
From: Linda Hansen
Sent: Wednesday, 2 February 2022 4:12 PM
To: Law;
Subject: CM: RE: Provisions of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021 - Post-hearing responses - 13 December 2021
Record Number: D22/03765

Thank you Madeleine – my response is below. No corrections. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute.

Specific needs for palliative care services in rural, regional and remote NSW

Access to palliative care services is often described in the media as a “postcode lottery”, depending on where you live and that people living in rural, regional and remote areas should not even waste their money on buying a ticket. While we do not subscribe to the analogy, as we know, while there are many dedicated health professionals living and working in these communities, they may not necessarily have specialist palliative care training or skills. And there are many places in NSW that have no access to specialist palliative care services at all. Outside of the Greater Sydney Metropolitan area, encompassing Newcastle and Wollongong, there are very few specialist palliative care doctors and west of the divide there is only one – in Broken Hill.

To address this inequity, pathways for appropriate access to specialist palliative care services need to be identified and adequately resourced. This can be achieved by creating common referral criteria to adequately staffed multidisciplinary teams in hospitals and all care settings.

Simply funding a single “specialist” position is only part of the solution – that position needs to be supported by a multidisciplinary team.

Action

Increase recurrent funding for specialist palliative care services to increase capacity to meet demand across all care settings (including hospital consultation teams), in rural, remote and regional NSW.

Rationale

Across NSW there are gaps in specialist palliative care medical, nursing and allied health workforce capacity. Each metropolitan LHN requires Level 3 Specialist Palliative Care Service, each regional LHN requires a minimum Level 2 service with linkages to a Level 3, and each rural LHN requires a minimum level 1 service. However, these capacities are rarely filled, especially further away from metropolitan areas.

Action

Further develop the capacity of specialist palliative care services with specific and recurrent funding to encourage post graduate training in palliative medicine and palliative care for nurses and allied health workers.

Rationale

Existing shortages in the specialist palliative care workforce require a coordinated response from NSW and Commonwealth fund holders. Funding is required for both employment and training of palliative

medicine staff specialists, palliative care nurse practitioners, specialist palliative care nurses and allied health practitioners, for both hospital and community sectors.

Action

Establishment of Rural Palliative Care Scholarships for specialist training in the fields of Medicine, Nursing, Social Work and other Allied Health disciplines.

Rationale

Specialist workforce shortages in rural and regional areas of NSW are the significant contributor to inequity of access to specialist palliative care for these populations. Offering rural/regional targeted training scholarships to encourage a workforce to specialise in palliative care then live in these areas is a simple yet effective strategy to help address this issue.

Action

Further develop capacity in advance care planning and palliative care in aged care by providing specific and recurring funding for a Palliative Care Educator to provide an education and training service for staff in RACFs – rural, regional and remote areas inclusive.

Rationale

Palliative care should be everyone's business. Health professionals throughout the community, wherever they live, and in hospitals and RACF settings, should have the skills to be able to apply the Palliative Approach to their patients with life-limiting illnesses, with referral and/or access to Specialist Palliative Care services as required.

An adequately funded educator would be a significant asset in helping those settings outside of metropolitan regions stay up-to-date with education, resources and training.

Kind regards.

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