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## **POLITICIANS MUST TACKLE PALLIATIVE CARE TIME BOMB**

Doctors are calling on politicians to use the final days of their campaigns to address the growing palliative care crisis in Queensland.

A new report from the Centre for Independent Studies has revealed that barely one in 10 patients in need of palliative care each year receive an MBS-subsidised palliative service.<sup>1</sup>

AMA Queensland's own election manifesto, *Five Point Plan for Better Health*, is calling for the next State Government to increase funding for palliative care and specialised training.

AMA Queensland President Dr Bill Boyd said palliative care had been ignored for too long.

"We broadly welcome the announcements that have been made regarding hospitals and extra nurses – but palliative care isn't on anyone's radar," Dr Boyd said.

"Palliative care has already been cut from six to three months for patients and this dire situation is set to worsen in the next few years.

"As our population ages we will see huge increases in the number of elderly people requiring palliative care services. If we're struggling now, how will we cope in five, 10 or 20 years?"

Palliative Care Queensland estimates that referrals are increasing by around 20 per cent a year.

AMA Queensland is also asking the next State Government to encourage Advance Care Planning, ensuring patients are better prepared for end-of-life care and their wishes respected.

"Our health system is good at finding out what's wrong with patients and then 'fixing' them – but we haven't devoted enough money or attention to improving end-of-life care," Dr Boyd said.

"Palliative care patients and their families deserve the very best care we can give them."

As well as addressing palliative care, AMA Queensland's *Five Point Plan for Better Health* is asking political parties to appoint an Assistant Minister for Health for regional areas.

Other AMAQ policies include extending funding for programs to improve the health of doctors and ensuring all pregnant women in the public health system are routinely seen by an obstetrician.

To view the *Five Point Plan for Better Health* go to:

[www.amaq.com.au/icms\\_docs/276330\\_election-platform--five-point-plan-for-better-health.pdf](http://www.amaq.com.au/icms_docs/276330_election-platform--five-point-plan-for-better-health.pdf)

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<sup>1</sup> Centre for Independent Studies, *Life Before Death: Improving palliative care for older Australians*, November 2017