



Australian COVID-19 Palliative Care Working Group (ACPCWG)

Formed under the auspices of Palliative Care Australia (PCA)

1. Purpose:

Recognising the challenges for service delivery in the circumstances of a disaster, and in line with the World Health Organisation's Guide ***Integrating palliative care and symptom relief into the response to humanitarian emergencies and crises***¹, this Working Group (ACPCWG) has been formed under the auspices of Palliative Care Australia (PCA) to support preparation for provision of the best possible palliative care to the people of Australia during the COVID-19 epidemic.

Current responses to Humanitarian emergencies and crises rightfully focus on saving lives, but for both ethical and medical reasons, the prevention and relief of pain, as well as other physical and psychological symptoms, social and spiritual distress, also are imperative.

The principles of humanitarianism and impartiality require that all patients receive care and should never be abandoned for any reason, even if they are dying.

– Dr Naoko Yamamoto, in the Foreword to the WHO Guide

2. Objectives:

The Purpose of this Working Group (ACPCWG) is, in the context of the advice Department of Health and relevant state/territories jurisdictions, to:

- Provide expert advice to the PCA Board; including specific advice on the areas where PCA can influence
- Provide expert palliative care input into government decisions and policies about COVID-19
- Communicate critical information to PCA Member Organisations and Affiliate Members, and state and Territory clinical networks set up specifically to address palliative care issues related to COVID-19
- Provide a central point for the summary of and prioritisation of evolving issues to inform a national response
- Support the ongoing provision of the best possible palliative care to the Australian community; including consideration of issues of training and upskilling; clinical care; organisation and delivery of services; equipment, infrastructure and medicines; and ethics and decision-making

¹ <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/274565/9789241514460-eng.pdf>

- Provide recommendations and support communication of key issues relevant to palliative care to the broader community
- Help optimise palliative care services preparedness as part of whole of health response to the COVID-19 pandemic through:
 - Identifying current and emerging issues which require consideration
 - Provide advice on prioritisation of actions, including how those can be operationalised successfully and collaboratively with key stakeholders

3. Membership

3.1 Structure

The members of the Working Group (ACPCWG) are:

Palliative Care Australia (PCA) Board Chair (Chair)
Palliative Care Australia CEO
Australian and New Zealand Society of Palliative Medicine (ANZSPM)
President or delegate
Palliative Care Nurses Australia (PCNA) President or delegate
Australasian Chapter of Palliative Medicine of the RACP (AChPM) Chair or delegate
End of Life Directions for Aged Care (ELDAC) Project lead or delegate
Individual experts as proposed by the Working Group (ACPCWG), and endorsed by PCA
Paediatric Palliative Care Australia and New Zealand (PaPCANZ) Chair or delegate
CareSearch Project lead or delegate
Caring@Home Project lead or delegate

PCA Secretariat:

Palliative Care Australia Policy Advisor
Palliative Care Australia Clinical Advisor
Palliative Care Australia Corporate Services Officer

3.2 Term

Appointment to the Working Group (ACPCWG) will be for one year, or less if the COVID-19 situation resolves beforehand.

3.3 Chair

The Chair will be the Chair of the PCA Board.

3.4 Expertise

The Working Group (ACPCWG) will bring together clinical experience, service leadership and networks and skills in the organisation and delivery of palliative care to the challenging task of providing palliative care across the entire country during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.5 Secretariat

The PCA Corporate Services Officer will provide secretariat support to the Working Group (ACPCWG).

4. Meetings

The Working Group (ACPCWG) will meet by teleconference.

4.1 Frequency

The Working Group (ACPCWG) will initially hold meetings at least once a week and then future meetings will be scheduled as deems necessary to respond to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.2 Notice

The dates and times of each meeting of the Working Group (ACPCWG) will be notified by the Secretariat to all members of the Working Group (ACPCWG) as far in advance as possible.

4.3 Supporting papers

The agenda and relevant supporting papers will be distributed by the Secretariat to all members of the Working Group (ACPCWG) 24 hours prior to the meeting if possible, taking into account the rapidly evolving context.

4.4 Minutes

Minutes of the Working Group (ACPCWG) will be reviewed by the Chair prior to circulation to Members.

5. Conflicts of Interest

Members of the working group (ACPCWG) will ensure conflicts of interest are managed accordingly. Members will be invited to disclose conflicts of interest at the commencement of each meeting and the Working Group (ACPCWG) will determine capacity to vote on any issue if there is an actual or perceived conflict of interest depending on the nature of the issue under discussion and the nature of the conflict.