

MEDIA RELEASE



Palliative
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Australia

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Connect with Palliative Care Australia

24 May 2014

Momentous day for palliative care

The World Health Assembly has passed resolution on palliative care, recognising these essential health services as an integral component of health systems worldwide, and calling on national governments to ensure they receive the attention they deserve.

Dr Yvonne Luxford, Chief Executive Officer of Palliative Care Australia and part of the World Hospice and Palliative Care Alliance delegation to the World Health Assembly, described it as a landmark decision, unparalleled in its importance.

‘This is a hugely significant event, and is the first time that the World Health Assembly has considered a resolution on palliative care. It confirms that all countries need to take palliative care seriously – it is not an optional extra – and presents huge opportunities for the advancement of quality care at the end of life for all.’

The key recommendations to WHO Member States from the resolution are to integrate palliative care into healthcare systems, ensure palliative care is embedded in the basic and continuing education and training for all health workers, and make sure that relevant medicines, including strong pain medicines, are available to patients.

‘Over 20 million people worldwide are in need of palliative care services. This figure rises to 40 million if you include family members or carers who also need support,’ said Dr Luxford. ‘This resolution will be a catalyst to raise awareness of the importance of palliative care services and lead to the development of national strategies to meet the needs of people who are dying, their families and carers.’

Even in Australia, which is one of the world leaders in palliative care service provision, it is estimated that 50-70% of those who could benefit from access to palliative care needs services are unable to access them.

‘This ground breaking resolution comes on the eve of National Palliative Care Week in Australia (25 – 31 May), which has the workforce focused theme of *Palliative care is everyone’s business: Let’s work together*,’ said Dr Luxford. ‘This provides us with a great opportunity to highlight the importance of the palliative care workforce, and in particular to focus on education – we must make care of the dying a mandatory education component for all health professionals.’

PCA is holding an event for anyone with a professional interest in palliative care on Thursday 29 May, including an update on this decision from the World Health Assembly.

For more information visit <http://www.palliativecare.org.au/nationalpalliativecareweek>.

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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: His Excellency General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd), Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia