

PCA e-bulletin

Supplement

An historic day for palliative care

Dr Christine Bennett, Chair of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission (NHHRC) addressed the National Press Club on Monday 16 February 2009 and publicly released the Commission's interim report, *A Healthier Future for all Australians*.

Dr Bennett highlighted that the report is an historic and important opportunity to get it right – by taking steps for improvements to Australia's health care system in 5, 10 and 20 years time.

The report is framed around 4 key themes which encapsulate the Commission's directions for reform:

- **taking responsibility**
- **connecting care:** this theme includes an identified health reform area of *Caring for people at the end of life*
- **facing inequities**
- **driving quality performance**

"Palliative Care Australia is delighted with how well the report has worked to position end of life issues into the future model of integrated health care. We met with many of the Commissioners and they expressed great interest in working to better integrate palliative care. We are most grateful for the enthusiasm and the consultation time availed to us," said PCA Chief Executive, Donna Daniell.

"The formal recognition of the linkages between palliative care and advance care planning is also an excellent step forward."

During her presentation, Dr Bennett singled out specialist palliative care and the need to improve access to services as important, together with the need to strengthen skills development for both specialist and primary care areas.

Chapter 7 (pages 181-193 of the full report) is the identified health reform area of *Caring for people at the end of life*, and sets out the 5 reform directions for our sector. However, our interests are across many areas of the report.

For example other health reform areas holding great promise for palliative care include:

- placing health literacy in the national curriculum for all schools – this embraces our aim to foster capacity building in community toward the greater recognition that death is a part of life.
- building a culture for continuous improvement, research and innovation with clinical leadership
- public reporting on access, efficiency and quality for public and private hospitals – this holds promise for the full integration of the National Standards Assessment Program and its role in enabling continual improvement across both specialist and primary care
- better use of workforce capabilities and improved clinical training infrastructure – this fits well with the work already underway within the palliative care community, in undergraduate, postgraduate and CPE education.

The Commission's final report is due for release in June 2009. This report aims to set out a road map, ready for decision, and indeed investment by the Government.

I commend the report, particularly to the palliative care sector, for your reading.

PCA will be working on helping the NHHRC in shaping the detail of their recommendations, as we do not agree fully with each of the recommendations and further detail and supporting evidence is required.

Please see PCA contact details below for details on how to be involved.

Donna Daniell
CEO