

Palliative Care WA Inc

Information about the WA State Election

Provided in the State Bulletin of 04 September 2008

1. WA Election - 06 September 2008 - Major Parties and Palliative Care

In mid August 2008 Palliative Care WA Inc wrote to the Western Australian branches of Labor, the Liberals, the National, the Christian Democrats and the Greens asking each party if they would, in the next WA parliament (and in the case of the Liberals and Labor, if they formed government):

- support the implementation of a range of service improvement strategies developed by the Department of Health's Palliative Care Network
- help secure appropriate recognition of palliative and end of life care in the next round of Australian Healthcare Agreements, due for finalisation in late 2008.

PCWA identified some specific priorities:

1. long-term funding for the paediatric palliative care service
2. improved coordination of palliative care service provision in all rural areas of WA
3. improved access to specialist inpatient palliative care beds throughout Perth (in accord with the Reid Review of 2004)
4. ongoing support for indigenous palliative care.

Our process has two objectives - to bring palliative and end of life care issues to the attention of WA politicians, and to glean information which might help our members and other stakeholders make their personal voting decisions on election day, which is this Saturday 06 September 2008. A copy of the materials we sent to the parties is available from me on request.

The following information paraphrases the information with which I have been provided.

Labor - has not, at the time of writing, responded to our written information, this is partly due to a communications mixup, so I think it is only fair to send you any response if it arrives in time tomorrow. Labor has indicated to PCWA in recent weeks that they intend implementing strategies developed by the Palliative Care Network, strategies which address the four priority areas we identified. The Labor website is www.visionwa.org.au.

Liberals - Dr Kim Hames MLA, Shadow Minister for Health, announced a \$3.5M a year palliative services project fund to help improve the capacity of existing programs and develop imaginative new ways to deliver palliative services to Western Australians as part of the 'Liberal Plan for Better Health Services' (see the election commitments page on www.wa.liberal.org.au). In a letter to me, Dr Hames said a special focus of the fund will be on providing palliative care to indigenous, rural and remote communities. He also advised a Liberal Government would increase funding for Silver Chain by \$84M over four years, part of which will assist palliative care patients, and said he looked forward to discussing PCWA's other recommendations 'in government'.

Greens - Giz Watson MLC, Member for the North Metro Region, in a letter to me, highlighted the Greens' health policy (<http://greens-wa.net>) which has a strong focus on prevention of illness, better planning to meet the health needs of an ageing population, initiating a holistic cancer control plan with a special emphasis on palliative care, and improving organ donation rates in WA. She wrote that the Greens believe equitable access to a comprehensive high quality health system is a basic human right, and are strongly aware of the particular needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Specifically, the Greens support the consensus decision-making process employed by the Palliative Care Network, and support Australian Greens' policy relating to the Australian Health Care Agreements which commits to expanding community-based support services. Lastly, Ms Watson mentioned her and the Greens' support for the WA consent to medical treatment bill, and her calls for national recognition and a standardised register of all advance directives.

Nationals - Brendon Grylls MLA, Leader of the Nationals WA, in a letter to me, said his party has concerns about the funding and resourcing of health services in regional WA, that they oppose the Labor Party's hub and spoke service model, and that they want to ensure people living in regional communities can access health services, including palliative care, close to home. The Nationals' key policy, 'Royalties for Regions', would quarantine 25% of all mining royalties (\$675M over and above current government expenditure in 2008-09) for reinvestment in regional projects, including country health services. The Nationals support a regional palliative care coordination model in all areas of WA to ensure people can receive adequate care close to their home and families. The Nationals say they will not form a coalition but aim to secure the balance of power in the parliament and use this leverage to make Royalties for Regions 'a non-negotiable policy'. The website is www.nationalswa.com.

Christian Democratic - Gerald Goiran, State Director of the Christian Democratic Party, in a letter to me, said his party supports palliative care, is very concerned 'by the push for euthanasia' and wants to see more resources devoted to improving quality of life for patients and families facing life-threatening illness. He said the Christian Democratic Party totally supports all the strategies outlined by PCWA and would seek to implement them if elected. The website is www.cdpwa.org.au.

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