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Cancer Voices NSW
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Re: Election issues for people affected by cancer

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the Greens NSW position on issues of concern to people affected by cancer.

I have developed the below responses in my capacity as the Greens NSW health spokesperson.

For full copies of the Greens policies relating to cancer prevention, diagnosis and treatment please visit <http://nsw.greens.org.au/policy>

If you require more information regarding the Greens NSW position on the below matters please contact me.

1. Should all cancer treatment centres, public and private clinics be required to accredited for standards of clinical care?

Yes. The Greens support accreditation of all cancer treatment facilities for standards of clinical care.

Unaccredited services pose significant risks to cancer patients through the delivery of inadequate or inappropriate treatments or advice.

The Greens believe that at a critical and vulnerable time in a person's life, the regulatory process should deliver to all cancer patients the security and reassurance of knowing that their treatment is being delivered in a framework of clinical care that lives up to the nationally prescribed standards.

2. Will you mandate Clinical Practice Standards for Radiation Oncology and Medical Oncology in NSW?

Yes. The Greens support a mandate for Clinical Practice Standards for Radiation Oncology and Medical Oncology in NSW.

Radiation and medical oncology can involve invasive, high impact therapies that can cause pain, nausea and extreme discomfort.

Clinical practice standards are an important quality control that will re-assure patients they are receiving appropriate and high quality treatment.

3. Do you agree that public cancer patients should not have to face cost add-ons, especially for chemotherapy treatment?

Yes. The Greens are opposed to additional costs for public cancer patients, including for chemotherapy treatment.

Access to health services is a basic human right and should be based on need, not on the ability to pay.

Health Minister Jillian Skinner has abandoned NSW chemotherapy patients to a blame game between the state and federal governments. During a time of incredible stress, cancer patients in NSW face serious payments for chemotherapy drugs that are far higher than those in any other state.

We have put pressure on the Minister Skinner to step up to the plate and support cancer patients at their most vulnerable. We have done this in the media (see: [j.mp/smh120526](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-09-12/skinner-should-stand-up-to-cancer-patients/5564442)) and in parliament (see: [http://j.mp/1AXa0hk](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-09-12/skinner-should-stand-up-to-cancer-patients/5564442)).

4. What is your view on the need for equity in access to palliative care services, with greater funding than is available now?

The Greens are committed to the right of the terminally ill to die with dignity, with the least possible amount of pain and discomfort. It is important that this takes place in a setting that also provides comfort and support to loved ones.

The Greens strongly support the provision of additional palliative care nurses and specialist physicians to ensure that care can be delivered in the community, especially in rural and regional NSW.

Despite an overwhelming majority of Australians expressing a preference to die at home, palliative health care in NSW is heavily hospital-centric. We are particularly concerned that while 70% of people state that they wish to die at home, only 14% do so.

Good quality care in a hospital or community setting is vital to ensure the mental and physical wellbeing of NSW citizens receiving palliative treatment, their families and other support networks affected during such a difficult time.

5. The Government's good new end-of-life care packages should be available state-wide. Will you commit to ensuring this?

The geographic location of a patient at the end of their life should not determine whether or not they can gain access to palliative care. The Greens support the availability of palliative care and end-of-life care packages across NSW.

The Greens are also committed to ensuring that people who have become incapacitated are not denied autonomy and control over their treatment. Legislation to support advanced care directives is urgently needed to ensure that the thought-out and premeditated wishes of each individual are respected and upheld in often difficult circumstances.

The Greens will also continue to advocate for the legalisation of voluntary euthanasia to enable the terminally ill who are psychologically capable of making an informed decision can maintain a high level of dignity and bring to an end intolerable pain and suffering.

6. The uptake of these end-of-life care packages and their success or failure is entirely dependent on the capacity of each palliative care service. Will you commit to enhancing the capacity of palliative care services state-wide, especially in rural and regional NSW?

The Greens are strong advocates for end-of-life care that provides patients with choice and dignity. We support enhancing the capacity of palliative care services state-wide.

Further investment in rural and regional health services is a priority for the Greens NSW. We are calling for significant investment in oncology, dialysis and mental health services for rural and remote communities. Additionally, for patients in rural and regional communities whose clinical needs cannot be met near their homes, the Greens support accessible and affordable patient travel and accommodation.

