
Inadequate palliative care leaves Queenslanders suffering

Queensland has only half the number of specialist palliative care services it needs to meet community needⁱ, forcing many people to die without the dignity they deserve.

Australian Medical Association (AMA) Queensland President Dr Dilip Dhupelia said inadequate government funding for palliative care was causing unnecessary suffering.

“Six years ago, a Queensland Parliamentary Committee identified the large unmet need for palliative care services but progress to improve the situation has been far too slow,” Dr Dhupelia said.

“Specialist services are still under-resourced, there aren’t enough palliative care beds and there isn’t enough community care or after hours cover.”

During National Palliative Care Week, AMA Queensland has called on Queensland Health to create state wide multi-disciplinary palliative care units to coordinate services.

“Each unit would be responsible for palliative care in a specific region,” Dr Dhupelia said. “It would especially help level the playing field for the one third of our population living in regional and rural areas.”

Palliative Care Queensland has identified five priorities areas: better funding, improved access, community activation, stronger focus on Advance Care Planning and workforce development.ⁱⁱ

Palliative Care Queensland CEO Shyla Mills called for a Queensland Palliative Care Strategy.

“Time is precious for people with a palliative condition. Funding needs to be available and easy to access.” Ms. Mills said

“Most people tell us that their family matters most to them at the end of life, so we need funding for services, as well as a specialist and generalist workforce that meets the national recommended levels of care, to enable people to be with their family in a place of their choice while they are dying.”

Dr Dhupelia said the Productivity Commission reported up to 90 per cent of the 29,500 people who died in Queensland each year would benefit from palliative careⁱⁱⁱ.

“That figure will grow as Queenslanders are living longer and suffering more complex, chronic health conditions,” he warned.

“Services are already stretched and referrals are expected to increase by 20 per cent but palliative care funding is only set to increase by 13 per cent.”

ⁱ <https://palliativecareqld.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/2018-19-PCQ-Pre-Budget-Submission.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Palliative Care Queensland (2019) Palliative Care in Queensland Priorities for 2019. Published on website: www.palliativecareqld.org.au/publications-positions-submissions

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/human-services/reforms/report/human-services-reforms.pdf>