



*Information for Families:  
Supporting Your Loved One  
Palliative Care @ Maroba*



## What is Palliative Care?

Palliative care is person and family-centred care provided for anyone with an active, progressive, advanced disease, who has little or no prospect of cure and who is expected to pass away.

Our goal for Palliative Care is to help residents live their life as fully and as comfortably as possible and to optimise their quality of life, when living with a life-limiting or terminal illness.

Palliative Care focusses on your loved one's symptoms which may be physical, emotional, spiritual or social. Palliative Care is based on needs and may include:

- Relief from symptoms such as pain, nausea, agitation, shortness of breath
- Equipment to improve comfort and prevent pressure injuries
- Support for family discussions and planning for future care
- Guidance on medical treatment and goals of care
- Support with meeting cultural, emotional, social and spiritual needs
- Counselling and grief support
- Maintaining dignity and peace

Palliative Care is family-centred, meaning you and other carers can receive practical and emotional support.

## Why might Palliative Care be needed?

When health changes, treatments are no longer effective and the resident continues to deteriorate, we move to Palliative Care.

Palliative Care ensures:

- Comfort rather than invasive procedures
- Respect for your loved one's wishes
- Support for you and your family

## Who is in the Palliative Care team?

At Maroba, care is provided by:

- Medical team: GP, Nurse Practitioner, Registered & Enrolled Nurses
- Support team: Aged care nurses, pharmacist, spiritual care officer, Palliative Care specialists
- Family: You are an essential part of the team

## Where is Palliative Care provided?

We aim to keep your loved one in a familiar, comfortable space where family and friends can visit freely. Whenever possible, care is provided in their own room to maintain dignity. In some cases, care may occur in a hospital or hospice, depending on individual needs.

## What to Expect

At Maroba, we believe in keeping you informed and involved when we notice changes that may indicate your loved one is approaching a palliative stage. A palliative approach means shifting the focus from life-prolonging treatments to prioritising comfort, symptom management, and quality of life.

*End-of-life care is focused on providing increased services and support for the person's physical, emotional, social and spiritual/existential issues as they approach death.' Definitions from RACGP 2024 Silver Book*

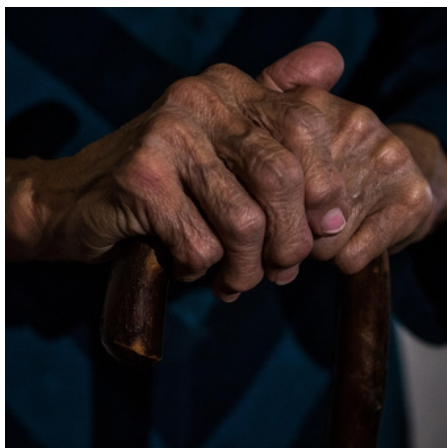
## Anticipated Palliative Approach

This stage begins when we notice changes that suggest your loved one may be entering the final phase of life. We will meet with you and your family to prepare for what's ahead. These conversations may include:

- Planning for end-of-life medications in advance
- Discussing your loved one's wishes, needs, and preferences
- Ensuring everyone understands what to expect and feels supported

## Active Palliation

This refers to the final weeks, days, or hours when your loved one may be rapidly approaching end of life. During this time, their comfort and dignity are our highest priority. We will provide increased services and support to ensure care is coordinated and compassionate.



## Supporting Your Loved One in Their Final Days

Caring for someone in their last weeks, days, or hours can be emotional and overwhelming. Watching a loved one in their final moments is difficult, and it's normal to experience many different feelings during this time.

Many families worry that death is painful. In most cases, the time before death is generally peaceful. You can bring great comfort simply by being present—sitting quietly, holding their hand, talking softly, playing music, or engaging in calm activities they enjoy. Even if your loved one doesn't respond, they can often still hear you. Remember: “Being with” can be more important than “doing for.”

## Emotional Support

This time can be deeply emotional. Here are some ways to care for yourself and your family:

- Acknowledge your feelings: It's normal to feel sadness, fear, or even relief. Allow yourself to experience these emotions without judgment.
- Take breaks: Step outside for fresh air, eat regularly, and rest when you can. Caring for yourself helps you care for your loved one.
- Lean on support: Talk with family, friends, or our staff. We are here to listen and provide guidance.
- Create meaningful moments: Share memories, play favorite music, or read aloud. These small acts can bring comfort to both you and your loved one.
- Seek professional help if needed: Our team can connect you with counselling or pastoral care for emotional and spiritual support.



