



PalliativeCare
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Private health insurance consultation valuable

Consumer consultation on private health insurance may highlight the number of Australians who are unable to access palliative care in the private hospital system, says Palliative Care Australia (PCA) CEO Liz Callaghan.

Welcoming Health Minister Sussan Ley's move to hold consultations on the private health care sector she expected it to uncover some surprises for people, particularly Baby Boomers.

"Many Australians have been paying into health insurance schemes for a long time now and they will expect to be cared for as they age and face death. But palliative care is not always offered in private hospitals and we often hear of people who are at their most vulnerable being moved into the public system for palliative services.

"PCA has been calling for a roundtable discussion with the private health insurance and private hospital providers to encourage them to change this policy. It could be part of the Minister's consultation process. It will certainly become increasingly important to Australians.

"It seems in some cases cover ends when curative treatment ceases. Our system is already geared towards cure at any cost when in fact what many people need is quality palliative care with their end of life wishes recognised."

Ms Callaghan said a 2012 Australian Centre for Health Research study* found patients in need of palliative care were receiving expensive and aggressive treatment in private acute hospitals that are focused on cure.

"The issues around private health insurance and palliative care need to be investigated which is why the Health Minister's move is so encouraging.

"Most Australians want to die at home, so as a community we need to invest in models of home based and inpatient care that deliver palliative care services for people expecting their private health insurance to deliver it for them.

"We only get one chance to get death right for every Australian. It is important we ensure the health system is set up to deliver care in the setting and environment of patient choice," Ms Callaghan said.

* http://www.achr.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/ACHR_End-of-Life-Care.pdf

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