

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

From: Kasey McCulloch, Media Officer, Mercy Health

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Dying with dignity and choice

With an ageing population and one third of Australians reported to have at least one chronic condition, access to palliative care has never been more important.

On Friday 27 May Mercy Health in conjunction with the Mercy Care Centre Community Advisory Group is hosting a community forum in Young, New South Wales, to highlight the importance of quality health care for people with a terminal illness.

Palliative care is defined as specialised care and support for people with a life-limiting illness, their families and their carers. Palliative care looks after the physical (including treatment of pain and other symptoms), emotional, social, cultural and spiritual needs of the patient and those supporting them through their journey.

Mercy Care Centre Young Operations Manager Mary Lou Cusack said the *Dying with Dignity and Choice* community forum is designed to provide a safe space for families to start discussing death.

“Nobody likes to talk about dying but it is inevitable that we will all die someday,” explained Ms Cusack.

“If people plan in advance for death, it relieves some of the decision making burden on their loved ones. It allows people to inform their friends and family about how they wish to be cared for, whether in their final years, months or days.”

Australian Jesuit priest, human rights lawyer and academic Father Frank Brennan will be the keynote speaker at the *Dying with Dignity and Choice* community forum. Fr Brennan is renowned for his social activism and the National Trust has classified him as a Living National Treasure.

The forum will also include a panel made up of palliative care consultant Dr Frank Brennan, general practitioner Dr Bill Meagher, solicitor and chair of the Mercy Care Centre Community Advisory Group Eris Gleeson, pharmacist David Hamblin and Mercy Health palliative care clinical nurse consultant Pauline Heath.

“We believe this forum is the first of its kind in country New South Wales,” said Ms Cusack.

“The forum will coincide with National Palliative Care Week, which this year is putting the spotlight on chronic illnesses. Four out of five deaths in Australia are currently caused by chronic illness.”

Mercy Health has been providing a palliative care service to Young and surrounding districts since 1984.

Event details

Date: Friday 27 May 2016

Time: 7.30 – 9.30pm

Venue: Young Golf Club

Cost: Free

For catering purposes, please register for the forum at M and M's Music Studio, Hamblin's Amcal Pharmacy or Sportspower.

- Ends -

For interviews and photo/filming opportunities, please contact:

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