

MEDIA RELEASE

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10 steps to Budget savings through palliative care

Palliative Care Australia (PCA) is calling on the Government to make 2014 the year to prioritise much needed action on palliative care, identifying ten budget essentials in its submission to the Treasurer.

‘We feel that now, more than ever, is the time for palliative care to become core business in national health and aged care policy,’ said Dr Yvonne Luxford, Chief Executive Officer of Palliative Care Australia. ‘Not only is it something that the Australian community is demanding, but palliative care is gaining prominence on a global level and we have strong evidence about its benefits and cost effectiveness. Now is the time for action.’

Just this month, the Executive Board of the World Health Assembly passed a resolution, co-sponsored by Australia, which stated that palliative care should be integral to health systems, available to all who need it, and a mandatory component of all health professional training and education.

‘Our research shows us that 70% of Australians think we don’t talk about death and dying enough and more than 50% of people who had recently lost a loved one had not discussed end of life care with them, nor were they confident their loved one’s end of life wishes were carried out,’ said Dr Luxford.

‘The majority in our community feel there is a need for greater public dialogue on this issue. Not only does the Government have an obligation to observe international developments, but it needs to listen to the community and keep in step with changing attitudes.’

The latest evidence suggests access to palliative care not only improves the quality of life of people dying from a terminal illness, their families and carers, but also reduces pressure on health budgets.

‘We are conscious that Budget savings are essential and that international studies demonstrate that palliative care service models result in cost savings through reductions in hospital admissions, emergency department visits, laboratory and intensive care unit costs,’ said Dr Luxford. ‘A Productivity Commission Inquiry could easily provide the local evidence to support these economic analyses in an Australian context.’

Access to palliative care is a basic human right and should be available to all people, when and where they need it. Dying Australians’ access to services that support them to live well at the end of life is essentially a lottery based on where they live, their diagnosis, background or age. This is an unacceptable situation.

‘Just 25% of people who could benefit from palliative care services are able to access them each year. Our community expects and deserves better than this,’ said Dr Luxford. ‘If we fail to act, the price to be paid by the community over time will be significantly higher – not only socially, but economically too.’

For more information and a list of the 10 Budget essentials identified by PCA, refer to the [2014-15 Pre-Budget Submission](#).

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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

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