



Media Release

25 February 2015

Out of hospital palliative care needs workforce investment

Palliative Care NSW fully endorses the NSW AMA's call for improved access to out of hospital palliative care (AMA Media Alert: "State hospitals are drowning in demand", 24 February 2015).

Overwhelmingly Australians want to die at home, but access to community palliative care in New South Wales falls short of current and future needs, according to Palliative Care NSW CEO Linda Hansen.

"Palliative Care Australia 2014 survey data shows 68 percent of people want to die at home, but the number who do is about 14 percent. In NSW we have made some steps towards making this possible for people, but we don't have the workforce to support it as the population ages" Ms Hansen said.

The NSW Government has committed \$35million over four years to assist people to die at home, including a volunteer programme and an after-hours phone line.

"The package is a fantastic first step and a very welcome one, but there are ongoing costs associated with providing care for people who want to die at home and they need to be addressed.

"Palliative Care NSW would like to see an increased investment in palliative care workforce to ensure all NSW residents have access to quality palliative care. We estimate this to be \$4million to cover immediate gaps and a further \$4m per annum into the future.

Ms Hansen says workforce issues across the palliative care sector in NSW mean people die without adequate palliative care and this can have a huge impact on family and carers as well as the patient.

"We anticipate a 40% increase in deaths attributable to the five leading causes of mortality between 2011 and 2021, but the workforce is not keeping pace with the growing need. We expect this figure will continue to increase by about 829 presentations per year, so that by 2025 we will experience about 32,000 presentations to Palliative Care in NSW, an increase of about 56% in the 14 years since 2011.

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