

The Senate

Community Affairs
References Committee

The cancer journey: informing choice

Report on the inquiry into services and
treatment options for persons with cancer

June 2005

© Commonwealth of Australia 2005

ISBN 0 642 71509 2

Senate Community Affairs References Committee Secretariat:

Mr Elton Humphery (Secretary)

Ms Lyn Beverley (Principal Research Officer)

Mr Ian Kemp (Seconded adviser)

Ms Leonie Peake (Research Officer)

Ms Ingrid Zappe (Executive Assistant)

The Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Phone: 02 6277 3515

Fax: 02 6277 5829

E-mail: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

Internet: http://www.aph.gov.au/senate_ca

This document was produced by the Senate Community Affairs References Committee Secretariat and printed by the Senate Printing Unit, Parliament House, Canberra.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Members

Senator Gavin Marshall, Chair	ALP, Victoria
Senator Sue Knowles, Deputy Chairman	LP, Western Australia
Senator the Hon Peter Cook (to replace Senator Steve Hutchins for this inquiry)	ALP, Western Australia
Senator Gary Humphries	LP, Australian Capital Territory
Senator Meg Lees	APA, South Australia
Senator Claire Moore	ALP, Queensland

Participating Members

Senator the Hon Eric Abetz	LP, Tasmania
Senator Lyn Allison	AD, Victoria
Senator Guy Barnett	LP, Tasmania
Senator Andrew Bartlett	AD, Queensland
Senator Mark Bishop	ALP, Western Australia
Senator Kim Carr	ALP, Victoria
Senator Grant Chapman	LP, South Australia
Senator Helen Coonan	LP, New South Wales
Senator Trish Crossin	ALP, Northern Territory
Senator Kay Denman	ALP, Tasmania
Senator Alan Eggleston	LP, Western Australia
Senator Chris Evans	ALP, Western Australia
Senator the Hon John Faulkner	ALP, New South Wales
Senator Alan Ferguson	LP, South Australia
Senator Jeannie Ferris	LP, South Australia
Senator Michael Forshaw	ALP, New South Wales
Senator Brian Greig	AD, Western Australia
Senator Brian Harradine	IND, Tasmania
Senator Len Harris	PHON, Queensland
Senator John Hogg	ALP, Queensland
Senator Meg Lees	APA, South Australia
Senator Ross Lightfoot	LP, Western Australia
Senator Joseph Ludwig	ALP, Queensland
Senator Julian McGauran	NPA, Victoria
Senator Sue Mackay	ALP, Tasmania
Senator Brett Mason	LP, Queensland
Senator Shayne Murphy	IND, Tasmania
Senator Kerry Nettle	AG, NSW
Senator Marise Payne	LP, New South Wales
Senator John Tierney	LP, New South Wales
Senator John Watson	LP, Tasmania
Senator Ruth Webber	ALP, Western Australia

TABLE OF CONTENTS

MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEE	<i>v</i>
LIST OF ACRONYMS	<i>xi</i>
PROLOGUE.....	<i>xiii</i>
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	<i>xv</i>
CHAPTER 1	
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Terms of reference.....	1
Conduct of the Inquiry.....	1
Background to Inquiry - Cancer in Australia	2
What is cancer?.....	2
The good news.....	3
The increasing burden of cancer in Australia.....	3
The need to ensure the best use of cancer resources	5
Increasing patient focus and empowerment	6
The Call for Reform of Cancer Care in Australia	10
Conclusion	11
Acknowledgments	13
CHAPTER 2	
ROLE OF THE COMMONWEALTH AND STATE/TERRITORY	
GOVERNMENTS	15
The Australian Health Care System	15
Overview of health system funding.....	15
Roles and responsibilities	15
Commonwealth government.....	15
State and Territory and local governments	16
Private Sector	16
Non-government sector.....	17
Joint government policy forums	17
Medical workforce	17
Health Reform Agenda Working Group.....	18
Coordination of cancer activities	18
Expenditure on cancer	18
National Service Improvement Framework for Cancer	19
Strengthening Cancer Care.....	20
Cancer Australia	20
State and Territory Cancer Initiatives.....	21

