



Palliative Care WA (Inc)

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Hon Robyn McSweeney MLC
Minister for Child Protection, Community Services,
Seniors and Volunteering and Women's' Interests
10th Floor
London House
216 St Georges Terrace
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Minister

Cessation of the WA Funeral Assistance Program

Palliative Care WA Inc is the peak body representing all Western Australians who seek to secure better care and support for those dealing with the problems of dying, death, and bereavement.

We have recently become aware of the Government of Western Australia's decision to cease funding the long-standing Funeral Assistance Program, until now administered by the Department of Child Protection.

Our understanding is that the Program funds in the order of 400 funerals each year, with gross costs of about \$1.2M, and net costs, after funds have been reclaimed from decedents' superannuation, Centrelink bereavement payments and other sources, of just over \$700,000. Palliative care providers report that the Department of Child Protection has administered the Program very diligently, with careful regard for taxpayer funds. (This diligence has cost palliative care services, who often must pay body storage charges while the Department's thorough but time-consuming processes are completed.)

Palliative Care WA Inc is of the view that the Funeral Assistance Program is of vital importance, ensuring the poorest people in our community are – mostly – buried in a timely and dignified manner.

The purpose of this letter is to ask you how the Government sees 400 West Australians will be buried each year from now on. Do you anticipate some other level of government will meet this need? Will health services, whose finances are already stretched, be expected to pay for funerals, and if so, what will happen to those people who never interact with a health service prior to death? We note that if health services must pay, the cost to government will remain, but efficiency and the capacity to recover some funds will diminish.

Palliative Care WA Inc would be pleased to meet with you to discuss this urgent issue at any time.

Yours sincerely

Will Hallahan
Executive Officer

cc Sue Ash, CEO, WA Council for Social Services
Michele Kosky, ED, Health Consumers Council of WA
Brian Begg, President, Australian Funeral Directors Association – WA Division