Increased investment in palliative care is required to address current unmet and increasing need for support for people with a life limiting illness and their families to live, die and grieve well.

The following information indicates the scope of unmet and increasing need to 2021.

a) Diseases requiring palliative care
The World Health Organisation (WHO) has identified the following diseases in adults as requiring palliative care: Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias, cancer, cardiovascular disease, cirrhosis of the liver, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, kidney failure, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson’s disease, rheumatoid arthritis and drug resistant tuberculosis. The diseases among children also include: congenital anomalies, endocrine, blood and immune disorders, neurological disorders and neonatal conditions.

b) Population based need for palliative care
- Population based estimates of need developed with reference to WHO data in 2011 suggest that 378 people per 100,000 aged 16 and over, and 63 children per 100,000 population under the age of 16, need palliative care at the end of life.
- An in-depth study prepared for the UK Government in 2011 found that 75% of all deaths are likely to require some palliative care input.

c) People who need palliative care are currently missing out

Palliative care provision in Victoria is currently between 16% and 40% less than required to meet current need, based on the population based indicators referred to above.

Improved access to palliative care is required for: Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children and young people with life limiting conditions, and people with a range of non-malignant conditions including: lower respiratory lung disease, dementia, Alzheimer’s disease, and end-stage renal disease.

d) Increasing demand due to demographic and morbidity trends
Demographic drivers of increased need for palliative care in the 10 year period ending 2012 are: an increase in the Victorian population (15%), increase in the population aged 65 and over (40%). Morbidity drivers for increased palliative care are the increasing prevalence of chronic diseases, which are the leading causes of death, and increasing death rates (7.7% increase in Victoria to 2021).
1 Worldwide Palliative Care Alliance, 2014, Global Atlas of Palliative Care at the End of Life, Appendix 6 Methodology for estimating the number of people in need of palliative care, pp93
2 ibid, pp93-102
6 Refer to evidence cited in: Palliative Care Victoria, 2014, ibid.