New South Wales - The Cancer Institute	21
Victoria - Department of Human Services	22
The development and implementation of the Cancer Services Framework	22
The Fighting Cancer policy	22
The Ministerial Taskforce for Cancer.....	23
Establishment of Cancer Coordination Unit.....	23
Western Australia - Department of Health.....	23
Conclusion.....	24
CHAPTER 3	
IMPROVING CANCER CARE IN AUSTRALIA	25
Traditional care model.....	25
Referral issues	25
Accreditation of cancer services and credentialing of practitioners	28
Fragmentation of care.....	30
Multidisciplinary Care.....	32
Definitional Issues	32
The situation overseas	33
The situation in Australia	34
National Breast Cancer Centre leading the way in multidisciplinary care	34
The development of multidisciplinary care in Australia	35
Palliative Care	36
Conclusion.....	36
Barriers to implementing multidisciplinary care.....	36
A question of patient ownership.....	37
Resistance to change.....	37
Medical Benefits Scheme (MBS).....	39
Current Medicare provisions	40
Workforce issues	42
The cost of Multidisciplinary Care.....	44
Rural and Indigenous Australians and multidisciplinary care	45
Care coordination	45
Breast Care Nurse Model	47
Who is best placed to coordinate?	48
The need for information	49
Conclusion.....	50
Psychosocial support	50
Conclusion.....	57
Cancer care in regional, rural and remote areas	59

The way forward.....	61
Video and Teleconferencing	63
Travel and accommodation assistance schemes.....	64
Cancer care for Indigenous Australians	69
Problems with data quality	70
Conclusion.....	73
CHAPTER 4	
COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES.....	77
The great divide: conventional and complementary treatment	77
Definitional issues	77
Conclusion	80
Prevalence and cost of complementary therapies.....	81
What motivates people to use complementary therapies	82
Comparisons with overseas practises	83
Evidence for complementary therapies	84
Research into and regulation of Complementary Therapies	86
Safety and efficacy of complementary therapies.....	91
Towards Integrative Medicine - Integrating complementary therapies and conventional medicine	93
Providers of complementary therapies	94
Moving to integration - from ideas into practice.....	96
Information for cancer patients	99
Regulation of complementary therapy practitioners	100
Integrative medicine as practiced in Australia	101
Complementary therapy services in the non-government sector.....	102
Conclusion.....	104
CHAPTER 5	
OTHER ISSUES RAISED IN THE INQUIRY	107
Early detection through screening programs.....	107
Access to free mammograms	107
Access to free mammograms once diagnosed with breast cancer	108
Access to breast prostheses and lymphoedema sleeves	109
Access to PET scans for people with recurrent or advanced breast cancer	110
Adolescent cancer care	111
Research.....	116
Clinical Trials	116
Data.....	117
Palliative care	119

CHAPTER 6	
FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR CANCER CARE IN AUSTRALIA	125
Diagnosis and referral.....	126
Referral guidelines.....	126
Empowering cancer patients through provision of information.....	126
The need for support.....	127
Improving delivery of services and treatment options	127
Development of multidisciplinary care	127
Measures to increase the practice of multidisciplinary care in Australia	128
Multidisciplinary care needs to be better supported by the health system	128
Accreditation of cancer services and credentialing of practitioners	128
A multidisciplinary team must include non medical health providers	129
National adoption of clinical guidelines	129
Conclusion	129
Improving care co-ordination	130
Improving access to psychosocial care	130
The need for information during the cancer journey.....	130
The needs of regional and Indigenous Australians	131
Complementary therapies	131
The need for more information on complementary therapies	132
Towards Integrative Medicine.....	133
The need for more investment in research into complementary therapies.....	134
Palliative care	134
Conclusion	134
APPENDIX 1	
LIST OF PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS, TABLED DOCUMENTS AND OTHER ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AUTHORISED FOR PUBLICATION BY THE COMMITTEE	137
APPENDIX 2	
WITNESSES WHO APPEARED BEFORE THE COMMITTEE AT PUBLIC HEARINGS	143
APPENDIX 3	
GOVERNMENT AND NON GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED IN CANCER TREATMENT OR SUPPORT.....	149