

4 September 2008

Ms Helen Walker
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WA Cancer and Palliative Care Network
Health Networks
PO Box 8172
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Dear Helen

Rural Palliative Care Model in Western Australia

Palliative Care WA Inc welcomes the Department of Health's draft *Rural Palliative Care Model in Western Australia*, released for consultation in August 2008. The following observations on the organisation's behalf they are based on our established policy positions and understanding of conditions on the ground.

The development of the Model is based on a sound evidence base and the document demonstrates the Department has a good understanding of the problems and issues pertaining to palliative and end of life service provision in rural and remote Western Australia. Poor service provision and coordination contributes to poor outcomes for patients, families and communities, and this relationship could perhaps be emphasised more.

The Model employs a whole of population-based service provision framework. This analytical and planning approach is essential if we are to properly consider issues of equity and access to services and the development of broader health system and community capacity to care for people at the end of life.

Palliative Care WA Inc also welcomes the provisions for regional governance structures and interest groups, and regional and local care coordination. These elements of the Model will tend to build effective partnerships for care, develop broader end of life care capacity and confidence in each region and locality, and ensure ongoing strategic development of services in accord with local population needs.

Further, statewide interest groups and formal relationships with other palliative care services have been shown to be effective in supporting sometimes isolated clinicians (and thereby helping minimise staff stress and job turnover), better understanding emerging statewide end of life care issues, and, most importantly, improving quality and continuity of care for patients, families and carers. Indeed, in many cases the successful deployment of 'PRN' support for people with extremely complex or uncommon needs will rely on local services maintaining strong and responsive relationships with metropolitan Level 2 and 3 partners and other providers. It may be necessary to secure additional resources for metropolitan services to properly support their rural counterparts and their patients through time.

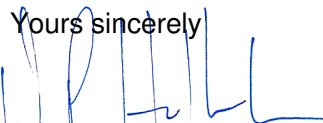
Better support for Indigenous Western Australians at the end of life, their families, carers and communities, is essential. We welcome the consultation draft's acknowledgement of the particular needs of this population and hope that the Department is able to secure resources to ensure Recommendation 5 – the development of strategies in this area – is implemented promptly.

As ever, implementation of the model will be a challenge, but we note that the consultation draft was released by the Western Australian Country Health Service member of the Palliative Care Network Advisory Committee, and we hope that this indicates the Service is committed to supporting regional authorities to put the model in place. Palliative Care WA Inc will take an interest in advocating – at the appropriate levels – for additional palliative care resources to be provided to people living in rural and remote Western Australia if they are needed.

In summary, we congratulate the Palliative Care Network on this important piece of work.

I know that you will not hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions or to discuss the matter.

Yours sincerely



Will Hallahan
Executive Officer