



## Media Release

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# Aged care sector needs more support to help New Zealanders die well

Aged residential care homes need more resources to help them support the increasing number of New Zealanders dying in their care, says Simon Wallace, Chief Executive of the New Zealand Aged Care Association (NZACA).

Mr Wallace says palliative care is becoming a major issue for NZACA's 570 members, which account for 90% of New Zealand's aged residential care sector, providing a range of services, including rest homes, hospital facilities and dementia units.

"The way New Zealanders are dying has changed significantly over the past 20 years, with deaths in aged residential care (ARC) homes increasing faster than for any other place of death in New Zealand.

"ARC homes are also becoming an increasingly important setting for deaths from cancer, exceeding cancer deaths in hospitals in 2010. They are also the most common place of death for New Zealand women, regardless of age or cause of death.

Mr Wallace says NZACA's members are all committed to helping their residents 'die well' and to providing support to grieving families, but the Government needs to recognise the increasing end of life care needs that are being placed on them.

"Almost one third of New Zealanders are now dying in ARC homes. Unfortunately, the way ARC homes are currently funded by Government does not reflect this new reality. This needs to change. Our members provide quality palliative services, but this will be challenged by the growing number of New Zealanders dying in their care.

"We are calling on the Government to pay ARC homes a distinct palliative care supplement and for consistent reimbursement for palliative care across all settings of care."

Mr Wallace says NZACA commissioned a report into the New Zealand palliative care environment, and the UK, USA and Australia experience.

“Research in those countries found that a higher payment is made for palliative care. The research also revealed that providing high quality palliative care in ARC homes delivers significant benefits to the health system, including fewer hospital admissions and hospital deaths.

“If the New Zealand Government improved palliative care funding in ARC homes, it would reduce the burden on our hospitals which will face a growing challenge with the ageing of the population.”

Mr Wallace says NZACA supports new initiatives in the New Zealand palliative care area.

“We are a member of the Ministry of Health’s new Palliative Care Advisory Panel, together with Hospice NZ and other organisations committed to providing high-quality palliative care. We also welcome Ministry of Health and District Health Board palliative care initiatives introduced this year.

“While this is all positive, we need immediate action now to bolster resources for ARC homes to ensure they can continue to provide quality end of life care for residents and support for their families.”

#### **For more information**

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#### **Key Facts & Figures**

- NZACA is New Zealand’s largest aged residential care membership organisation, representing 90% of the sector.
- There are around 666 aged residential care homes spread around New Zealand. The average aged care residential care home is 57 beds.
- 61% of homes are privately owned, 20% owned by a charitable/religious/welfare organisation, 19% publicly listed and 1% have ‘other types of ownership.
- The number of people requiring residential care is steadily increasing and will continue to do so. The number of beds required for residential care will increase from the current 37,030 to 38,000 by 2016 and up to 52,000 by 2026.

Source: 2014 Member Profiling Survey: New Zealand Aged Care Association; Aged Residential Care Service Review, Sept 2010, Grant Thornton