



Media Release

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Budget shows palliative care should be core business in aged care

Palliative Care Australia CEO Liz Callaghan welcomes the comprehensive palliative care in aged care measure announced in today's [Federal Budget](#).

"The \$32.8 million investment into specialist palliative care support in residential aged care is welcomed and supports PCA's call that palliative care should be core business in aged care, however this is [contingent](#) on matched funding from the states and territories.

"The measure shows the Commonwealth's commitment to ensure palliative care is included in aged care service provision, and not just end-of-life care. Like the [Productivity Commission](#), we call on cross jurisdiction cooperation to avoid problems resulting from poor stewardship, which ultimately leads to aged care services not responding as they should to users' palliative care needs and choices.

"[Australian studies](#) have shown that when specialist palliative care services are brought into residential aged care settings, there is a reduction in unnecessary hospitalisations and an improvement in symptom and pain management.

"I also am pleased to see 20,000 more high level needs home care packages to support people to live longer at home. Palliative care support must be a component of this care as many of these people would choose to receive care at home and to die in their own homes.

"The Government has also announced streamlined and faster consumer assessments for all aged care services. This must enable rapid access to palliative care if required and will ensure care is received at the right time and in the right place. We only get one chance to die, so we must get it right.

"The Government will introduce a performance rating for aged care service providers against the new quality standards and improve complaints processes, and put in place an approach to respond to care failures.

"PCA would like to see specific palliative care quality indicators across residential and community aged care. For example, all staff need to be trained and equipped to recognise the need for appropriate end-of-life or palliative care, including appropriate pain management and the signs of approaching death.

"We look forward to the Government working with us and our state and territory members to improve palliative care delivery in aged care. However we must also recognise that caring for people who are approaching and reaching the end of life at any age is everybody's business – everybody in health, aged and social care has a role to play," Ms Callaghan said.

The Government also announced significant expansion of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program, which will mean people will have greater access to culturally safe aged care services in remote Australia.

“PCA welcomes support for culturally appropriate palliative care and end-of-life care provision on country, which allows access to family and community support, in addition to models of care that support culturally appropriate grief and bereavement practices,” Ms Callaghan said.

The announced \$102.5 million investment to support the mental health needs of older Australians is also welcomed.

“[The Principles for Palliative and End-of-Life Care in Residential Aged Care](#) call for the mental health needs of consumers to be assessed, documented and met including treatment for anxiety or depression. This measure will address some of the mental health issues for chronic or serious health conditions. Grief, bereavement and spiritual support must be included in this initiative.

“Among a range of measures in rural health, the Government will strengthen the role of nurses in primary health care, including greater awareness of the role and skills of nurse practitioners, who are integral to the delivery of specialist palliative care.

“PCA looks forward to the release of the National Palliative Care Strategy later this year and its implementation plan. The ‘comprehensive palliative care in aged care measure’ is a start to the required reform and investment needed in palliative care to ensure that every Australian is able to live and die well,” Ms Callaghan said.

Media contact: Grace Keyworth – 0422 040 576

palliativecare.org.au



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