

# MEDIA RELEASE



**Palliative  
Care  
Australia**

## Palliative Care Australia Inc.

Suite 4, 37 Geils 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)

## **Urgent action needed to ensure quality care at the end of life for all Australians**

Palliative Care Australia (PCA) has today released the National Palliative Care Consensus Statement which aims to ensure the recognition of palliative care as a fundamental part of Australia's healthcare system.

"The National Consensus Statement is a call to action by PCA and its members to ensure that all Australians have access to quality palliative care and to ensure no Australian with a terminal illness will suffer from preventable discomfort and pain," said Dr Scott Blackwell, PCA President.

"We want people to have a say in how they die, and to understand the support available for them. The reality is that the number of people who die at home in Australia has actually decreased over the past 50 years, despite many indicating this is their preference. Now only about 16% of people die at home, 20% die in hospices and 10% in nursing homes. The rest die in hospitals."

The Statement outlines eight key priorities which have been identified as needing urgent action based on four key themes: where people would prefer to die, the need for advance care planning, access and equity in provision of services and raising community awareness about palliative care.

The eight priorities are:

- 1. All Australians must have reasonable access to resources to support them to die in the location of their choice.**
- 2. A single common legislative requirement regarding advance care planning must be adopted throughout Australia**
- 3. All Australians have a right to equitable access to quality palliative care when and where needed.**
- 4. All Australians must have access to education about dying and death**

Contact: Rachel Stanton 0402 463 764

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*

- 5. Adequate and appropriate education in quality end of life care must be a standard provision for all health professionals.**
- 6. The Standards for Providing Quality Palliative Care for all Australians (the Standards) must be embedded in all appropriate care settings.**
- 7. Appropriate funding must be made available by all levels of government to palliative care services on an equitable population needs basis.**
- 8. Research in palliative care must be appropriately funded and targeted.**

The themes were identified from a survey commissioned by PCA for National Palliative Care Week, and from international research.

“The survey results made it clear to us that we don’t talk enough about death and dying in our community and as a result, people aren’t aware of the services available to them at the end of life, nor do they make plans about the type of care they would like to receive,” explained Dr Blackwell.

“This Statement outlines what we need to work towards to ensure a future where all Australians are well informed and able to make good end of life choices, and have access to quality palliative care wherever and whenever they need it.”

The Statement was developed with input from representatives from the palliative care and related sectors following a Stakeholder Forum convened by PCA during National Palliative Care Week, 22 – 28 May 2011.

The development of this National Palliative Care Consensus Statement is timely. Just last week in the Senate there was a petition to improve funding and availability of palliative care and a call from Senator Boyce to assist people to die with dignity in Australia.

“There is broad agreement that we need a healthcare system that supports all of us to live well at the end of life. What we need to do now is start putting this into action.” said Dr Blackwell

“The priorities, goals and timelines we have identified in the Statement are attainable and we call on governments at all levels, health care providers, policy makers and researchers to commit to delivering on these priorities and to make palliative and end of life care a core component of the health system; assisting people to not only live well, but to die well too – free from pain, in the place of their choice, with the people they wish to be present and above all, with dignity.”

**Ends**