

## Purpose

To provide the Cancer Society's position on End of Life care.

## The Cancer Society's position

The Cancer Society acknowledges the diverse range of strongly-held personal and professional beliefs on euthanasia and assisted dying. There are varying views from spiritual, religious or cultural perspectives which may not be necessarily shared within groups or cultures. We appreciate the importance of these perspectives to ways of thinking about euthanasia and assisted dying. However, as an organisation the Cancer Society remains neutral regarding the End of Life Choice Act 2019 coming into force<sup>1</sup>.

It is the Cancer Society's view that a critical focus should be **better support for people nearing the end of life and their whānau.** <sup>2</sup>

The Cancer Society regards *End of Life care* as the broader critical issue, and thus take the following position:

- I. The Cancer Society has a significant role in advocating for high quality and equitable care across, and at all levels, of the health continuum.
- II. The Cancer Society promotes access to high quality and timely *End of Life care* and support for people who are dying, and their whānau, with seamless transition between care settings. Please note, the Cancer Society does not provide *End of Life care*.
- III. The Cancer Society advocates for national planning and services that encompass physical, emotional, practical and spiritual support for people nearing the end of life. All planning should take the following into account:

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<sup>1</sup> In December 2017, the Cancer Society withdrew its previous position on euthanasia and assisted dying. The previous position (November 2012) supported the enhanced provision of palliative care to all New Zealanders, regardless of ethnicity, creed, geography and socio-economic status.

<sup>2</sup> The publication of this statement follows the Cancer Society's extensive research review of international literature and policy.

- the imperative for **universal** access to high quality services;
- all New Zealanders should have the opportunity to think, talk about, plan and share their wishes for *End of Life care* (advance care planning). Wherever possible, *End of Life care* should be provided in a way that aligns with a person's wishes and preferences;
- appropriate *End of Life care* acknowledges that a person's unique needs intersect with the diverse cultural and social needs of particular communities or groups;
- *End of Life* treatment decisions (including forgoing treatment) also relate to factors including, but not limited to, transition between levels of care, available supportive care, geographical location, individual autonomy and communication ability;
- the extent and quality of support provided to the whānau and people nearing the end of life is a key determinant of their experiences.

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**Citation:** Position Statement: End of Life Care. Cancer Society of New Zealand. November 2019. Available: <https://cancernz.org.nz/national-office/our-work/position-statements/>

**This position statement acknowledges:** Hospice New Zealand Hospice 'NZ Position Statement on Euthanasia and Assisted Dying' <http://www.hospice.org.nz/about-hospice-nz/euthanasia-our-opinion>

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