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MEDIA RELEASE

Dignity in the final journey

Catholic Healthcare was delighted to hold its Pastoral Care Conference 2019, Dignity in the Final Journey, at the Australian Catholic University in Sydney recently.

Catholic Healthcare's Director of Mission Andrew Nee said, "Our conference, held every two years, is an opportunity for our pastoral care people and other like-minded individuals to get together and learn from each other's experiences.

"Pastoral care is an essential part of Catholic Healthcare's person-centred holistic approach. As well as helping those who are facing physical, social or emotional challenges, we explore spirituality to help people make meaning of ageing and to be treated with dignity, especially at the end of their journey."

The first keynote speaker, Rev Professor Elizabeth MacKinlay AM from Charles Sturt University, presented on *Finding Meaning in the Experience of Frailty*. MacKinlay spoke about the importance of spirituality in ageing, and how meeting spiritual needs improves mental health and wellbeing. MacKinlay stated that spirituality is the ultimate meaning mediated through relationships, the environment, religion and the arts.

With regard to frailty, MacKinlay says, "we need to think beyond the biomedical model. We need to take a holistic perspective on frailty which encompasses physical, mental, social and spiritual dimensions."

The second keynote speaker, Dr Dan Fleming from St Vincent's Health Australia, presented on *Dignity and Ethics in End of Life Care: Considerations from Victoria's 'Voluntary Assisted Dying' Experience*. Fleming spoke about the implications of the Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) laws on Catholic aged care services. Delegates were asked to think about the excellence of care they provide and what it entails.

Fleming says, "The work of Catholic health and aged care services rests on a beautiful and courageous ethic of care, which is centred on the dignity of each and every person. We have a long and great tradition of providing excellent end-of-life care. Our focus is to ensure that our ethic of care continues to serve those who need it. The challenge is to uphold this tradition of care and to continue advancing it."

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