



**NSW Ambulance**

excellence in care

## **Authorised Care Plan Program** Respecting patient's wishes

Clinician's Information Booklet



## NSW Ambulance Authorised Care Plan Program

Currently this program has four different types of plans:

1. Paediatric Authorised Palliative Care Plan
2. Adult Authorised Palliative Care Plan
3. Paediatric Authorised General Care Plan
4. Adult Authorised General Care Plan

## Adult & Paediatric Authorised Palliative Care Plans

For patients with a diagnosis of a life-limiting illness General Practitioners (GPs) & other treating clinicians are involved in providing palliative care and they now have the option of closing the after-hours gap for this group of patients. In consultation with the patient and their family, the GP/treating clinician may elect to complete a NSW Ambulance Authorised Palliative Care Plan (Adult and Paediatric available).

Once endorsed by NSW Ambulance, this plan specifically authorises NSW Ambulance paramedics to deliver individually tailored treatment based on the GP's or treating clinician's advice.

as documented in the plan. In the event of a Triple Zero (000) call-out by the patient, the NSW Ambulance Authorised Palliative Care Plan may be initiated. This may include administration of medications and other treatment to relieve and manage symptoms in the patient's chosen place of care.

**Please note:** To enable NSW Ambulance Paramedics to comply with the patient's wishes a copy of the endorsed plan must be provided. Therefore NSW Ambulance advises patients to keep a copy of their endorsed plan with them at all times.

## What we know

Patients have an increasing awareness that they are able to make their wishes known, particularly when it comes to the end of their life. Advance Care Directives are being completed and recognized in NSW, particularly now that patients understand the benefits of communicating their preference regarding goals of care. The development of NSW Ambulance Authorised Care plans assist paramedics to provide treatment and make decisions to support the patient's wishes and previously planned/discussed plans of care.

Individuals with a diagnosis of a life-limiting illness can require specialised care to assist with managing complex or distressing symptoms. This care is often provided by their local family GP, community palliative care nurse with the ongoing support of the Specialist Palliative Care Service. Families and carers also have an important role in supporting individuals with palliative care needs in the home, particularly in the after-hours period when health service providers may be more difficult to contact.

**This plan allows the paramedic responding to a Triple Zero (000) call to respect the palliative care wishes of the patient and follow the GP's advice.**

It is understood that families and carers are often well prepared with education and support, including medication regimes to help manage breakthrough pain and other symptoms in the after-hours period. It is also understood that on occasion, things may not go as planned and more help is needed to manage these symptoms and to also meet the patient's wishes by avoiding unnecessary presentations to hospital.

According to recent research, 70 per cent of Australians would prefer to die in their own homes yet only around 14 per cent are able to. The most recent statistics on palliative care and deaths in hospital indicate that in 2013-14, 50 per cent of Australians who died that year did so within a hospital setting<sup>1</sup>.

In the after-hours period when sudden changes in health may lead to uncertainty, NSW Ambulance Triple Zero (000) service is commonly a first response. In the absence of detailed clinical knowledge about the patient, the paramedic's response is protocol based and transfer to the hospital emergency department is generally required.

This transfer is often not the optimal outcome in these situations and may be avoidable. For a patient with palliative care needs, transfer may be avoidable if the paramedic has access to a NSW Ambulance Authorised Palliative Care Plan. A completed Authorised Palliative Care Plan may also facilitate transfer or admission directly to a specialist unit preventing an avoidable presentation to the Emergency Department.

When the paramedics are called via Triple Zero (000), they are advised that a patient at that address has an Authorised Palliative Care Plan in place. The finer details within the plan are not visible on their system. The patient/person responsible will be required to provide a copy of the endorsed plan to the paramedics when they arrive.

<sup>1</sup>National Hospital Morbidity Database

## What does an Authorised Adult or Paediatric Palliative Care Plan include?

### Checklist and instruction sheet:

#### SUBMISSION OF AN AUTHORISED PALLIATIVE CARE PLAN

- The plan may be completed electronically or by hand.
- All handwritten details must be clear and legible. Failure to complete the plan legibly will result in the plan being returned to the author.
- All fields must be completed. Additional relevant documentation may be attached to the plan.
- Completed plans must be submitted to NSW Ambulance for endorsement. If the Authorised Care Plan hasn't been endorsed by NSW Ambulance this may result in a delay in the paramedic providing the planned treatment.
- If the form is being completed by both a medical and nurse practitioner, the medical practitioner must sign page 2 and the nurse practitioner must complete the signature section on page 4
- If the entire form is being completed by the medical practitioner one signature on page 4 will meet the medico-legal requirements.
- Completed plans must be completed using the attached form and may be submitted via fax or scanned and submitted as a PDF attachment via email  
Email:  
AMBULANCE-ClinicalProtocolP1@health.nsw.gov.au  
Fax: (02) 9320 7380.

#### EXISTING AUTHORISED CARE PLANS

- Check "New Patient" if this is the patient's first NSW Ambulance Authorised Palliative Care Plan
- Check "Existing Patient" if the plan being submitted is a modification or new version of an existing plan.

#### PATIENT DETAILS

- All fields are to be completed.
- The patient's full address (including street number, street, suburb, post code) is to be completed (as the NSW Ambulance response alerts are linked to the patient's address).

#### CARDIAC ARREST TREATMENT DECISION

- Ensure 'PERFORM CPR' or 'WITHHOLD CPR' is clearly selected (not both).

