

# MEDIA RELEASE



**Palliative  
Care  
Australia**

**Palliative Care Australia Inc.**

Suite 4, 37 Geills Court, Deakin ACT 2600 | PO Box 24, Deakin West, ACT 2600  
t: 02 6232 4433 | f: 02 6232 4434 | w: [www.palliativecare.org.au](http://www.palliativecare.org.au) | e: [pcainc@palliativecare.org.au](mailto:pcainc@palliativecare.org.au)

19<sup>th</sup> October 2011

## **More people accessing palliative care in Australian hospitals**

Palliative Care Australia (PCA) welcomes the publication of the *Trends in palliative care in Australian hospitals* report released today by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). The report provides an overview of the number and characteristics of palliative care admissions in public and private hospitals over a ten year period.

‘It is very pleasing to see this report from the AIHW,’ said Dr Yvonne Luxford, PCA Chief Executive Officer. ‘Building a comprehensive data set for palliative care is important, and is something that PCA has been advocating for over a number of years.’

The report shows that the number of people who died in hospital after receiving palliative care has increased by 56% over the last decade.

‘This is a fantastic indicator that our hospital system is gaining an understanding of the need to refer people to palliative care,’ said Dr Luxford. ‘What we need to make sure, however, is that people are receiving high quality care, and one way to do this is by ensuring that education about palliative and end of life care is a standard provision for all health professionals.’

PCA hopes that the increase will be recognised by healthcare planners and demonstrate the need for extra resources in this area.

‘With the average length of stay for palliative care patients at 12.5 days, it is clear that we need increased funding and resources specifically for palliative care,’ said Dr Luxford. ‘The \$1.6bn previously identified by COAG for funding sub-acute care unfortunately did not flow through to palliative care in many states and territories, which was very disappointing.’

Contact: Claire Maskell – PCA National Communications Officer – 02 6232 4433/0406 258 722

PCA is the peak national organisation representing the interests and aspirations of all who share the ideal of quality care at the end of life

*Patron: Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia*

‘We also need more detailed data to ensure that funding for palliative care is directed where it is most needed’, said Dr Luxford. ‘This report is a great start, but much more needs to be done, especially the collection of data from community-based palliative care services.’

The [National Palliative Care Consensus Statement](#) released by PCA in June identified the need to support research into palliative care, and funding to be made available on an equitable population needs basis. The Statement also calls for all Australians to have access to quality palliative care when and where needed.

‘One thing that this data does show is that, overwhelmingly, it is people with cancer who are referred to palliative care - 69% of patients with cancer as a principal diagnosis had been a palliative care patient during their final hospital stay’, said Dr Luxford. ‘It is encouraging that 36.8% of patients with dementia and 58% of patients with Motor Neurone Disease also accessed palliative care, but we do need to improve in other chronic disease areas, for example, only 20% of patients with COPD and 21% with heart failure were referred.’

‘This report confirms that more people are accessing palliative care than ever before, but there are still many more people, their loved ones and caregivers, who could benefit from palliative care services. We need to ensure that there are appropriate resources and a strong evidence base in place to support this.’

**Ends**