## What You May Notice and How You Can Help

Not every person will show all these signs, but these changes are part of the natural process as the body slows down.

### **Appetite and Thirst**

Your loved one's appetite and thirst will decrease. This is normal and not painful. Offer sips of water or use a moist mouth swab for comfort. Our nurses can show you how to help with mouth care if you wish.

### **Sleep and Alertness**

As the body and organs slow down, your loved one may be drowsy or hard to wake and will sleep more. Speak softly and calmly when they are alert, and allow them to rest when needed.

### **Skin and Temperature Changes**

You may notice cool or clammy skin, mottling (blotchy or darker patches), or a bluish tint on lips—these are signs of slowing circulation. Sometimes, changes in metabolism can cause a distinctive smell. Gentle hand or foot massage can provide comfort; our nurses can guide you.

### **Incontinence**

Urine output will reduce and become darker. Loss of bladder or bowel control can occur. We will use incontinence aids to keep your loved one comfortable.

### **Secretions**

As coughing and swallowing reflexes decline, saliva and mucus can build up in the throat, causing gurgling or bubbling sounds. These noises are not distressing for your loved one, though they can be upsetting for family. We can help by:

- Elevating the head of the bed
- Gently turning your loved one on their side
- Providing medication to reduce secretions if needed

### **Breathing**

Breathing may become irregular—sometimes fast, sometimes with long pauses—and may sound shallow or noisy. This is due to slowing circulation and waste buildup in the body. It is not painful or distressing for your loved one.

### **Agitation and Restlessness**

Your loved one may become restless or agitated due to changes in blood flow and brain function. You can help by:

- Speaking calmly
- Offering gentle hand or forehead massage
- Playing familiar music

If agitation continues, let the nurse know—medication can help reduce discomfort.

## When Your Loved One Has Passed

When death occurs, your loved one will stop breathing, their heart will stop beating, their mouth may relax and fall open, their eyes will become fixed, and natural secretions may leave the body. These changes are part of the normal process.

Once your loved one has taken their final breath:

- A Registered Nurse will confirm the death and notify the GP and Nurse Practitioner so the Death Certificate can be completed.
- We will gently remove any medical equipment such as pumps, cannulas, or catheters.
- Our nursing and care team will provide a respectful final wash and dress your loved one in clothing chosen by the family.
- We will prepare the room so you and other loved ones can spend some quiet, final moments together.
- We will confirm the funeral directors to collect your loved one and make that call for you

The doctor will also complete a Cremation Certificate if cremation is the chosen option.

## What to Do in the Final Moments After They Have Passed

This is personal for everyone but some things to think about may include;

- Take Time Before Calling Others
- Pause and allow yourself to sit quietly with your loved one. This can be a moment for reflection, prayer, or simply being present.
- Say Goodbye in Your Own Way
- Speak to them, hold their hand, or place a meaningful item nearby. Even after death, these gestures can bring comfort.
- Invite Family Members
- If possible, allow other family members to come and spend time before the funeral director arrives.
- Capture a Memory
- Some families choose to take a photo of a hand holding theirs or a favorite item in the room. This is a personal choice.
- Ask for Support
- Our staff can assist with rituals, prayers, or cultural practices that are important to you.



## Ways to Honour Your Loved One

- Sit with your loved one, share memories, or say a personal goodbye in a calm, respectful environment.
- Light a candle, play their favourite music, read a poem, or say a prayer that was meaningful to them.
- Join the Guard of Honour as your loved one leaves Maroba—a tradition that honours their life.
- Place a photo, flowers, or a small keepsake with your loved one before they are transferred.
- Gather with family and friends to share stories and celebrate their life, either at Maroba or later during the funeral.
- Create a memory book with photos and messages from family and friends, or an online tribute page.
- Donate to a cause that was meaningful to your loved one as a way to honour their values and legacy.

## Funerals and Memorial Services

A funeral or memorial service is an opportunity for family and friends to come together to mourn, share memories, and celebrate the life of your loved one.

There are several decisions to consider:

- Preferences: Did your loved one express any wishes about their funeral or memorial?
- Viewing: Would the family like to have a viewing?
- Service: Will you hold a service? If so, where would you prefer it to be?
- Personal touches: What special elements—music, readings, photos—should be included to reflect your loved one's life and personality?

Including personal expressions and meaningful details can make the service a beautiful tribute.

