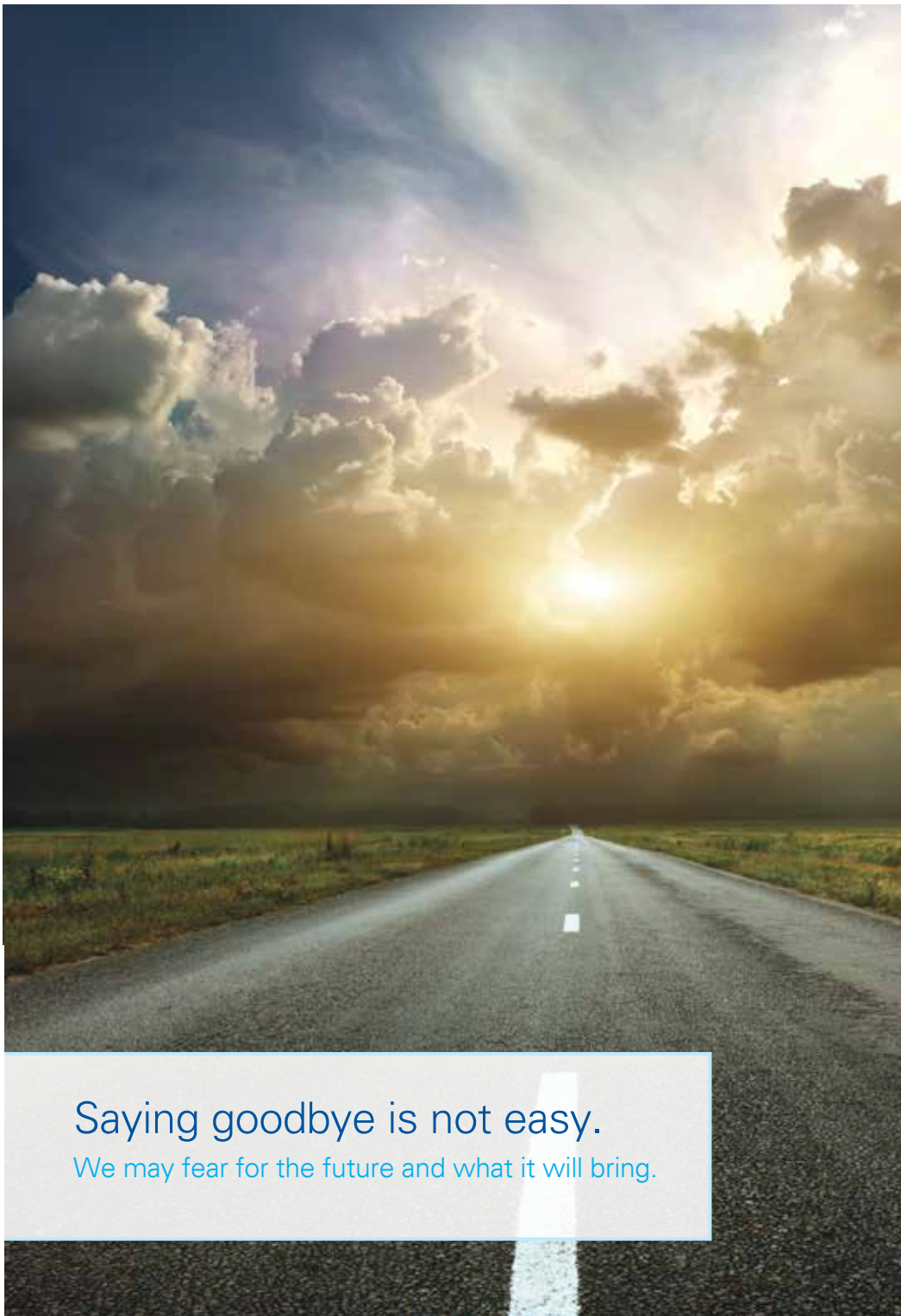




Preparing to say goodbye

Proudly part of



Saying goodbye is not easy.

