

# Dying to get palliative care

## Funding shortfalls hit terminally ill

**Alex White**

Dying Victorians are being forced on to waiting lists for palliative care or being pushed into overcrowded hospitals instead of receiving care at home because of funding shortfalls, experts warn.

Kelly Rogerson, chair of Palliative Care Victoria, has sounded the alarm that the state's at-home care system is in crisis following years of underfunding by the Victorian government, with at least an extra \$20m needed to restore service levels.

She revealed that 79 people die each day in Victoria without access to palliative care, and that terminally ill patients are frequently told to seek treatment in hospitals rather than stay at home due to budget issues.

"It just doesn't make sense," Ms Rogerson said.

"We've got this massive increase of our ageing population and terminal illness trajec-

ries, but we're a small piece of focus from a Department of Health point of view.

"People are only getting care in the last weeks of their life rather than actually living well, which is what palliative care is all about."

Data from Palliative Care Victoria showed 62 per cent of people who wanted to die at home were actually being admitted to hospital instead.

Ms Rogerson added this was resulting in huge "pressure on hospitals" and called for an urgent funding injection from the Allan government to help struggling services.

Her call comes after funding was cut in the 2024-25 budget. This was despite a report in 2022, commissioned by Palliative Care Victoria, which found 75 per cent of service providers don't believe they can meet future demand, with a projected \$91m annual shortfall in the state's sector by 2025. In comparison, in NSW the sector was boosted in 2022

with an extra \$734m to be injected into the end-of-life care system over five years.

Despite warnings of underfunding, a Victorian government spokesperson said: "Every Victorian deserves access to compassionate, high-quality end-of-life care when and where they need it."

"We've invested more than \$182m to expand access to palliative care across Victoria, including year on year increase."

Opposition health spokeswoman Georgie Crozier slammed the state's action on the issue as tone deaf.

"Labor needs to immediately correct the underfunding of essential palliative care services, so that support and dignity can be provided to those patients at the end of their life," she said.

In one case raised with the Herald Sun a mother-of-three dying of cancer was not able to get assistance for help to care for her young children due to funding issues.

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Keni and Archie at the site of the new GFA charity house in Tarnet. Picture: Mark Stewart

## Kids hammering it home

**Chloe Bott**

Keni and Archie know first hand the critical lifesaving work the Royal Children's Hospital do every day.

Last week, the two seven-year-olds put together a jumbo jigsaw and revealed the design for the 2026 Good Friday Appeal house. Their perseverance

marked the beginning of the charity home build that is near and dear to their hearts.

Keni still attends the RCH after having a craniotomy in 2023 to remove a brain tumour, and Archie visits the respiratory clinic for treatment and consultation.

The five-bedroom Tarnet house will be built by volunteer tradies using

donated building materials. "Thank you to Henley Homes and Willowood Properties from the depths of our hearts for your generous contribution to the GFA and the RCH," Keni's mother Teigan said.

The home will be auctioned on Good Friday next year, and all proceeds will go directly to the RCH.