END OF LIFE DOULA

An End of Life (EOL) Doula - also known as a 'Death' Doula - to distinguish this role from a 'Birth' Doula - is someone who provides non-medical support and advocacy services to a dying person, their families, and those close to them. An EOL doula can provide a broad range of services depending on individual needs, including, but not limited to: the provision of practical and emotional support; resources; assistance; advocacy; and education to a person with a terminal or life limiting diagnosis or who is aging. This support service is also available to their family, friends and those close to them.

EOL Doulas are engaged prior to the death of a person, often from the point of receiving a terminal or life-limiting diagnosis. The nature and scope of their work is determined by the individual circumstances of the dying person.

As a rule, EOL doulas can be engaged by the person with the illness or who is aging, directly, or by the family and/or network of that person. The range and terms of services to be provided are discussed openly and agreed upon in advance.

An End of Life Doula can support a person, or those caring for them by:

- Understanding the person's choices and following their wishes
- Providing guidance in relation to State legislated documents relevant to the person's place of residence. Each Australian state has its own legal and statutory requirements
- Providing information about the many end of life choices available for both living and after death care
- Helping to uphold a person's right to an end of life experience that is meaningful and aligned with their personal values and belief system—whether cultural, religious, spiritual, or individual
- Assist a person in organising their future plans according to their wishes

- Advocate for and guide a person through the complexities of the medical, hospital, and aged care systems—ensuring that everyone involved has access to clear information and understanding at every stage
- Act as a liaison or communicator between the person and their medical and other support teams
- Support access to and coordination of services and resources that align with the person's needs and preferences
- Offer emotional support to everyone involved, both before, during, and after death, and into the period of bereavement
- Coordinate services and all aspects of care as needs evolve, with a focus on adapting to changing requirements
- Support and maintain a peaceful, intimate 'space' for everyone, ensuring a meaningful experience regardless of the need for medical support or the setting
- Provide tailored support based on the person's preferred place of dying, whether at home, in a hospital, palliative care unit, hospice, or residential facility
- Offer emotional and spiritual support, or connect individuals with specialists who can offer such care
- Encourage the preparation of essential end of life planning documents, including an Advance Care Directive, Enduring Power of Attorney, Enduring Guardian, and Will
- Assist with planning and conducting vigils, both before and after death
- Support the creation of Emotional Wills and other legacy documents
- Serve as a scribe for biographies and journaling
- Conduct needs assessments and provide practical management
- Coordinate team management, including rostering and briefings
- Establish reporting and communication systems
- Provide companionship and attentive listening
- Offer respite care, in-home support, and practical assistance

- Provide bereavement support, including helping with packing, selling items, etc.

Caring for, supporting, or even simply knowing someone who is dying can be a confronting, confusing, and emotionally challenging experience for everyone involved. There is often a great deal to consider—decisions to make, responsibilities to manage, and emotions to navigate—which can feel overwhelming. Understanding all your options can make a meaningful difference. In every situation, an End of Life Doula offers a calming presence during an emotionally intense time, gently guiding individuals and families through the journey of illness, palliative care, dying, death, and into bereavement. Doulas provide genuine, continuous support across the full spectrum of end-of-life care.

Being well-informed about available resources and receiving support to navigate the healthcare system empowers individuals to make informed choices—shaping a path forward that aligns with their values, needs, and preferences. Having an End of Life Doula by your side—whether offering quiet guidance in the background or taking a more active role—helps everyone involved move forward in a way that is consistent with your values, needs, and preferences allowing life to be lived as fully as possible.

End of Life Doulas do not make decisions, direct others, or offer advice. Instead, they act as advocates and sources of comfort—offering choices, outlining options, and supporting individuals and families to carry out their own decisions. In doing so, they help shoulder some of the practical and emotional burden during a time of grief.

To find an End of Life Doula please visit - **End of Life Doula Directory**