

Media Release – 15 February 2010

Peak Body Welcomes New Advance Care Planning Laws

The President of Palliative Care WA Inc, Dr Scott Blackwell, welcomed an announcement by the WA Minister for Health, Hon Dr Kim Hames MLA, that state laws which permit Western Australians to make formal plans for their future medical treatment will be operational from Monday 15 February 2010.

“People, especially those approaching the end of life, want some control over the care they receive, even if they are not able to speak for themselves when the time comes. The amendments to the *Guardianship and Administration Act 1990* which come into force today will help ensure they have this control. Now we need to see ongoing education and administrative reform within hospitals and health services so that the new Advance Health Directive and Enduring Power of Guardianship forms are recognised, recorded and observed,” said Dr Blackwell.

“Palliative Care WA Inc is one of a number of community groups which has fought for years to have laws like this in Western Australia,” said Dr Blackwell. “We are pleased the current government has progressed legislation which was introduced by their predecessors. This shows both sides of politics support the concept of advance care planning,” he continued.

Palliative Care WA Inc encourages all interested Western Australians to access the materials provided by the WA Department of Health and WA Office of the Public Advocate, and discuss completing either an Enduring Power of Guardianship or Advance Health Directive, or both, with the people close to them. “Talking about death and dying is not always easy, but the more we can make sensible preparations for our care in advance, the easier things go at the time,” said Dr Blackwell.

Staff at the Palliative Care WA Inc office can provide general advice about advance care planning and palliative care. Business hours are 9AM to 5PM, Monday to Friday. The telephone number is 1300 551 704.

Palliative Care WA Inc’s Position Statement on Advance Care Planning in Western Australia is available at www.palliativecarewa.asn.au/policy.php.

Palliative Care WA Inc is the representative community organisation which seeks to improve the quality of care and support available to all Western Australians at the end of life.

Dr Blackwell is available for interview on 0409 296 249.