

# Facts you may not know about palliative care

- The Australian and New Zealand Society for Palliative Medicine and the Australian Medical Association does not support euthanasia and assisted suicide.
- Evidence provided to a Queensland Parliamentary Committee back in 2013 indicated there was significant unmet need for palliative care in Queensland and this gap was continuing to grow<sup>i</sup>.
- In 2013 the Health Department's own reports admitted Queensland palliative care services were already stretched, with referrals to services increasing annually by 20 per cent while funding was only expected to increase by an annual 12.9 percent<sup>ii</sup>. More recent reports reveal only a 5.6% funding increase between 2013/4 and 2019<sup>iii</sup>.
- A 2016 review of the National Palliative Care Strategy found that there are significant barriers to access to palliative care services for a number of people within the population, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples<sup>iv</sup>.
- As at 2018 Queensland had approximately 49 FTE palliative care specialists for the state<sup>v</sup>. To meet Palliative Care Queensland's recommendation of 2 FTE specialist palliative medicine physicians per 100,000 population, Queensland would need 101 FTE palliative care doctors.
- A 2019 QUT report estimated that between 51,000 to 71,000 of the total population in Queensland require palliative care services. For people over 65 years old, between 52,000 and 57,000 would require palliative care services<sup>vi</sup>.
- Queensland ranks low among the other states for the number of publicly funded in-patient palliative care beds per capita, and though efforts are being made in digital/telehealth to connect specialist palliative care to regional and remote areas, face to face access is significantly limited. For example, the town of Mackay with a population of 125,000 has no specialist palliative care physician<sup>vii</sup>.



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- Of the 49 recommendations made in Victoria's inquiry into end of life choices, 30 related to the improvement of palliative care funding and access, and only a single recommendation related to the introduction of assisted suicide. Palliative Care Victoria requested an additional \$65 million per annum to implement the recommendations, but it received only half this amount. The Victorian state government only committed an extra \$71.9 million, over a 4 year period, and only after the euthanasia and assisted suicide legislation had been passed<sup>viii</sup>.
- 105 of Australia's 148 palliative medicine specialists (70% of the profession) wrote an open letter in 2017 to Victorian and NSW MPs, saying that euthanasia advocates "actively and deliberately undermine" public confidence in palliative care<sup>ix</sup>.
- Current Australian data indicates that no more than 2 in every 100 Palliative Care patients would be in moderate or severe pain at the end of life. In these unusual cases where when all other methods of palliation for pain and other symptoms is inadequate, and if the patient agrees, palliative sedation therapy is available to provide adequate relief of suffering<sup>ix</sup>.
- Australian palliative care services are ranked second-best in the world. The United Kingdom comes in first, and they rejected euthanasia and assisted suicide legislation in 2006<sup>x</sup>.

<sup>i</sup>AMA Queensland's Health Vision Part Five: Care at the End of Life

<sup>ii</sup>Health and Community Services Committee, Palliative and Community Care in Queensland: towards person-centred care, Queensland Parliament, May 2013

<sup>iii</sup>Queensland Health Palliative Care Services Review – Key Findings March 2019; page 21. Increase of 5.6% cited is for Hospital and Health Services (HHS) Activity Based Funding for palliative care

<sup>iv</sup>[http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/EF57056BDB047E2FCA257BF000206168/\\$File/Evaluation%20of%20the%20National%20Palliative%20Care%20Strategy%202010%20Final%20Report.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/EF57056BDB047E2FCA257BF000206168/$File/Evaluation%20of%20the%20National%20Palliative%20Care%20Strategy%202010%20Final%20Report.pdf)

<sup>v</sup>National Health Workforce Data Set 2017

<sup>vi</sup>QUT (2019) Palliative care services review: Commissioned external literature review

<sup>vii</sup>Palliative Care Queensland Submission to the Parliamentary Health Committee Inquiry 2019

<sup>viii</sup>[https://www.no euthanasia.org.au/national\\_palliative\\_care\\_week\\_2019](https://www.no euthanasia.org.au/national_palliative_care_week_2019)

<sup>ix</sup>[https://www.no euthanasia.org.au/letter\\_members\\_parliament\\_australian\\_palliative\\_professionals](https://www.no euthanasia.org.au/letter_members_parliament_australian_palliative_professionals)

<sup>x</sup>"How We Die: A View from Palliative Care" by Michael Ashby in QUT Law Review, Volume 16, Issue 1, pp 5-21.



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