



Media Release

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Palliative care lost in Budget spending

The Federal Budget is aimed at addressing pressing health concerns but continues to ignore one of the most vulnerable groups – those who will die in pain because they cannot access palliative care, says Palliative Care Australia’s (PCA) CEO Liz Callaghan.

PCA believes access to palliative care is the biggest problem facing the health system. The Government’s Intergenerational Report predicted 40,000 Australians over 100 years old in 2055 – most of whom will need some form of palliative care. The demand for palliative care services will be immense, she said.

“The Budget identifies several areas that will need palliative care support – whether it is additional funding to help patients with chronic diseases, cancer or to assist organ donation, but does not acknowledge its importance.

“With a stated focus on innovation and value for money this Budget could have benefitted greatly from an investment in community palliative care. There is growing evidence that community care provides value for money, relieves pressure on the acute system and is better able to manage the needs of a palliative care patient,” she said.

Research from the University of California, Berkley projected savings of more than \$1b within eight years by implementing a community-based palliative care system in California.

“Four out of five deaths are from chronic disease with a predictable outcome of death, yet over 70% of people who access palliative care have a cancer diagnosis. There is much to be done to ensure all Australians know they can access this vital care at end of life.

According to the Grattan Institute’s report ‘Dying Well’ failure to talk and plan for death is one of the most significant obstacles to improving the quality of dying in Australia.

“PCA is encouraging Australians to talk about dying – after all it won’t kill you. The Australian Bureau of Statistics tells us one Australian dies every 3 minutes and 27 seconds - not all of those will need palliative care, but it’s important that those who would benefit from it know about it and how to access it.”

Ms Callaghan said getting Aussies talking about their wishes at end of life was a main focus of the National Palliative Care Week (24-30 May) this year.

“We look forward to working with the Federal and State Governments to deliver greater community awareness programs to Australians, building on our dying to talk campaign that will launch in just under two weeks,” she said.

Media contact: PCA Frith Rayner 0400 45 99 88

