

MEDIA RELEASE



**Palliative
Care
Australia**

Palliative Care Australia

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Election campaign fails dying test

'Health reform promised us improvements to the way people dying of terminal conditions are treated, to the enhancement of both patient outcomes and cost efficiency,' said Professor Margaret O'Connor, President of Palliative Care Australia (PCA), the peak national body representing the palliative care sector.

'We need the election campaign to provide real guidance in integrating the health system so the experience of people as they approach the end of their lives will be improved,' said Professor O'Connor.

'The current health care system is largely designed to provide short-term, episodic care for mainly acute illnesses. Improvements are required to ensure high quality experiences for people as they approach the end of their lives. The inability to manage preventable pain in the home or in residential aged care facilities, combined with difficulties accessing medication and community care services, contribute to the current overloading of hospital services.

'Palliative Care Australia advocates a team-based range of services including general practice, allied health and nursing supports, with referral pathways to and from specialist services. This cannot be achieved without enhancing both the role and the skills of primary care professionals so as to improve community based care.

'One of the challenges is to redress the health and aged care professional workforce shortage by making both aged care, and specifically palliative care within aged care, an attractive career path. Palliative Care Australia recommends:

- introducing a palliative care loading for the ACFI subsidy, and thus the salaries of aged care staff with appropriate palliative care qualifications
- enhancing Medicare items and other incentives for GPs and specialists such as palliative medicine physicians and geriatricians, to provide medical services in residential and community care settings.

'Our aim is that all Australians should be able to expect to die with their preventable pain and other symptoms well managed, with the people they wish to be present and, whenever possible, in the place of their choice. We look forward to working with the elected government, and with other stakeholders, towards achieving this.'

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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