

Palliative care in New Zealand is critically ill

“Many New Zealanders are missing out on vital palliative care services as the government continues to inadequately resource the sector” says Wayne Naylor, spokesperson from the newly established Palliative Care Collaborative Aotearoa (PCCA).

“The PCCA is concerned that a lack of resources is leading to inequitable outcomes for the most vulnerable people requiring palliative care, including children, and people in marginalised groups because of their ethnicity, address or diagnosis,” Mr Naylor says.

“It has become clear that a strong, cohesive voice to advocate, lead and advise on palliative care issues at a national level in Aotearoa New Zealand is critical.”

Therefore, Hospice New Zealand, the Australia New Zealand Society of Palliative Medicine, Hospital Palliative Care New Zealand, the Palliative Care Nurses New Zealand, and Paediatric Palliative Care Australia and New Zealand have pulled together to create the PCCA – a single voice to lobby for greater recognition of the importance of palliative care and for equitable treatment of people’s end of life choices by the Government, the Ministry of Health and Te Whatu Ora – Health NZ.

“It’s concerning that New Zealand’s international ranking on the quality of our end-of-life care has plummeted and little attention is being given to address the situation,” he says.

“Improving access to palliative care services was implicit in the acceptance of assisted dying in New Zealand, yet this has not eventuated.

“We are disappointed that the government now has seven people working on assisted dying without one single person within the Ministry of Health and Te Whatu Ora – Health NZ responsible for palliative care.

“We’re calling on the government to work with us on six key areas to address these inequities.”

The PCCA’s six key focus areas include funding a national approach to the care of dying babies, children and young people, increasing funding to deliver sufficient palliative care services, ensuring sector strategies and plans are up-to-date and relevant, increasing training to support those working in the sector, increasing awareness so families and whanau can support one another up to the end of life, and increased regional and cultural accessibility to services.

“We’re really passionate about improving the care for people who are dying,” Mr Naylor says. “We have come together to ensure every New Zealander can have choices and dignity at the end of their life.

“Palliative care is a human right. It can’t be subject to a person’s age, race or address. The government must step up and help us by better resourcing our services.”

For more information on the Palliative Care Collaborative Aotearoa visit: www.pcca.nz