The Greens are also calling for measures to ease the financial and emotional burden incurred by patients travelling from rural and regional areas to metropolitan centres for medical treatment. We are strongly opposed to the closure of country-patient accommodation services such as Blue Gum Lodge at Royal North Shore Hospital. We also support an increase in funding to the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS).

7. Many cancer patients are transferred to aged care facilities if they need ongoing care or don't die quickly enough in acute hospitals and palliative care units. Will you commit to increase the availability of specialist palliative care to aged care facilities?

Government support has failed to keep pace with the number of people with substantial needs for pain relief and dignity in the final stages of their life. As the NSW population ages and advances in medical treatments keep people alive for longer, palliative care services are under pressure from increasing demand.

The Greens support the provision of specialist care nurses to visit homes and aged care facilities to provide for the wishes of the terminally ill to stay in place and to be treated in the location to which they have been transferred. These measures are critical to provide choice and control over end-of-life experiences.

8. Co-ordination of cancer care: cancer patients recommend the introduction of guidelines to ensure clarity re what services should be provided and what can be expected. Will you undertake the development and implementation of such guidelines?

Receiving a cancer diagnosis is a distressing event for the patient and their carers and families. This should not be exacerbated by the stress and confusion created by a lack of coordinated care.

The Greens support the introduction of guidelines to ensure clarity in the provision of care.

The Greens will be announcing additional funds for Local Health Districts to enable them to provide seamless coordinated cancer treatment and support. Treating health needs at the local level addresses people's daily lives and experiences, allowing for greater co-ordination.

We will also be announcing additional funding for Aboriginal community health services to ensure cancer care is better coordinated.

9. Patient held cancer treatment and care plans will improve efficiency and outcomes: what is your view on requiring these to be introduced?

Recent research suggests that patient-held records and written survivorship care plans improve outcomes and empower patients in regards to their own treatment.

The Greens accept these findings and support the implementation of patient-held records and plans.

Widespread implementation will require significant support from the medical profession which will need to be developed through careful consultation.

Cancer places enormous strain on patients and their support networks. Empowering patients with their own records and care plans will not only address some of the psychological burden of a cancer diagnosis but it will facilitate more targeted and individualised treatment.

10. The condition of Lymphoedema needs greater acknowledgement and access to effective treatment – do you support the development and adoption of guidelines which clarify best practice treatment?

Conditions and symptoms associated with the treatment of cancer, such as Lymphoedema, further reduce quality of life for patients. The Greens support guidelines that encourage best practice evidence-based management programs for Lymphoedema.

While Lymphoedema cannot be cured, the symptoms can be reduced and managed with appropriate intervention, particularly if the condition is diagnosed early.

It is therefore important that the occurrence of Lymphoedema and other damage to the lymphatic system be acknowledged as a side effect of cancer, and that treating clinicians are aware of the likelihood of occurrence and the treatment options.

11. Cancer patients want cancer research to be more focussed on personalised medicine and targeted therapies: do you commit to supporting this as a research priority?

Yes. The allocation of research resources should be based on the available evidence of what is likely to cause the greatest improvement in patient health wellbeing.

12. Will you support a conscience vote to legalise medical use of marijuana for the terminally ill? What is your position on this issue?

All Greens members are committed by policy to vote for regimes that improve access to medical cannabis for the terminally ill and for others who may benefit from it.

The Greens NSW are strongly committed to the campaign for the legalisation of medicinal cannabis and in 2015 will be seeking support for our bill currently before the NSW parliament.

The Bill lists severe and treatment-resistant nausea and vomiting due to chemotherapy and pain associated with cancer as being symptoms that may be relieved through the use of cannabis. It can be accessed online here: <http://j.mp/medicannabisbill>

The Bill sets out a compassionate and sensible solution for those suffering from intolerable pain and chronic conditions. Our model takes decisions about medicinal cannabis use away from politicians and police and into the hands of medical practitioners.

13. NSW Cancer statistics are now very outdated; the latest are from 2008. Will you seek a way to overcome the problems involved?

Effective and targeted health policy and treatment programs rely on quality data about diseases. Outdated statistics are a barrier to best practice. The Greens support an update to NSW Cancer statistics.

14. Is the money spent on cancer in NSW spent most effectively (is public cancer services and the Cancer Institute NSW). Do you think we should undertake an audit of cancer spending in NSW?

The Greens support an audit of cancer spending in NSW.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Kaye". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Kaye
Greens NSW MP and Health Spokesperson