

Compassionate Communities

Handbook

of Ideas for Hosting Community
Information Sessions



**Compassionate
Communities SA**

Program of Palliative Care SA

*We are inclusive. We celebrate multiple approaches and points of view.
When we say palliative care is everybody's business, no matter their age, we mean everybody.*

Acknowledgements

Our organisation acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and seas on which we live and work, and pays respect to Elders - past, present and emerging.

Palliative Care South Australia (PCSA) has undertaken this work as part of the Nurturing Compassionate Communities in Councils project, this has been made possible by collaborating with the City of Mitcham and Campbelltown City Council and funding from Adelaide Primary Health Network.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the co-design workshop which contributed to the development of this resource.

© Palliative Care South Australia 2025
www.palliativecaresa.org.au
hello@palliativecaresa.org.au | 08 8271 1643

To reference this document: Palliative Care South Australia (2025).
Compassionate Communities Handbook of Ideas for Hosting Community Information Sessions
Download at
www.palliativecaresa.org.au/



Palliative Care South Australia is a Registered Charity (registered with ACNC - A9773) and is endorsed as a Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR), ABN: 66 185 542 917

About This Ideas Handbook



Purpose

To support councils in organising inclusive, informative sessions that foster open conversations around serious illness, caregiving, dying and grief— led by expert guest speakers and tailored to local community needs.

What are the expected outcomes of these sessions?

- Raise awareness of compassionate community principles
- Reduce stigma and fear around serious illness, caregiving, dying, death and grief
- Connect residents to local services and supports
- Encourage informal networks of care (neighbours, friends, volunteers)
- Empower people to plan ahead and care for one another



ACTIVITY IDEAS

1

Identify a program and series structure

- Gather a working group of staff and volunteers to lead these activities
 - Identify how often; which day; what time you will host the sessions. Repeat this for the whole series of sessions, it helps people create a habit to attend
 - Using the list in this handbook identify topics you would like to focus on (don't be fixed on order, as you will be dependent on external speakers)
 - Identify who will be your facilitator for the series of sessions
-

2

Choose a Suitable Venue

- Library, neighbourhood house, community centre or council chamber
 - Ensure accessibility: mobility access, hearing support, and transport options
 - Consider informal, welcoming setups to encourage relaxed conversation
 - Lecture style room set, with AV capability
 - Consider options for virtual attendance and recording
 - Use the same venue for all, to create consistency
-

3

Plan the Session Structure

- A sample 60-minute session:
 - Offer welcome light refreshments to create a warm, community feel.
 - Welcome & Acknowledgement of Country
 - Short introduction by Council staff facilitator
 - Guest speaker presentation (20 minutes)
 - Guided Q&A
 - Wrap up and share local resources and support services
 - Close with an invitation to the next session

4

Identify and Engage Expert Guest Speakers

- Invite professionals or individuals with lived or working experience, such as:
 - Palliative care nurses or doctors
 - Carers or former carers
 - Funeral directors or celebrants
 - Grief counsellors or social workers
 - Legal or advance care planning experts
 - Aboriginal Elders or multicultural leaders
 - Faith leaders or spiritual care providers
 - Community artists or storytellers
 - Provide them with a clear brief and context for the audience. Be clear on how much you are happy for them to promote their own business.
 - Ensure diversity and cultural safety in your speaker selection.
 - Utilise your local networks. Consider putting a call out in newsletters for local experts who work in this area.
-

5

Promote the Series of Sessions

- Use inclusive, accessible language in all promotion. Distribute via:
 - Council newsletters, social media, libraries, and community noticeboards
 - GP clinics, aged care homes, neighbourhood houses
 - Local newspapers, radio, or school newsletters
 - Partner organisations and compassionate networks
- Include a warm call to action: ie: “Come together to learn, share, and care – for ourselves, our neighbours, and our future.”

6

Prepare Resources for Attendees

- Printed info on local support services
 - Speaker bios and key takeaways
 - Engage with your library to have books on display about the same topic
 - Tea bag or small memento as a symbolic gesture of connection
 - Feedback form to guide future sessions
-

7

Follow Up and Thank the Speakers

- Send a personalised thank-you email or letter within a few days of the session, acknowledge their time, expertise, and the impact they made on the community.
 - Include specific feedback or quotes from attendees that reflect the value of their presentation.
 - Tag or acknowledge the speaker (with permission) in any social media posts or event recaps.
 - Ask for their reflections, invite any feedback they have on the session structure, audience, or ideas for improvement.
-

8

Share the session with others

- Post photos or quotes (with permission) from the event on social media to capture the atmosphere and message.
- Share key takeaways or highlights from the session in a community e-newsletter or council blog post.
- Tag and thank the guest speaker(s) on social media, if they have public profiles and consent to being acknowledged.
- Highlight feedback from attendees (anonymously or with permission), such as: *“This session gave me the confidence to talk to my family about end-of-life care.”*

9

Evaluate the Sessions

Consider the following to include in your feedback form:

We value your feedback. Your thoughts will help us improve future events and ensure we are meeting the needs of our community.

1. Overall, how would you rate today's session?

- Excellent
- Good
- Poor

2. How useful or relevant did you find the information shared today?

- Very useful
- Somewhat useful
- Not very useful
- Not useful at all

3. Did the session make you feel more confident or comfortable talking about the topic?

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

4. Would you recommend these sessions to others?

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

5. What is one take home message from today's session?

(Short answer space)

5. What topics would you like to see covered in future sessions?

(Short answer space)

6. Any other comments or suggestions?

(Short answer space)

Suggested Topic Ideas



Suggested topic ideas

- Advance Care Planning
- Wills, Powers of Attorney, and End-of-Life legal essentials
- Estate planning and accessing financial supports
- Understanding palliative care
- Understanding Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD)
- Understanding the role of the caregiver
- Understanding aged care
- Understanding disability care
- Understanding grief
- Children and grief
- Funerals
- Rituals, Religious and Spiritual practices around end of life and grieving
- Transport support options around end of life
- How to support a neighbour or friend who is grieving or dying
- Indigenous Perspectives on dying and connection to Country
- Writing for Healing: Journaling through grief and loss
- Art and Memories
- Volunteering roles that support end of life and grieving
- Compassionate Communities

Stay Connected



**Compassionate
Communities SA**

Program of Palliative Care SA



Compassionate Communities are groups of people and places where everybody recognises that we all have a role to play in supporting each other in times of serious illness, dying, death, grief and caregiving.

Residents of Compassionate Communities recognise that care for one another at times of crisis and loss is not simply a task solely for health and social services but is everyone's business. Everyone is ready, willing and confident to support each other in emotional and practical ways.

About our Compassionate Communities SA (CCSA) program:

- We host Compassionate Community Conversations
- We manage the:
 - Compassionate Communities Charter SA project
 - Nurturing Compassionate Communities in SA projects
- We deliver public education programs – Last Aid, PalliLEARN and TLC
- We act as a source of guidance on policy formation at local, regional, national and international levels
- We create community awareness initiatives that promote and develop an understanding about compassionate communities
- We host a SA Death Literacy Working Group

and more...

**Keeping LOVE, LAUGHTER and FRIENDSHIP
central to people's lives in the last chapter of life**

hello@palliativecaresa.org.au | 08 8271 1643

palliativecaresa.org.au/CCSA



We strive to create a community where members say: *“everybody has a role to play in supporting each other in times of serious illness, dying, death and grief. We are ready, willing and confident to have conversations about living, dying and grieving well and to support each other in emotional and practical ways.”*

Palliative Care South Australia’s mission