

13 October 2020

QUEENSLAND DOCTORS CALL FOR DIGNITY FOR THE DYING

Queensland's peak medical body is calling on the next State Government to develop a 'palliative plexus' health network to tackle the growing end-of-life care crisis.

Australian Medical Association (AMA) Queensland's election manifesto, *11-Point Action Plan - The Pathway to Better Health for Queenslanders*, calls for an urgent extra injection of \$277 million into the state's palliative care sector to provide people with genuine choices at the end of life.

AMA Queensland President Dr Chris Perry said 75 per cent of the 30,000 Queenslanders who died each year could benefit from palliative care.

"The gross neglect and underfunding of this sector by successive politicians impact the way that three-quarters of Queenslanders live in their final weeks, days and hours of life," he said.

"Palliative care is a recognised human right and yet Queensland has only half the number of specialist services it needs to meet community demand.

"A Queensland Parliamentary Committee identified the drastic under-funding of the sector more than six years ago, but there has been little or no improvements."

"AMA Queensland is calling on all political parties standing in this month's state election to publicly reveal their commitment to strengthening our palliative care services so that doctors, patients and families can make an informed choice at the ballot box."

Dr Perry said the call for \$277m in new funding was calculated in partnership with Palliative Care Queensland and the Queensland Specialist Palliative Care Clinical Directors Group to provide home care, specialist palliative care training, infrastructure upgrades, support programs and a base and outreach or 'palliative plexus' model for regional, rural and remote communities.

"Having a plexus-style model with a base, such as a major city or regional hospital in each HHS, that reaches into specialist palliative care rural facilities within the same HHS would go a long way to meeting the unmet need for dying Queenslanders," he said.

"The concept is simple – give carers at the grassroots level the support they need to deliver specialist palliative services to people in their local communities, including the elderly, children and First Nations peoples who all deserve to die with dignity.

"Palliative care is not exclusively about managing physical symptoms - it also addresses psychological, emotional, social, cultural and spiritual support needs for the patient and their carers."

Dr Perry said success of a new plexus model rested on the incoming government re-establishing the fully-funded week-long intensive palliative care training course that used to be provided to GPs but was axed.

“AMA Queensland is also calling on the next State Government to support its call for GPs to receive Medicare rebates for helping patients sign Advanced Care Directives which set out their end-of-life treatment preferences,” he said.

“In this way, doctors and families can feel confident their loved one is receiving the care they want in their final days.”

The AMA Queensland 11-Point Action Plan – The Pathway to Better Health for Queenslanders also calls for:

- \$7.57m to boost maternity services in rural and regional communities
- \$26m to boost pain management services across Queensland
- \$3m to reduce community-based alcohol-related harm and violence
- \$4.2m to improve the health of First Nations Queenslanders with a safe and culturally safe appropriate hospital network
- \$ 2.5m to include doctors in healthcare decisions
- \$1.67m to improve doctors’ mental health and workplace wellbeing

Read the full 11-Point Action Plan: The future health agenda [HERE](#)

MEDIA CONTACTS: Fran Metcalf, Sequel PR – 0417 627 867; Chiara Lesevre, AMA Queensland – 0419 735 641.