

# MEDIA RELEASE



**Palliative  
Care  
Australia**

## Palliative Care Australia Inc.

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## Demand for palliative care increasing, but most miss out

Palliative Care Australia has welcomed the third annual *Palliative Care Services in Australia* report from The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), but is concerned that the majority of Australians who need palliative care services are not receiving them.

‘The report shows us that just 20% of people who died in 2011-12 were receiving palliative care,’ said Professor Patsy Yates, president of Palliative Care Australia. ‘Although this doesn’t include those who had access to palliative care and died at home, when you compare this to the latest research which estimates anywhere between 50% – 90% of people would benefit from access to palliative care services, it is clear we are falling well short of what is required.’

It is also clear that palliative care admissions are continuing to rise, from 38,000 in 2001-02 to 57,600 in 2011-12, an increase of 52%. Fifty-one (51%) of people who died in 2011-12 did so in hospital.

‘This rise in hospital admissions is really at odds with what we hear from the community. Most people want to be supported to die at home. We must see a shift in policy and funding support to make this a reality,’ said Professor Yates.

‘To support this, we need a comprehensive awareness raising campaign to encourage people to talk about the care they would like at the end of their life, inform them of the choices available and address associated stigma and misconceptions. We also need a nationally consistent approach to advance care planning legislation to provide confidence that their wishes will be met.’

The report also indicates a need to promote and embed the benefits of and practice of palliative care for people across the range of chronic diseases. Nearly 60% of palliative care admissions who died had a diagnosis of cancer, yet dementia and Alzheimer’s disease, despite being the third leading causes of death in Australia, do not even feature in the palliative care admissions data in this report. We also have to question why only 1 in 18 residential aged care residents were identified as needing palliative care when research indicates that the proportion of people dying in aged care is increasing?

‘We really need to commit to developing a Palliative Care Workforce Strategy which embeds palliative care into the education and training of all health professionals across their careers. We must ensure that palliative care becomes everybody’s business,’ said Professor Yates.

‘The AIHW reports make a valuable contribution to our understanding of the delivery of palliative care in Australia, however, the report mentions a number of times that data quality issues were a problem in determining definitive numbers. It is vital that we have more comprehensive data, including from community palliative care. In order to better prepare for the future, PCA calls for the development and implementation of a comprehensive national palliative care data collection set.’

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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