



Palliative Care
Australia
Matters of life and death

Better access to palliative care

Petition in support of PCA's Federal Election Platform –
what are people saying?

MARCH 2025

Key themes raised by petitioners

Australia has responded strongly to [the 'Better access to palliative care' petition](#) with 40,000 signatures collected since December 2024.

Apart from galvanizing Australians around the value of palliative care, the petition has been an outlet to express the good and bad of dying and death in our country, with many people adding their story to their signature:

"My beautiful mother had to jump through so many hoops to get palliative care. She was told she had to PROVE she was going to die within 6 months to get access. She did prove it - by dying a horrific death well within the 6 months." – Sharon

"I have witnessed firsthand the value of palliative care, and the grace afforded to my mother in being able to die at home, in her own bed, in the presence of her family and with the support of loved ones. Everyone should be afforded this dignity and respect." – Ross

"My mother's last 6 months of life were terrible. She had a massive stroke and was totally incapacitated. It was awful and traumatic for everyone." – Julie

"Having lost a sister to melanoma, she spent her last days in palliative care. I have seen how important it is for the comfort and wellbeing of the sick and their families." – Diane

These four comments represent the thousands we have received. Overwhelmingly the response to the petition tells us two things:

1. People and families who have been able to access palliative care have a much better experience at the end of life – less pain, less distress, less grief.

2. Conversely, those left behind, who haven't been able to access palliative care for their loved ones speak of lasting trauma, deep guilt due to "not having done enough", fear for their own future, and of a betrayal by a system meant to care.

This report seeks to represent that response and share the learnings with those who want to make up the 48th Parliament of Australia:

1. Strong Public Support for Better Access to Palliative Care:

- **Access to Care:** Many respondents highlighted difficulties in accessing high-quality palliative care within aged care. Those who have been able to access palliative care expressed deep gratitude and demanded that all Australians be able to access this critical care and have choice at the end of life.
- **Dignity in Death and Lasting Grief:** Frequent mentions of "dignity" and "rights of those who are dying". Being cared for at home was a wish expressed often, and many people spoke of the deep trauma and distress that remains many years after a 'bad death'.
- **Personal Experiences:** Many of those signing the petition and leaving comments are currently living with a terminal illness and expressed fear and distress at not being supported at the end of life - reinforcing the urgency of the issue. As discussed, a significant number of comments also shared emotional stories about family members.
- **It Makes No Sense:** It's clear that respondents understand the stress and strains the public health system is under and the impact an ageing population will have on already stretched services. In light of this, a level of anxiety was expressed by many people about their own future care options as they age.

2. Political and Policy Implications:

- **Growing Public Pressure:** Sentiment analysis indicates sustained engagement, suggesting the issue will not fade without government action. Respondents expressed frustration that reforms to date had not improved access to palliative care.
- **The Opportunity:** Addressing palliative care and end of life dignity can be a positive step for policymakers looking to align with public concerns. Sentiment expressed a clear expectation that access to palliative care should be a priority for ongoing health and care reforms.

How Did We Get Here?

PCA's 2025 Federal Election Platform was launched on 27 November 2024 at Parliament House, Canberra. The platform is built on a foundation of four pillars:

- Better access to palliative care through primary care
- Better access to critical palliative care medicines
- Better access to palliative care through aged care
- Better access to palliative care for people under 65

The actions outlined in the platform by PCA and our members around Australia work within and strengthen existing health and care structures. The full platform is available on the [PCA website](#).

To raise awareness of the platform and generate political will leading up to the 2025 Federal Election, much loved Australian performer and author, Jean Kittson, has been the public face and voice leading the campaign, sharing her own heartache and trauma surrounding the death of her beloved parents, Elaine (99yrs) and Roy (96yrs), in early 2024.

Jean's deeply personal story was shared with the Australian community through a series of powerful videos, where Jean invited Australians "to make some noise" if they supported 'better access to palliative care'. Jean's full story can be viewed on the [PCA website](#).

"My father and mother are examples of the devastating inadequacies, inefficiencies, and incompetence that still plague residential aged care," Jean says.

"No one should have to go through what we did."

As you have seen, Australia responded with 40,000 signatures so far on the '[Better access to palliative care](#)' [Change.org petition](#).

Next Steps

This petition reflects a strong, national demand for improvements in accessing palliative care. Those who seek to form the 48th Parliament of Australia have an opportunity to act proactively in addressing these concerns, ensuring that all Australians receive compassionate and high-quality care in their final months, weeks, and days.

The actions outlined in PCA's 2025 Federal Election Platform should serve as a starting point; a blue print for the next steps of reform across the aged care, primary care, and disability sectors. The enclosed overview will give you and overview of the commonsense, budgetary responsible actions being put forward by the sector.

Palliative Care Australia and our members around the country stand ready to continue our partnership with government to make good on the clear and loud sentiment expressed by Australians through this petition.

To honour those who have taken part and responded to the petition, we close this brief report with the words and weight given to us by Australians to take forward on their behalf:

"One day it will be us and if we don't stand up and speak now then it will be too late by the time it's our turn. This affects everyone!" - Katie

"We owe our elderly and terminally ill good care and respect." - Susan

"Better access to palliative care is worth voting for!" - Laurie

We look forward to further discussions as the next parliament advances Australia's critical health and care reforms.



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