

14 August 2008

Hon Jim McGinty MLA
WA Minister for Health
Australian Labor Party WA Branch
2nd Floor, 79 Stirling Street
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Minister

The incidence of life limiting conditions like cancer and organ failure is growing all the time as the population of Western Australia ages. In addition, more and more people are everyday diagnosed with multiple chronic diseases. Many are likely to eventually die from a sudden exacerbation of one or more of these illnesses, while most live for years with poor health and high care requirements.

Each year we understand a little better the looming challenge of providing quality end of life care for large numbers of people, and of supporting their carers, families and communities. The National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission, for example, recently identified 'caring for and respecting the needs of people at the end of life' as one of 12 challenges for our health system. Now is the time for all levels of government to invest in strategies which develop the entire health system's, and the broader community's, capacity to provide appropriate end of life care.

The WA Palliative Care Network, working with a range of stakeholders including Palliative Care WA Inc, consumers and clinicians, has already developed a range of strategies which are consistent with the health-promoting, needs-based, whole-of-population service models called for by the Reid Review in 2004, and by Palliative Care Australia. These strategies are designed to help ensure all Western Australians are able to access safe, consistent, appropriate, high quality care and support at the end of life.

The purpose of this letter is to ask you, should the Labor Party form the next Government of Western Australia, to:

1. fund the prompt implementation of these strategies
2. help ensure the upcoming Australian Healthcare Agreements include adequate provisions for palliative and end of life care.

Palliative Care WA Inc's members and supporters, would be interested in your answers, and we are happy to share them if you can respond to this letter before the election.

The attached paper briefly spells out the issues and identifies specific priorities. Please contact me anytime on 0412 412 532 if you have any questions or to discuss this request.

Yours sincerely



Will Hallahan
Executive Officer