

Supporting quality in aged care

The role of the Victorian Palliative Care Advice Service

Practical palliative care support to help you deliver quality care every day

The Victorian Palliative Care Advice Service (PCAS) is a free, state-wide service offering direct and immediate access to specialist palliative care nurses and doctors. PCAS supports clinicians in providing high-quality care for individuals living with life-limiting illness or those requiring palliative or end-of-life care. The service also assists families, residents, and carers in understanding the role of palliative care, including what to consider, plan for, and expect.

For aged care providers, embedding PCAS into local policy promotes a consistent, evidence-based approach to palliative care delivery across Victoria.



Aged Care Standard – 5.7.1: **Recognising when the individual requires palliative care and preparing for end-of-life**

The provider has processes to recognise when the individual requires palliative care or is approaching the end of their life, supports them to prepare for the end-of-life and responds to their changing needs and preferences.

PCAS supports the standard by:

- Supporting care staff in identifying when palliative care could assist a resident's wellbeing, and how to communicate this effectively.
- Explaining what palliative care is and how it improves quality of life.
- Supporting age care providers communicate with residents, families, and care teams.
- Assisting with the development of symptom management plans.
- Guiding referrals to specialist palliative care services, when required.

Aged Care Standard – 5.7.2: **Supporting end-of-life planning conversations and advance care planning**

The provider supports the individual, supporters of the individual and other persons supporting the individuals and substitute decision maker, to:

1. continue end-of-life planning conversations
2. discuss requesting or declining aspects of personal care, life-prolonging treatment and responding to reversible acute conditions
3. review advance care planning documents to align with their current needs, goals and preferences.

PCAS supports the standard by:

- Being available 365 days, 7am–10pm to directly provide support to clinicians, residents and their families.
- Supporting end-of-life planning through phone consultations with specialist nurses and doctors.
- Guiding individuals, families, and care teams through changes in care discussions.
- Supporting care staff to ensure that care aligns with the person's wishes and changing needs.
- Providing immediate specialist advice to support informed decision-making.

Aged Care Standard – 5.7.3:

Planning and delivering palliative care that prioritizes comfort, dignity, and cultural/spiritual needs

The provider uses its processes from comprehensive care to plan and deliver palliative care that:

- a. prioritises the comfort and dignity of the individual
- b. supports the individual's spiritual, cultural and psychosocial needs
- c. identifies and manages changes in pain and symptoms
- d. provides timely access to specialist equipment and medicines for pain and symptom management
- e. communicates information about the individual's preferences for palliative care and the place where they wish to receive this care to aged care workers, supporters of individuals and other persons supporting individuals
- f. facilitates access to specialist palliative care and end-of-life health professionals when required
- g. provides a suitable environment for palliative care
- h. provides information about the process when an individual is dying and about loss and bereavement to supporters of individuals and other persons supporting individuals.

PCAS supports the standard by:

- Providing immediate expert advice to ensure safe, high-quality care (no referral needed).
- Supporting GPs and Nurse Practitioners with prescribing, conversions, and medication advice.
- Guiding holistic care, that meet individual needs.
- Providing translated resources and interpreter access to care staff, residents and their families and carers.
- Offering symptom management advice and links to local services.
- Assisting residents and families with communicating care preferences.
- Supporting care staff, residents, and families with what to expect and plan for with dying and grief.
- Guiding clinicians on when and how to refer to local specialist palliative care services, when required.

Aged Care Standard – 5.7.4:

Implementing processes in the last days of life

The provider implements processes in the last days of life to:

- a. recognise that the individual is in the last days of life and respond to rapidly changing needs
- b. ensure medicines to manage pain and symptoms, including anticipatory medicines, are prescribed, administered, reviewed and available 24-hours a day
- c. provide pressure care, oral care, eye care and bowel and bladder care
- d. recognise and respond to delirium
- e. minimise unnecessary transfer to hospital, where this is in line with the individual's preferences.

PCAS supports the standard by:

- Being available 365 days a year, including after hours.
- Offering guidance on symptom relief, including breakthrough medications and syringe driver management.
- Providing practical care advice for caregivers (e.g. pressure, oral, eye, bowel/bladder care).
- Helping identify and manage symptoms to prevent unnecessary hospital transfers.
- Assisting teams with symptom management and end-of-life decisions based on the person's wishes.
- Collaborating with Ambulance Victoria and the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department for timely, appropriate care.

Further information and guidance can be found at: Australian Government Department of Health. (2025). *Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards: Standard 5: Clinical care, Outcome 5.7 palliative care and end-of-life care*. Retrieved from <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/strengthened-aged-care-quality-standards-february-2025>.

We are unable to provide prescriptions, referrals, access medical records or replace the care of local healthcare providers. The Victorian Palliative Care Advice Service is funded by the Department of Health, operated by The Royal Melbourne Hospital and supported by the Victorian Government. This is a free and confidential service for everyone in Victoria.
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