



Media Release

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Terminally ill children should not be missing out on quality palliative care

Terminally ill children may be missing out on quality palliative care due to access issues and gaps in services, says Palliative Care Australia (PCA) CEO Liz Callaghan.

“Some Australian families receive excellent care, but what occurs in inner city Melbourne may not be the same experience for a family in rural and remote Queensland.

“Overwhelmingly palliative care remains focussed on older people, when we know that tragically many Australian families experience the loss of a child. The death of a young person has a wide reach – impacting parents, siblings and often the wider community.

“Child-centred care cannot just be buzz words, they must be a reality so we can guarantee all children and families get a high standard of care. Child-centred care requires that all services in place around a family are coordinated in such a way that the needs of the child and that family are central to all planning.

“Simon Waring, who lost his four year old son to cancer, was supported to have Marmaduke at home. His family benefited from high quality palliative care services delivered in an environment that meant Marmaduke’s anxiety was low and the family had quality time with him. All families should have the choice to manage care as it is needed,” Ms Callaghan said.

PCA and the Australian and New Zealand Paediatric Palliative Care Reference Group (ANZPPCRG) will bring those issues back to Parliament House today with a briefing on the state of paediatric palliative care.

ANZPPCRG Chair Dr Marianne Phillips said each state and territory should make a commitment to paediatric palliative care.

“Children should not miss out on palliative care because of gaps in service delivery, failure of services to integrate and lack of support for families.

“We know care of children and adolescents with life limiting conditions has not been addressed to the same level as for older people. Children and adolescents with life limiting conditions must have the same quality of care as anyone else.

“Paediatric palliative care is a growing specialty area in Australia, but hasn’t received as much attention as palliative care for adults.” Dr Phillips said.

Ms Callaghan said services that work include the Government funded Hummingbird House in Brisbane.

“Hummingbird House will provide end of life care for children and support services for families. This is one model we know works and we welcome the investment in it.

“Children and adolescents need to experience the best life possible, regardless of how long that life is.” She said.

Media contact: PCA Frith Rayner 0400 45 99 88

