

POSITION STATEMENT – VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING

Albany Community Hospice (the Hospice) has prepared this position statement on the practice of Voluntary Assisted Dying (sometimes referred to as euthanasia and physician assisted suicide) in recognition that it is an issue of significant interest to our community. We acknowledge that there is a diversity of opinion in public and healthcare communities about Voluntary Assisted Dying in end of life care. We also acknowledge that although this practice is on the political and legislative agenda within our state, the practice of Voluntary Assisted Dying is currently an illegal act in Western Australia.

Consistent with the position statement of Palliative Care Australia, the Hospice believes good palliative care does not include Voluntary Assisted Dying. Palliative care intends to neither hasten nor prolong death. The Hospice aims to support any patient with a life limiting condition by providing access to evidence based holistic end of life care. This aims to relieve suffering and improve quality of life in a compassionate, dignified and respectful way.

The Hospice believes that the following constitutes good medical practice and is not the same as Voluntary Assisted Dying:

- A person engaging in their right to refuse all life sustaining treatments including the withdrawal of nutrition and hydration; and
- A person being provided with symptom relief, which may include palliative sedation for the management of symptoms that cannot otherwise be adequately controlled at the end of their life.

The Hospice places great importance on patients feeling safe, having opportunities to talk about their advance care planning wishes, and responding compassionately to distress. The Hospice responds to current requests for Voluntary Assisted Dying with respect and attempts to explore and address any underlying difficulties.

Endorsed by:

Albany Community Hospice Board of Management & Medical Advisory Committee

30 April 2018