

Key Messages from PCV Membership

Introduction

To ensure that Palliative Care Victoria is advocating effectively on behalf of its membership, a survey was undertaken in March/April 2022. KPMG were engaged to undertake the analysis and prepare the report entitled '*The sustainability of palliative care in Victoria*'. The survey had been previously used in 2017 and we were therefore able to undertake comparative analysis of changes over 5 years and reduce the skewing of influence caused by the pandemic. Despite Victorian Health being in a Code Brown, the return rate was 40.5%, demonstrating how important this engagement is to the sector.

The CEO also offered an interview to all those organisations who were unable to complete the survey due to Code Brown pressures. This resulted in 12 interviews providing further depth and richness to the advocacy campaign for 2022.

Key Messages from the KPMG Survey

- Over the past 5 years total funding for palliative care services has grown by 10.2% however demand for services has grown at a much faster rate. The Victorian Department of Health estimated that the need for palliative care would increase by an average of 4-5% annually.
- The shortfall in funding is estimated to increase from \$24 million in FY 2021 to over \$91 million a year by 2025.
- Approximately 500 additional fulltime equivalent (FTE) staff will be needed in the next 3 years to help meet the increasing demand for palliative care services. NSW recently funded an additional 600 FTE and Queensland an additional 150 FTE.
- The numbers of services provided in the KPMG report is a conservative estimate of need and only captures the level of demand that providers can meet within current resources.
- At the time of the survey 533 people with palliative care needs were on waiting lists to receive services from palliative care providers.
- Community based specialist palliative care services have seen the most rapid trajectory in demand for service over the 5 years, reporting an 85% increase in services delivered.
- Only 23% of survey respondents indicated their service could meet the current levels of demand. This reduced to 14% when considering future demands.

Key Messages from the interviews

- All interviewees experienced the same uplift in service demands that are reflected in the KPMG results, regardless of setting: hospital inpatient, consultancy, community, state-wide, public or private location.
- Key themes in addition to the extra pressure of activity included:
 - Integration and support for residential aged care facilities
 - Inequitable after-hours support

- The importance of a well-resourced community specialist palliative care service to support the sector
- Limited access to early palliative care provision
- Inequitable community palliative care provision with variable wait times and after hours support as examples
- Providing palliative care support to those with non-malignant conditions, or those in marginalised communities such as people experiencing homelessness.
- Need to support carers with additional respite care in the home especially in end-of-life episodes
- Desire for the palliative care sector to have the opportunity to unify, collaborate and evaluate the current strategic direction.

NSW spends \$300 million per year on palliative care, a recent announcement in June confirms that the NSW government have committed an additional \$743 million over the next 5 years, by year 5 NSW will be spending \$600 million per year ongoing on palliative care; Victoria's annual budget is \$170 million.

From the information gathered in the KPMG survey and from the interviews, we can ascertain that demand for palliative care services in Victoria far exceeds the funding available to continue optimal service delivery. In addition, there are key target areas which need improvement and adequate resourcing to do so. Ensuring the sustainability of this essential sector should be considered a matter of priority, especially with a population that is ageing.

How you can help

1. Share the campaign resources – Website link here
2. Promote the messages using the social media resources already prepared for you on the website
3. Contact politicians in your local electorate to lobby for palliative care, offer to meet with them to discuss it. We are happy to come with you or provide you with more information as preparation. The PCV team can provide you with details of local members.
4. Share the campaign with your local newspapers and radio stations, use it as an opportunity to show case palliative care services you are involved with.

What Palliative Care Victoria is doing

1. Writing to the Premier, the Health Minister, the Secretary and palliative care team in the Victorian Department of Health to deliver the KPMG report and to meet to discuss the recommended actions.
2. Sending every 2022 Victorian electoral candidate the campaign materials and asking for an opportunity to meet and discuss further.
3. Working with a range of media outlets to highlight and promote stories of palliative care across the Victorian community to raise the profile.
4. Writing to all health care leaders and Not for Profit organisations with shared goals to invite them to engage with the campaign and present clear, consistent messaging about palliative care needs in Victoria.