

# Death Doula models of care: independence, partnerships or integrated models?



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## What are Death Doulas?

The non-medical Death Doula (DD) role is that of guide and advocate, for the dying and their families.

### How DDs work and are paid

Most are independent contractors in the employ of families, although some volunteer their service.



## Potential New DD Models

Potential new models include payment via Medicare, the NDIS, aged care packages, private insurance, or models whereby hospitals or hospices employ DDs. Some DDs are starting to specialise (e.g., dementia doulas) and in the USA are working with those accessing Voluntary Assisted Dying - a specialised DD role. New models of care would need to affirm how DDs see their role within the health and social care systems and not just be incorporated into current systems (e.g., some DDs view rules and regulations imposed by organisations as impinging on their freedom of practice).

## Role tensions

There are tensions between the emphasis on the nonmedical 'care work', countered by a drive to be acknowledged as worthy by health professionals in seeking authenticity via qualifications or professional legitimacy (DDs remain unregistered without standardised or mandated education curricula).

## References

Rawlings et al. Death Doula working practices and models of care: The views of Death Doula training organisations. *BMC Palliative Care* 22:78

Rawlings et al. (2022) An international survey of Death Doula training organisations: The views of those driving Death Doula training and role enactment. *Palliative Care and Social Practice*, 16: 1–12



## Conclusion

The potential to incorporate DDs into collaborative models of end-of-life care cannot be discounted, however the complexity associated with the lack of registration and standardised education for DDs cannot be ignored.