## Costs and Arrangements

Funeral costs can vary depending on the type of service, coffin, flowers, notices, and other choices. Your funeral director will:

- Explain what needs to be done
- Provide options and guidance
- Coordinate arrangements according to your wishes
- They are required to give you an itemised quote so you can make informed decisions.

# BEREAVEMENT

## Our Deepest Sympathy

This information is designed to help you understand the grieving process. While it may not lessen the pain, it can help you navigate this time with greater support and clarity.

Please know you are not alone. If you have any questions or need further help, our team are here for you. Feel free to reach out at any time.

## The First Few Days

Grief affects everyone differently, and in the early days after a loss, many families describe feeling numb or unable to believe their loved one has passed. You may also feel overwhelmed by the need to notify others and organize practical arrangements.

This can be a time when support from family and friends is especially helpful. Accepting offers of assistance can make things easier—for example:

- Having someone stay with you if you prefer not to be alone
- Asking for help with driving if you don't feel safe or focused

It's important to care for yourself during this time. Caring for someone during their illness can leave you physically and emotionally exhausted.

Notifying family and friends and arranging the funeral are often the first major tasks. You may choose to make these calls yourself or accept help from others to share the responsibility.

## Self-Care Checklist for the First Few Days

- Rest when you can
- Eat simple, nourishing meals regularly
- Stay hydrated
- Accept help with calls, errands, or meals.
- Avoid major decisions
- Take breaks for fresh air or a short walk.
- Talk to someone you trust
- Be kind to yourself



## Practical Help After a Loss

### Financial Assistance

- **Centrelink Support**

- Bereavement Allowance: 14 weeks at the married pension rate (lump sum or 7 payments).
- Single Pensioner Payment: One payment to the estate.
- Carer's Payment: Continues for 14 weeks after the person's death.
- Download booklet: Are You Needing Help After Someone Has Died? at <https://www.centrelink.gov.au>.

- **Veterans' Funeral Benefit**

- One-off payment from DVA. Call 133 254.

### Accessing Funeral Funds

Banks may release money before probate to pay funeral costs. You'll need:

- Death Certificate
- Funeral account
- Certified copies of will and death certificate

### Debts

You're not personally liable unless debts are joint. They're paid from the estate by the executor.

### Real Estate

Probate is required if property is solely in the deceased's name. Joint tenancy transfers automatically.

### Legal Matters : The Will

A will outlines the deceased's wishes and names an executor to:

- Distribute assets and/ or Pay debts

If there is no will, seek advice from:

- NSW Trustee & Guardian, Legal Aid NSW or a solicitor

The NSW Supreme Court Probate Section can assist (Phone 9230 8111 or visit <https://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au>).

### Probate

A Grant of Probate confirms the executor's authority to manage the estate. Apply through the Supreme Court Probate Registry.

Forms can be:

- Provided by a solicitor, downloaded online or purchased from legal stationery suppliers

## Who to Notify

- Executor
- Solicitor / Accountant
- ATO & Electoral Office
- Banks & Credit Unions
- Roads & Traffic Authority
- Medicare, Health Funds, Centrelink, DVA
- Insurance & Superannuation
- Local Council
- Utilities (electricity, gas, water)
- Medical specialists

## Documents You May Need

- Death Certificate
- Pension / benefit details
- Bank info
- Medicare card
- Veteran details (if applicable)
- Funeral director's details
- ID for estate
- Copy of the will



## Understanding Grief

Grief is a natural response to loss. It can affect every part of life—our body, thoughts, emotions, relationships, and sense of purpose. Bereavement refers specifically to the loss of someone through death.

Grief is individual and unique. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. Some people appear to cope more easily than others, but that does not mean they are not grieving. Comparing your grief to others is not helpful—everyone’s journey is different.

## Important Things to Remember

- It is normal and healthy to experience and express intense and painful emotions.
- Grieving is an important part of healing after loss.
- Painful feelings will ease over time, but there is no set timeframe for grief.
- Grief is not about “letting go” or “moving on.” It is about learning to live in a world that is forever changed while remembering your loved one in ways that feel right for you.
- People die—but relationships don’t. Your bond and memories remain.

## Common Responses

- Physical: Tiredness, changes in appetite, sleep difficulties, lack of energy, stomach upsets
- Emotional: Sadness, anger, guilt, numbness, anxiety, relief
- Thoughts: Forgetfulness, confusion, difficulty concentrating, obsessive thinking
- Spiritual: Questioning beliefs, searching for meaning, loss or strengthening of faith

Not everyone experiences all these reactions, and their intensity will change over time.

