Mediaprelease

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Call for Funding to Improve Palliative Care and End of Life Care

Palliative Care Victoria welcomes today’s commitment by the Victorian Health Minister to improve access to palliative care and end of life care choices and calls on the Victorian Government to provide substantial increases in funding for palliative care in the 2016 Budget.

Opening the largest Australian palliative care conference in Melbourne today, Hon. Jill Hennessy committed to consult widely in developing a new Victorian End of Life Care Framework so that people can genuinely make choices about the care they receive and more people can receive care at home. She also acknowledged the need to improve the effectiveness of advance care planning and to extend this to future health conditions.

“The Minister’s commitment is very welcome and confirms the need for significant innovation and investment to support the palliative care and end of life care needs and choices of Victorians. This high priority must be supported by substantial new funding in the 2016 Budget. For people who are dying and their families, time is of the essence,” said Mr. Michael Bramwell, Chair of Palliative Care Victoria.

Palliative Care Victoria’s 2016 Budget Call to Action outlines 6 key recommendations that require at least $16.45 million a year in new funding.

“Increased Government investment in palliative care and end of life care is a win-win strategy because it improves significantly the experience of patients and their families. At the same time it makes far better use of scarce health resources by freeing up hospital beds, reducing pressure on Emergency Departments and lowering costs.

“Recent reports by the Grattan Institute, the Office of the Victorian Auditor General, and the Travis review also confirm this,” Mr. Bramwell said.

Further Information

- Around 150,000 Victorians will die in the next 4 years
- Half of Victorian deaths are in hospital but most people (70%) wish to die at home
- Palliative care improves the quality of life of patients and their families
- Community palliative care reduces demand on hospital beds (The Travis Report 2015).
- The resource-constrained community palliative care sector is struggling to keep up with demand (Victorian Auditor General, Inquiry into Palliative Care, 2015)
- Palliative care costs between 40% and 300% less than other types of hospital care; it also reduces pressure on Emergency Departments, hospital beds and other health costs and improves the effective use of health resources.

Palliative Care Victoria 2016 Budget Call to Action Recommendations:

1. Increase the availability of community palliative care; this will assist more people to die at home
2. Expand palliative care consultancy services
3. Close the gap in palliative care for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders
4. End of life care is a priority for all Victorian Government funded health services
5. Increase community awareness and capacity in relation to palliative care and end of life choices
6. Invest in drivers to improve health care experience and performance.

Available for media interviews:

- Michael Bramwell, Chair, Palliative Care Victoria, Mobile 0413 256 247
- Odette Waanders, CEO, Palliative Care Victoria, Mobile 0448 191 198 or 9662 9644
The Victorian Auditor General's Report on Palliative Care released today is available at:

The audit assessed whether Victorians with a terminal illness have access to high-quality palliative care that is timely, coordinated and responsive to their needs and wishes.

The audit findings are positive overall but identify opportunities for improvement - as indicated in this short summary:

- Victoria has a strong palliative care sector and staff are skilled and dedicated
- 80% of DHHS' strategic direction actions have been achieved
- More work is required to improve community awareness and access to palliative care and advance care planning
- Improved support for carers and families is required, including respite, psychosocial and bereavement support; reviews of respite, carer support and after-hours services are recommended
- Escalating demand for palliative care means some community palliative care services are struggling to cope and there are some concerns about delays in accessing appropriate palliative care on discharge from hospital
- A new refreshed policy framework supported by a robust evaluation method is needed
- The funding model for community palliative care services should be reviewed.

The report includes 12 recommendations, seven require action by DHHS and five require action from health services. The response by DHHS to the seven recommendations is included as an appendix.

Relevant Information

- Over 15,300 Victorians receive palliative care at home each year
- Annual expenditure on palliative care services in Victoria is $111 million (<1% public hospital funding)
- People with a life limiting illness who receive palliative care are less likely to be admitted to emergency units, have reduced average hospital stays and are less likely to receive non-beneficial treatment
- Palliative Care Victoria’s evidence-based Call to Action 2015-19 is available at http://bit.ly/pcv-election-media

About Palliative Care Victoria

Palliative Care Victoria Inc. is the peak body representing palliative care providers, consumers and their families and those with an interest in palliative care in Victoria. Palliative Care Victoria’s vision is for all people with a life limiting illness and their families to be supported to live, die and grieve well.

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