We may fear for the future and what it will bring.

Preparing to say goodbye

Saying goodbye to people is never easy. This is especially true when we're saying goodbye to someone who is dying. Even if we know that person has lived a long life, has become frail and weary and is ready to go, we may still find it very hard to say goodbye.

There are a variety of reasons that could result in feelings of distress. We know we will miss the person and what they have brought into our lives. We may fear for the future and what it will bring. Sometimes, emotional issues from the past remain unresolved. At other times, we are reminded of previous grief and don't want to relive that pain. In addition, we are reminded of our own mortality and most of us don't want to confront the fact that one day we too will die.

Because your loved one's condition is deteriorating, and you may be facing some of these issues right now, we hope you find this information helpful.

Our commitment to you

Blue Care Tailor Made Palliative Care Program: Dying with Dignity.

Blue Care, as a Primary Care Palliative Care Service provider throughout Queensland, supports clients, residents and their families from the time of diagnosis of a life limiting illness. Blue Care provides a range of services according to client needs. People with a variety of health conditions and diagnoses are supported across a range of funding programs, and in the environment of their choice.

Blue Care will support you, your loved one and your family and friends throughout the process of planning and making care choices.

The Blue Care multidisciplinary team supports community-based clients, residents of our aged care facilities and their families through all the stages of palliative care. Blue Care palliative care services which manage symptoms and maximise a person's quality of life. These are underpinned by a person-centred focus including open communication, maintaining personal dignity and informed choice.

It is the person who comes first and is at the centre of all we do. Everyone's uniqueness is appreciated and we will work in partnership with you, your loved one and other family and friends. We will actively listen to hear the needs and wants of the person and will focus on their skills and capabilities. This will guide the design and delivery of service and accommodation solutions that are individually 'tailor made'. Our services will be delivered in such a way that the person is in control rather than controlled.

Some of the physical aspects of dying

Nutrition

A dying person will probably experience a decreased need for food and drink. It can be hard for family and friends to accept the person's lack of appetite and thirst. Many of us equate food and drink with basic care. However, as the physical body dies, the vital organs shut down and no longer need nourishment to keep them functioning. This is the wisdom of the body, which knows exactly what it needs. In the last stages of dying, forcing food or fluids when the body says 'no' may cause the dying person acute discomfort.

Circulation

As a result of blood circulation slowing down, the limbs of the body may become cool to the touch and darker in colour.

Breathing

As the person's cough or swallowing reflex diminishes, saliva and mucus may increase and collect in the back of the throat. This can cause noisy breathing which may be distressing for loved ones. Talk with the nurse or visiting doctor as there are medications and procedures which can lessen this. Breathing patterns may eventually become irregular, with increasingly long intervals where no breathing occurs.

If you have any concerns about your loved one's condition, talk to the nurse.

It's better to do this away from your loved one.

Hearing and touch

Never assume that the person can't hear you. Hearing and touch are the last senses to be lost, even if the dying person is not lucid or is in a coma.

Sleep

As the end of life approaches, the dying person will gradually spend more and more time sleeping and, at times, will be difficult to rouse. The person may become increasingly confused about time, where they are and the identity of family and friends who are normally familiar to them.

What you can do:

- Do not give liquids or food unless requested.
- Wet the lips and mouth with a small amount of water, ice chips, or a sponge-tipped applicator dipped in water.
- Protect lips from dryness with a protective lip balm.
- Always speak gently, and identify yourself before speaking.
- Use gentle reassuring touch.
- Be comfortable with silence. Remember that you are supporting the person to let go.
- Never speak about the dying person as if he or she was not in the room.
- Let relatives and close friends know what is happening.

Realise your limitations

No one can do everything. Take time out when you need it.
Get help when you need it.

Saying goodbye

Saying goodbye is not easy. Yet, it is important for you and the dying person to do so.

People who are dying sometimes want those who love them to give them permission to say goodbye.