## Coping Strategies

- Care for your body – Eat well, rest, and stay hydrated.
- Allow feelings – Cry, talk, write, or express emotions naturally.
- Reach out – Family, friends, or professionals can help.
- Create rituals – Light a candle, listen to music, or visit a special place.
- Avoid big decisions – Wait until you feel ready.
- Stay connected – Share memories with others.
- Seek help if needed – Speak to your GP or a counsellor if grief feels overwhelming.

## Grief Has No Set Timeline

Everyone grieves differently—don't compare yourself to others. Some talk, others prefer privacy; some keep busy, others struggle to do much.

## The First Couple of Months

Early weeks often bring shock or numbness—your body's way of coping. After the funeral, feelings of emptiness and disorientation are common. You may:

- Refer to your loved one in the present tense
- Forget they've died
- Feel waves of sadness

Practical tasks like notifying services can feel painful but provide purpose. If your partner has died, new responsibilities may feel overwhelming. Sorting belongings is hard—do it when you're ready. Familiar sights and smells can comfort. Some sense their loved one's presence—this is normal.

## Twelve Months: Anniversaries and Special Occasions

Birthdays, holidays, and the anniversary of the death can trigger strong emotions. Feelings often resurface beforehand. Planning ahead—spending time with supportive people or creating a ritual—can help. These feelings are normal and don't mean you're “going backwards.”

## After the First Year

Many people expect grief to ease after the first year, but for some, the second year can still be difficult—especially if other stressful events occur. You may feel more alone or struggle to find meaning without your loved one.

It's common to feel mentally and physically exhausted. If you feel you "should be coping better," remember: grief has no timetable. Seeking support is a sign of strength, not weakness.

## Helpful Ways to Cope with Grief Long Term

- Talk about your loved one – Share memories and feelings.
- Allow yourself to grieve – There's no right or wrong way.
- Take quiet time – Balance solitude and social time.
- Be kind to yourself – Treat yourself gently.
- Use memory activities – Photos, journaling, stories.
- Accept help – Let others support you.
- Look after your health – Eat well, rest, and exercise gently.
- Avoid drugs and alcohol – They don't ease grief long-term.
- Expect ups and downs – Healing takes time.
- Delay big decisions – Wait until you feel ready.
- Seek support groups – Talking helps.

Remember – Grief is part of life; healing is possible.

## How to Support Someone Who Is Bereaved

Everyone grieves in their own way. There is no "right" way to grieve, and it's important to allow people the time and space they need. However, your support can make a real difference. Here are some helpful points to keep in mind:

- Listen more than you talk – Let them share memories and feelings without judgment.
- Avoid clichés – Phrases like "time heals all wounds" can feel dismissive.
- Offer practical help – Meals, errands, or childcare can ease stress.
- Be patient – Grief has no timeline. Don't rush them to "move on."
- Check in regularly – Even after the funeral, ongoing support matters.
- Respect their choices – Some people want company; others need quiet time.
- Encourage professional help if needed – If they seem overwhelmed, suggest counseling or support groups.

## Bereavement Support

There are many community groups and organisations that offer support services for people who are bereaved. It's important to remember that grief is deeply personal and unique to each individual. Many people find comfort in talking with someone outside their family or close circle of friends, as it can provide a safe and supportive space to share feelings.

### BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Grief Line	Free support 7 days a week for people over 18yrs in NSW - <a href="https://griefline.org.au/">https://griefline.org.au/</a>	1300 845 745
Aged care Grief & Bereavement Support	National Support for Individuals following death of someone. Aged care residents and families can also access - <a href="https://grief.org.au/">https://grief.org.au/</a>	1800 222 200
National Association for Loss and Grief (NALAG)	You can also access free, confidential grief and loss support services across NSW - <a href="https://nalag.org.au/">https://nalag.org.au/</a>	02 6882 9222
13YARN	For Aboriginal and Torres strait Islander people - <a href="https://www.13yarn.org.au/">https://www.13yarn.org.au/</a>	13 92 76
Department of Veterans Affairs	Veterans and their families - <a href="https://www.dva.gov.au/get-support/support-families">https://www.dva.gov.au/get-support/support-families</a>	1800 838 372
Life Line	Free support 7 days a week - <a href="https://www.lifeline.org.au/">https://www.lifeline.org.au/</a>	13 11 14