

MEDIA RELEASE

19 November 2009

Demystifying the palliative care maze

Federal Minister for Ageing Justine Elliot today launched a practical new guide for medical and allied health professionals negotiating the often complex process of providing patients with holistic palliative care.

Compiled with guidance from Catholic Health Australia's (CHA) expert Palliative Care Special Interest Group, *Provision of Palliative Care in Catholic Health and Aged Care Services* is designed to help staff understand the palliative care experience from the patient's point of view.

"The book steps hospital and aged care staff through practical issues such as symptom management and taking an effective interdisciplinary approach, and addresses the less definable aspects of holistic palliative care including spiritual care and supporting the family," CHA CEO Martin Laverty said at the Parliament House launch.

"It also guides staff through how to handle difficult conversations about death and dying, and the importance of advance care planning."

CHA represents the largest non-government group of hospitals and aged care facilities nationally, with more than 35,000 employees caring for one in 10 Australians in hospital or aged care.

Mr Laverty today called on the Government to devote greater resources to making palliative care available to Australians all who need it.

"Today only one in three people who could benefit from palliative care is able to access it," he said.

"Not-for-profit Catholic hospitals and aged care providers are already delivering high quality palliative care to patients around Australia, but we could do so much more with better support from Government."

The book is available for purchase from CHA's website, www.cha.org.au, and is accompanied by a consumer brochure, *Catholic Palliative Care Services*, available as free downloads in four languages.