

16 December 2022

**RE: Australian Cancer Plan Public Consultation**

The Australian and New Zealand Society of Palliative Medicine (ANZSPM) congratulates Cancer Australia on the development of the Australian Cancer Plan. ANZSPM is a specialty medical society that facilitates professional development and support for its members. ANZSPM promotes the discipline and practice of palliative medicine to improve the quality of care delivered to patients and families living with life-limiting illnesses. Our members include palliative medicine specialists as well as oncologists, general practitioners, and other medical practitioners, who either practice or have an interest in palliative medicine.

ANZSPM is pleased to see that the final draft Plan has taken into account and developed priority actions for the palliative care needs for Australians living with life-limiting conditions and their families.

We are particularly pleased that our requests for the following enhancements to the initial draft Australian Cancer Plan have been taken up, and we urge Cancer Australia to consider development of an Implementation Plan that takes forward our practical suggestions for enlivening these aspects of the Plan.

**Integrating palliative care at all levels of cancer care**

ANZSPM considers that, in implementing this aspect of the Australian Cancer Plan, the following actions should be taken:

- Earlier identification of patients who would benefit from palliative care, and clear pathways for timely connections to Palliative Care Services
- Improved literacy about the scope of palliative care, and the benefits of early and sustained engagement with palliative care
- Increased engagement between Cancer Services and Palliative Care services
- Increased or mandatory inclusion of palliative care specialists in oncology MDT meetings
- Equitable geographic access to palliative care services for cancer patients
- Improved engagement with Advanced Care Planning.

**Recognising individual patient values and patient choice**

ANZSPM welcomes the Australian Cancer Plan's commitment to person-centred models of care, including maximising quality, safety, and accessibility of value-based models of shared care, developing new models for integrated care across the sector, promoting personalised care, and optimising systems to provide care that is personalised, safe, and high quality.



ANZSPM again takes the opportunity to draw your attention to a practical consideration in the implementation of the Plan. There is often a tension between what is medically best practice and what the patient and their family, based on their own context and values, might want to occur. It is important to ensure patients do not feel that they are obliged to follow a particular treatment path, and that they are supported to make these choices without feeling like a 'bad' or 'non-compliant' patient. ANZSPM recognizes individualised care as a key strength of palliative medicine that could be further integrated into current care pathways.

**For this reason, we recommend that the Australian Cancer Plan explicitly recognises individual patient values and patient choice at all levels of cancer planning and integrates palliative care more comprehensively into cancer services** as part of piloting integrated multi-channel, multi-disciplined navigation models that ensure the right support at the right time for every consumer across the cancer continuum.

### Supporting primary care providers to deliver palliative care

ANZSPM welcomes the importance the National Cancer Plan places on investigating suspected cancer early and referring appropriately. ANZSPM also welcomes the commitment it makes to building on existing capability of the primary care workforce to collaboratively and sustainably support the needs of consumers.

These primary care providers should be enabled, trained and reimbursed to provide generalist palliative care with the support of specialist services as required. This will require a flexible model which is responsive to changes in the current and future demands for palliative care services, including in-home service provision by primary care providers.

### Supporting seamless care transitions

ANZSPM welcomes the goal to support patients to navigate the system and coordinate their care. In particular, ANZSPM wishes to emphasise the importance of seamless collaborative care within and between hospitals (public and private), hospices, community care, and home care settings.

### Increasing palliative care experience for Medical Oncology Trainees

The Plan's Strategic Objective 5 recognises the need to address workforce shortages and improve oncology care through the strengthening of training programs. ANZSPM strongly advocates for timely engagement with palliative care as an essential part of comprehensive cancer planning. Effective collaborations between palliative care and cancer care services requires oncologists to fully understand the scope of palliative care, and the benefits of early engagement with palliative care services. For this reason, ANZPSM **supports mandated palliative care training and clinical experience** for Medical Oncology Trainees and would like to see this need specifically addressed in the Plan.

### Strengthening the evidence base for palliative care

ANZSPM supports the focus on priority-driven national research funding and equitable access to clinical cancer trials, as outlined in the Plan.

We note the focus on cancer clinical trials and draw your attention to the specific circumstances of palliative patients in this regard. Given a person in palliative care is unlikely to be eligible for participation in treatment-based trials of any duration, ANZSPM continues to make the case that palliative care be recognised as a specific priority area for cancer research. Where relevant and feasible, ANZSPM also wishes to see clinical research involving cancer patients include verified quality of life indicators.

ANZSPM also welcomes the focus on accelerating implementation of evidence-based, best practice care by setting care standards and establishing processes to translate evidence and clinical guidance into practice. One approach that ANZSPM strongly recommends is increasing integration of patient-reported outcomes into evidence-based recommendations for management.

We thank you for the opportunity to comment on this final draft Plan.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature is stylized and appears to be 'C. Mott'.

Dr Christine Mott  
**ANZSPM President**

