



DYING WELL: A Palliative Care Policy for Aotearoa

Why are these changes necessary?

Dying well is essential to human dignity

Just as our health system supports us at birth, through illness and in achieving wellness, it should uphold dignity, compassion, and cultural values at the end of life.

Hospices and Hospital Palliative Care Teams make dying well a reality

When specialist palliative care teams are available, whether from community hospices, in hospital, aged care, or at home, people can live their final days relieved from suffering, supported emotionally, socially, and spiritually, and according to their values and cultural traditions.

But hospices are under strain

- Despite strong community backing, due to financial instability as a result of inadequate and unequal Crown investment, staff redundancies, unfilled vacancies, and capping of patient numbers (and introduction of waitlists to maintain patient safety) are now underway.
- While 11,471 people received hospice support last year, we believe between 13,000 – 17,000 New Zealanders would – and in fact, should – have benefited.

There is a workforce shortage

- Lack of pay parity continues to discourage experienced and specialty trained nurses and clinicians from working in palliative care.
- Many specialist palliative doctors are nearing retirement and there is limited training of new specialists. Nurses, GPs and allied health professionals lack consistent palliative care training.
- According to research, NZ has only a quarter of the specialist palliative care doctors needed to meet growing future demand.

Access to quality palliative care is unequal

- NZ has a postcode lottery when it comes to access to palliative care. For example, people living in many locations face greater barriers accessing the full range of quality palliative care services. That's not fair or just.
- Additionally, 24/7 palliative support is variable from region to region. This is a basic standard in most countries and where NZ really falls short.

Our global standing is quickly slipping

- NZ's palliative care ranking has dropped to 15th in 2025, down from 3rd in 2015, as other countries invest and progress while our palliative care development has stalled and even gone backwards. The lack of paediatric palliative care services is a significant contributor to NZ's drop in global rankings.

Yet palliative care is a smart economic investment

- Every dollar invested in hospice care returns at least \$1.54 in actual care services plus \$1.59 in health system and social benefits, by significantly reducing pressure on hospitals, emergency care, and primary care. That's a total ROI of \$3.13 for every dollar invested!



What does fixing the palliative care system look like?

A Fair Price for Hospice Services

- Commit to completion of Health NZ's National Palliative Care Work Programme including implementation of the final recommendations, particularly as regards funding and contracting of specialist palliative care services.
- Ensure the Hospice Services and Funding Review is used to develop a fair price for services and a new national funding model.

Retaining, growing and developing the workforce

- Fund more specialist training positions and create clear career pathways for doctors and nurses.
- Support, and upon settlement, fund, the hospice nurses' pay equity claim.

- Create incentives to attract and retain clinicians, especially in rural areas.
- Make compulsory a standard of palliative care education in medical, nursing and allied health training and ongoing professional development.

Ensuring 24/7 end of life support is available to all New Zealanders

Supporting dying children by implementing the National Model for Paediatric Palliative Care and associated funding

Ensuring Health NZ has Dying Well as a key pillar

Immediate actions to take

We know this can't all happen at once. The following actions are, however, urgent and fully deliverable within your first year of government:

1. Stabilisation funding for hospices – \$20m

Immediate support to maintain care while national work is completed.

2. Fund hospice nurses' pay equity settlement – \$15.5m

Essential to stop workforce attrition and recruit/retain a skilled nursing workforce.

3. Implement the National Model for Paediatric Palliative Care – \$8m

Ensures children and families receive consistent, high-quality support.

4. Committing to:

- Complete and implement the National Palliative Care Work Programme.
- Implement the new National Model for Integrated Adult Palliative Care.
- Implement a National Palliative Care Workforce Strategy, which includes funding more specialist training positions.
- Ensure Dying Well becomes a core pillar within Health NZ.

Why announcing these policies may help your party

A clear, values-aligned win

Palliative care embodies a vision of fairness, dignity and caring for every New Zealander.

Deliverable in the first year

Targeted, modest investments produce visible improvements quickly, reinforcing your party's commitment to restoring public health.

Fiscally responsible

The immediate investments are affordable within a health system context and there is an opportunity to increase the return for every dollar invested.

Aligned with highly respected local organisations

Hospice is widely loved by communities. This is politically sound, emotionally resonant territory, and provides an opportunity for electorate MPs to engage positively locally.

A chance to correct inequity

Fixing postcode access disparities and underfunding shows a party that is serious about rebuilding essential community services, not just hospitals.

A future-focused policy

Sustainable funding alongside workforce development and specialist training, demonstrate a plan to prepare for the future and lift NZ's global standing.