



END OF LIFE CARE AND CHOICES

COTA NSW Policy Position

COTA NSW supports the right of individuals to make informed decisions about, and to have control over, their end-of-life care in keeping with their beliefs and values. We support the right of people to have access to quality, affordable care that preserves their dignity, in settings of their choice as much as possible. The role, responsibilities and rights of family carers and other family members/close friends should be acknowledged, to the extent that the person themselves wishes them to be involved. We believe people should be supported to die as they choose (within legal boundaries). To reflect the views of older people as evidenced by multiple COTA surveys, COTA NSW supports a change in legislation, with suitable safeguards, to make Voluntary Assisted Dying available to people.

Rationale for COTA NSW's position

- Credible research demonstrates that many people experience poor end-of-life care and are not given access to palliative care at an early stage of their dying. This is a major problem in rural and remote areas and for people in marginalised groups, which raises questions of social justice.
- There is an increasing need for access to different types and quality of care including acute care, home care, residential care and hospital/hospice care.
- The majority of people say they want to die at home but only a small percentage are able to do so.
- Increasing demand and a diminishing workforce has resulted in a lack of sustainability to deliver quality care across diverse settings. Additional resources are needed to address this issue.
- There is limited understanding of what is locally available for terminally ill people and their carers.

- To reflect the views of older people as evidenced by multiple COTA surveys, COTA NSW supports a change in legislation, with suitable safeguards, to make Voluntary Assisted Dying available to people.

COTA NSW calls for –

- Provide opportunities for people to discuss death and dying in non-intimidating settings; increase “death literacy”
- Provide education and information at community events and on COTA NSW websites and social media platforms to assist our members and the wider community, including health care professionals, to:
 - understand the choices and options of terminally ill people, in line with what is currently legally available;
 - access information about Advance Care Planning and where support to undertake such planning is available.
- Lobby all levels of government, in partnership with COTA Australia where relevant, to:
 - increase resources for palliative and end-of-life care in community, residential and hospital/hospice care settings
 - Remove restrictions on access to superannuation and insurance for terminally ill people and their families.
- Promote community engagement in care by undertaking projects that recognise the need for health professionals and community members to work together, for example by taking a “compassionate communities” approach to care.
- The NSW government to introduce voluntary assisted-dying legislation.