**Select all applicable check box reasons for withholding resuscitation.**

#### CLINICIAN'S DETAILS

- Ensure all fields are completed and the treating clinician has signed this section

#### TREATMENT AND MEDICATION OPTIONS

- All fields are to be completed.
- If there are specific treatment limitations/boundaries this information should be included to facilitate the decision making by the paramedic.
- It should be noted if the medication/s to be administered are outside NSW Ambulance

Pharmacology, the patient is required to provide their own medication for administration by the paramedics.

#### PATIENT CLINICAL HISTORY

- Ensure all fields are completed (additional pages may be attached).
- Write N/A where appropriate

#### PERSON RESPONSIBLE

- Where identified, relevant family enduring guardian details must be provided
- Correspondence from NSW Ambulance will be sent to the person identified in the last part of this section. e.g. Patient or Family Member/Enduring Guardian.

#### PATIENT/PERSON RESPONSIBLE

##### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

- The patient and/or their person responsible may sign the plan in this section to acknowledge that the plan has been discussed with them. If the patient is unable to sign, this should be indicated by writing "Unable to sign".

##### LOCATION OF CARE

- If appropriate, provide the address of the designated alternative care facility should treatment of the patient be unable to be continued in their current location. Information about how the paramedics can arrange this should be included.
- If the patient dies during transport by NSW Ambulance the preferred destination should be recorded here. (e.g. Nearest hospital or Patient's home address)

##### POST DEATH MANAGEMENT PLAN

- In the event of the patient's death, qualified NSW Ambulance paramedics will complete the "Verification of Death" form in accordance with NSW Health Policy "Death - Verification of Death and Medical Certificate of Cause of Death PD2015\_040"
- The details of the Medical Practitioner who will complete the "Medical Certificate of Cause of Death" must be recorded here.
- If there is no completed "Death Certification Arrangements for Expected Home Death SMR010531" form in the house, or if this section is not completed, paramedics will attempt to contact the GP to complete the Medical Certificate of the Cause of Death. If contact cannot be made NSW Police will be requested to attend the scene.

# Respecting patient's wishes

Please ensure that the patient or person responsible is informed to provide the endorsed Authorised Care Plan to the paramedics if they are called.

## CONTACT DETAILS

- All relevant contact details should be completed. Paramedics would be able to contact these services to discuss their assessment and further treatment plans if this section is completed.

## UPDATING OF CARE PLANS

- Clinicians, where possible, should complete the Plan in conjunction with the Palliative Care Service assisting with the care of this patient.
- Clinicians are to review and provide updated plans as required.
- NSW Ambulance Authorised Palliative Care Plans are valid for 12 months from the date of endorsement. It is the responsibility of the Clinician to ensure the plan (if required) is renewed with NSW Ambulance prior to the expiration date.
- In the event of death of the patient, the treating clinician/team are requested to notify NSW Ambulance.

## ENDORSEMENT OF AUTHORISED PALLIATIVE CARE PLANS

A NSW Ambulance delegate will review each Authorised Palliative Care Plan application. Once the plan has been endorsed by NSW Ambulance, a letter and a copy of the endorsed plan will be sent to both the patient and the clinician.

## DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Please complete this section of the form if the child is known to the Department of Family and Community Services as NSW Ambulance may need to contact them for clarification.

## AUTHORISED ADULT OR PAEDIATRIC GENERAL AUTHORISED CARE PLANS

Patients who have chronic health issues or disabilities may require specific treatment or they may require treatment in a specific hospital. These plans guide the paramedics to provide the required treatment or to attempt to facilitate transfer to the specific destination.

These plans need to be completed by the treating clinician and endorsed by NSW ambulance in order for the paramedics to follow the plan of care.

Following endorsement these plans will be returned to the patient via the provided email address or via regular post.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### IS THERE A RIGHT TIME TO INITIATE AN AUTHORISED PALLIATIVE CARE PLAN?

At some stage in the progression of a patient's illness, the decision may be made that further curative treatment is not indicated. At this point, ongoing medical care aims to maintain comfort and function with an understanding that end of life is inevitable in the near future. An Authorised Adult or Paediatric Palliative Care Plan is an appropriate response for individuals nearing end of life.

### WHO CAN INITIATE AN AUTHORISED PALLIATIVE CARE PLAN?

Caring for an individual with palliative care needs can be a complex undertaking and may involve a number of treating clinicians. The plan can be initiated by any clinical members of the team, however final approval and signing prior to submission to NSW Ambulance is the responsibility of the treating GP or specialist.

### WHY DOES NSW AMBULANCE NEED TO AUTHORISE THE PLAN?

NSW Ambulance staff review the medical orders of each submitted plan to ensure the order is consistent with the paramedic's scope of practice. It is possible components of the plan may need further discussion to ensure the plan is workable and endorsed. If this were to occur, the requesting GP or specialist would be consulted.

### HOW DO I INITIATE AN AUTHORISED PALLIATIVE CARE PLAN?

Request the Authorised Palliative Care Plan template via [AMBULANCE-ClinicalProtocolP1@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:AMBULANCE-ClinicalProtocolP1@health.nsw.gov.au)

or

Phone (02) 9779 3821.

Via HealthPathways.

Your Local Health District's Intranet.

Discuss the plan with the treating team, patient, family, carers and/or enduring guardian and agree on what measures are appropriate for the situation.

Complete the form then scan and email or fax the signed document as per instructions

## For more information

For more information about NSW Ambulance Authorised Care Plans (Adult and Paediatric)

contact:

### NSW Ambulance

Clinical Systems

Integration

Email:

[AMBULANCE-ClinicalProtocolP1@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:AMBULANCE-ClinicalProtocolP1@health.nsw.gov.au)

Phone: (02) 9779 3821