Inquiry into End-of-life Choices:
On 7 May 2015 the Legislative Council agreed to the following motion: “That pursuant to Sessional Order 6 this House requires the Legal and Social Issues Committee to inquire into, consider and report, no later than 31 May 2016, on the need for laws in Victoria to allow citizens to make informed decisions regarding their own end of life choices.

Terms of Reference: The Committee will examine:
• How current medical practices and palliative care can assist a person manage their end of life
• How this issue is managed in other Australian and international jurisdictions
• Potential changes to our legislative framework.

The following paper is contributed by Anam Cara House Colac Inc to provide information around the initial point, namely “How ... palliative care can assist a person manage their end of life.”

For thousands of Australians, along with their families and carers, living with a chronic or life-limiting illness is an everyday reality. Whilst each story is unique, the need for respite and also for good support at the end-stage of life, remain a constant - a fact understood by Anam Cara House Colac.

Anam Cara House Colac, Community Hospice, was established in 2011 by the community, for the community of South West Victoria. The Hospice is set in spacious surrounds and offers local, regional respite and end-of-life care in a first class facility closely replicating home, with an emphasis on individual needs, flexibility and personal choices. It provides care for guests (patients) in the form of day-stay and short-term overnight care, plus end-of-life care along with accommodation, if required, for guest's carers and families. The hospice offers care to people of all ages and is staffed by a dedicated team of qualified health professionals and trained volunteers.

Anam Cara House Colac understands the huge imposte on carers and the establishment of our hospice was a community initiative in response to a gap in service within the region. The purpose and mission of our hospice is to enhance the wellbeing of our guests(patients) and their carers by providing much needed local regional respite to underpin home-care and to support carers. And when home-care is no longer possible, or
for people living in a single person household (20% of the population), Anam Cara House offers short-term respite and end-of-life care.

Our point of difference is our social model of care that focuses on the individual person and their needs and also those of their carer. The care at Anam Cara House is not ‘time-driven’, but rather ‘person centred’ providing quality physical, emotional and spiritual care and also affordable care. Our care is provided within a ‘home-like’ environment where family and extended family are welcome. Underpinned by a "whole of community" approach to care, we also provide information, counselling and bereavement care.

At Anam Cara House we believe people are entitled to choices in their care. Our Community Hospice thus provides an important choice in place of care when hospital or an aged care facility may not be age appropriate or the preferred choice in place of care.

In summary, far-reaching benefits ensue from our hospice service that make a difference in people's lives at a critical time in their life journey. Our guests (patients) and their carers and extended family receive locally-based respite and palliative care support that assists them socially, financially and emotionally. The significance of this newly-established Community Hospice reaches far beyond Colac and the South Western District, both in terms of its formation and its future social impact.

NB A recent auditor-general report into palliative care found that 70 per cent of terminally ill Victorians wish to die at home yet only 14 per cent do. More than 50 percent are dying in hospital. More than 15,000 Victorians however do receive palliative care in their own homes and CEO of Palliative Care Victoria Odette Waanders says, “there is an urgent need for investment in community-based palliative care as a viable alternative to hospital care.” [18.05.2015, 774 ABC News Melbourne]