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Heart Foundation submission to Queensland Health Palliative Care Services Review

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Queensland Palliative Care Services Review. The Heart Foundation is dedicated to improving health outcomes for people living with heart disease.

We strongly believe that people living with advanced heart failure must be considered in the Queensland Government's state-wide review to facilitate increased and earlier referral to palliative care services.

The Heart Foundation is not a provider of local palliative care services, therefore our submission to this review does not fall neatly into the questions provided in the consultation paper. However, we are concerned that people with advanced heart failure are not receiving timely access to appropriate palliative care.

We urge the Queensland Department of Health to take up the recommendations in the recently launched Heart Foundation and Cardiac Society of Australia and New Zealand (CSANZ): [2018 Guidelines for the Prevention, Detection and Management of Heart Failure in Australia](#) (*Heart Lung and Circulation* 2018; 27:1123 – 1208).

These guidelines clearly outline the benefits of incorporating palliative care services into a multi-disciplinary approach and make recommendations based on current evidence for managing end-stage heart failure.

The key recommendation for palliative care in heart failure is:

Referral to palliative care should be considered in patients with advanced heart failure to alleviate end-stage symptoms, improve quality of life, and decrease rehospitalisation. Involvement in palliative care should be considered early in the trajectory towards end-stage heart failure.

The rationale is that nearly 40% of patients diagnosed with heart failure will die within 12 months of their first hospitalisation for heart failure, and will experience a range of debilitating symptoms which are highly distressing to them and their carers.

The guidelines cite a very strong evidence base clearly demonstrating that the introduction of palliative care is associated with significant improvements in quality of life and a reduction in symptom burden and rehospitalisation.

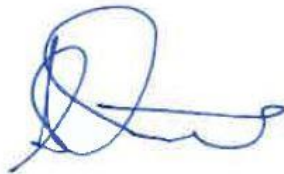
Key practical advice for service delivery that is directly relevant to the Queensland review is included in the Heart Failure Guidelines:

- *The palliative care service should work collaboratively with the patient's heart failure team and GP. This could also be extended to joint home visits by a heart failure nurse and palliative care nurse until the patient develops a strong collaborative relationship with the palliative care team, after which time the heart failure nurse may reduce their visits.*
- *It is important that the collaborative care plan is patient and family-centred.*
- *In patients with an ICD (Implantable cardioverter defibrillator) discussions concerning deactivation should occur between the patient, their family, and their cardiologist.*
- *Patients with heart failure should be encouraged to have an advanced care plan soon after diagnosis, regardless of their clinical status.*

We urge the Queensland Department of Health to give full consideration to these new guidelines and the implementation of these key recommendations in the Queensland context.

Should you require hard copies of the new guidelines or any further information, please contact Anna Lewis, Manager Heart Health, anna.lewis@heartfoundation.org.au

Kind regards



Stephen Vines
Chief Executive Officer, Queensland
National Heart Foundation