Care Australia *Standards for providing quality palliative care for all Australians*.

The NSAP provides tools for specialist palliative care services to

- assess their current achievement against the *Standards*
- analyse the results and identify areas for improvement
- develop and implement a targeted action plan for improvement.

As a quality improvement activity, the core objective of the NSAP is the improvement of quality in palliative care experiences and outcomes for patients, their families and carers.

The NSAP also includes an optional peer review process through which services obtain a benchmark of their performance to support continuous quality improvement.

### The NSAP Pilot

The overwhelming response to the call for expressions of interest to participate in the NSAP pilot demonstrated recognition in the sector for the need for a quality improvement program which aligns with accreditation requirements.

Thirty-one services, representing 21% of all specialist palliative care services in Australia participated in the pilot phase. These services were spread across Australia in metropolitan, rural and remote areas.

All pilot services developed quality improvement action plans. The pilot identified collective opportunities for improvement in the following areas:

- communicating with patients and families
- advance care planning
- managing home death.

### NSAP - next steps

Following the successful pilot, the NSAP is being launched and roll out to the 147 specialist palliative care services\* across Australia will begin.

The NSAP is a continuous quality improvement program and services should formally assess themselves against the *Standards* every 2 years.

It is envisioned this model will be developed to support quality improvement against the *Standards* in all care settings.

## NSAP Pilot

### key outcomes

- **care planning** - 80% of services positively assessed their performance in relation to care planning established around the patient's and family's description of their experience and needs (Standard 1).
- **sharing information** - 87% of services positively assessed their performance with regard to the sharing of information, providing support for decision-making, and developing and carrying out care plans (Standard 1).
- **individualising care** - 89% of services positively assessed their performance regarding individualising care in accordance with the patient's needs and wishes (Standard 2).
- **cultural customs** - 92% of services reported the concerns, hopes, fears and expectations of the patients are addressed openly and honestly in the context of age, social and cultural customs (Standard 6).
- **continuity of care** - 93% of services reported they had established links with other service providers and relevant community and government organisations (Standard 9).
- 92% of services support and promote continuity of care across settings and throughout the trajectory of illness (Standard 10).
- **referral policies** - 92% of services reported referral policies are clear, applied consistently and result in non-discriminatory access to services (Standard 10).
- **safety** - 96% of services reported they had in place systems to identify and respond to critical incidents.



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*'Very good process for identifying where the service gaps are and proactively trying to manage these gaps to meet the needs of patients, their families and carers.'*

*'People have learnt new skills and the service has built capacity for quality improvement through the NSAP process'*

*'The fact that it links in nicely with accreditation is another benefit'*



\* For information on specialist palliative care services, see the National Palliative Care Service Directory at [www.palliativecare.org.au](http://www.palliativecare.org.au).