

**NATIONAL PALLIATIVE CARE WEEK AFTERNOON TEA
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY
PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
WHITTLE WARD. HOBART, TUESDAY 23 MAY 2017**

Good afternoon and welcome to this afternoon tea here at Whittle Ward, an event to mark National Palliative Care Week for 2017. It is wonderful to see you all here today.

I begin by paying respect to the traditional and original owners of this land — to pay respect to those that have passed before us and to acknowledge today's Tasmanian Aboriginal community who are the custodians of this land.

I note from the Palliative Care website¹ that the theme for this year's National Palliative Care Week is 'You matter, your care matters. Palliative care can make a difference'.

I also note that this week is to highlight how palliative care can assist people in aged care to enable them to have a good quality of life.² So palliative care is not just about people terminally ill with cancer, it is much broader. It includes those when living with a life limiting or terminal illness and is the care that helps people live their life as fully and as comfortably as possible in that situation.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare states that “ in Australia and many other parts of the world, the demand for palliative care services is increasing due to the ageing of the population and the increases in the prevalence of cancer and other chronic diseases that accompany ageing (WHO 2014).³

I could add that it is because of improvements in medical science and treatment that we have an increased life expectancy. So many conditions and illnesses that were once fatal during the life course are no longer so and as we age the chances of developing a chronic disease increase.

¹ <http://palliativecare.org.au/national-palliative-care-week/>

² ibid

³ ibid

The Institute's website goes on to provide some "Key points" about those people living in residential aged care facilities:⁴

Nationally, there were 231,500 permanent residents in Australia in 2014–15 with completed Aged Care Funding Instrument and about 1 in 25 of these residents (9,144) had an appraisal indicating the need for palliative care. Around one-quarter (23.2%) of residents receiving palliative care had been diagnosed with cancer, with the types of cancer and the rest had other illnesses.

This highlights the absolute need identified by Palliative Care Australia for people in aged care facilities to be included in conversations about palliative care.

Palliative Care Australia and Palliative Care Tasmania are encouraging us all to talk to each other about end of life care wishes irrespective of the reason a person finds themselves at the end of their life.⁵ And it provides some excellent resources to assist with this. I have had a look at your website and am most impressed with the information it provides. The 'dying to talk' discussion starter is an excellent resource. The guide is broken down into four activities, Reflecting; Talking, Reviewing; and Follow-up activities.

For many this is a confronting conversation. Over the last two years, both my mother and Dick's mother have died – and at the end they were in a palliative care situation in a nursing home. Seeing these resources I rather wish that I had gone through the questionnaire provided in the 'dying to talk' guide with my mother.

The PCA website also has links to advance care plans for each state, in the case of Tasmania to a document which appoints an enduring guardian and an advanced care directive. Seeing this Dick and I have been inspired to complete the directive and have appointed enduring guardians.

I am aware too that last year on Dying to Know Day, Palliative Care Tasmania used the day to host tours of cemeteries with tour guides who pointed out the graves of prominent Tasmanians, told entertaining stories and gently asked participants to talk about the kind of death they wanted. The idea is stop death being a taboo subject. Palliative Care Tasmania wants all Tasmanians as

⁴ <http://www.aihw.gov.au/palliative-care/residential-aged-care/>

⁵ ibid

young as 30 and older to start talking to their loved ones about what they would like to happen if they are diagnosed with a terminal illness or suffer a fatal injury.

Well I can tell you Colleen Johnstone, that this year, Palliative Care week has led at least two Tasmanians to take your advice!

In closing, on behalf of all Tasmanians, I would like to thank all of the staff and the volunteers at the Whittle Palliative Care Unit and all of those who work in palliative care for their wonderful work.

Thank you.