They may need to be assured that:

- they are loved.
- mistakes and misunderstandings have been forgiven.
- things they were once responsible for will be managed by others.
- their loved ones will manage without them.
- their life had meaning.
- they will be remembered.

What you can do:

- Hold the person's hand and recall a pleasant memory that you have. Think of what that person has meant to you and share that with the person. It helps them to know that their life has had meaning. It may help you too. You won't have to say later "I never told them how much they meant to me".
- You may want to ask the person's forgiveness for any harm or hurt you may have caused over the years.
- You may also want to say something like "You know I forgive you for any harm or hurt that you caused me." Put it in your own words.
- Sometimes we need to give people permission to die by saying gently "just relax and let go", or something similar.

In some cultures, specific prayers, or rituals may ease the passage to death. These may be comforting to you as well as to the dying person. A Blue Care Chaplain is available to support you, or you may want to ask for your own spiritual and pastoral carer for assistance.

Being present at the moment of death

Even with all the preparation in the world, it is not comfortable watching someone you love die. Your decision to be present at the moment of death depends on many things. It is okay to choose to be present and it is equally okay to be absent.

It is hard to predict the moment of death. People sometimes die when their relatives and friends have left the room, even for just a moment. This can be upsetting for those who were keeping vigil and wanted to be there right to the end. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, who has greatly increased our understanding in her books on death and dying, says that this may happen because the dying person senses the change and thus they are able to go.

With the best planning, it may not be possible to be present when someone dies. Because of this, whenever you leave your loved one, reaffirm your love and feelings to them and tell them when you are coming back. You might also want to say something like "I really want to be here when you die, but in case I'm not, I want to say goodbye now."

Reflect

On the mysteries and gifts of life and death.

When your loved one has died

It may be important for you to have private time with your loved one following death. It is a sacred moment as we reflect on the mysteries and gifts of life and death.

If your loved one is in a Blue Care residential facility:

You will be able to stay with your loved one until the funeral director arrives. If you would like the Chaplain to come and pray with you, to talk or simply be with you, just let staff know.

If you are not present at the time of death, the nurse on duty will phone the nominated next of kin to let them know. Please let staff know if you would prefer to be called immediately or at a particular time should this happen at night.

You will be able to see your loved one in their room if you are able to come in straight away. If that is not possible, you will still be able to arrange a private viewing with your funeral director.

The doctor will be called to sign the Death Certificate and then the funeral director nominated on your relative's records will be notified. If you have yet to choose a funeral director, the Chaplain can provide you with a list of local companies.

Fees are payable for a resident's room until it is completely cleared and, unfortunately, we do not have storage facilities available. If you would like to donate goods to the facility, there is a procedure in place. Please let the staff know of your wishes.

If your loved one dies at home

You may wish to call someone to come and pray with you, to talk or simply be with you. They may also offer a blessing of comfort to you. Blue Care Chaplains are available, or you may call someone else who can provide you with spiritual and pastoral care. Just let the staff know.

You can take your time to say your goodbyes; there is no need to hurry. When you feel you are ready, then it is time to reach out to others.

Contact the doctor. The doctor will usually prepare the medical certificate confirming the death and stating the cause of death. If the death is sudden or unexpected, the doctor will make arrangements for appropriate notification of police and the coroner. Do not be alarmed by this. It is the usual process to find out the cause of death. In most cases, it is purely a formality.

Contact the funeral director of your choice. If you have yet to choose a funeral director, the Chaplain can provide you with a list of local companies. The funeral director will remove the body from your home when you are ready.

The Blue Care Chaplain can provide you with a list of local funeral directors.

Prayers for these times

This is a sad time for you. These prayers may help.

Gracious God,

*Thank you for being with me and for the certainty
I have that I am not alone.*

Help me to say goodbye to

Thank you for the gift of his/her life.

*Give me courage and strength and the assurance
of knowing we are all in your loving care.*

In Jesus' name I pray,

Amen.

Psalm 23

A Psalm of David.

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

*He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside still waters,*

He refreshes my soul.

*He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.*

*Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.*

*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.*

*Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*



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