I am writing on the advice of the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP regarding your inquiry into Palliative Care in Australia.

From my experience of caring for my 91year old mother at home and sitting beside her during her final days in a nursing home, it seems that aged persons in nursing homes are denied the standard of palliative care they would receive in a dedicated Palliative Care Ward of a hospital. My mother suffered needlessly. I was unable to get her the level of care she needed, despite clear instructions from her GP. I was informed the neglect was due to acute staff shortages and poor training of the staff that were on duty. I am able to supply you with the details of mother's case should your require as an illustration of the poor level of end of life care our aged citizens may experience.

The issues that arose included:
1. staff's lack of knowledge of basic palliative nursing techniques;
2. staff prejudices about the administration of palliative care medications;
3. failure to administer medications in a timely manner;
4. untrained and/or casual nursing staff;
5. and general abandonment for hours - I could not get a nurse to attend my mother, who rarely complained, was in acute pain and distress. I had to leave my mother's side to find the duty nurse and pleaded with her to provide medication (for which scripts had been written the day before). When I left the hospital much later in the evening to attend to other family, my mother had still not received any nursing care or medication, although I was assured it would be given to her very shortly.

I have already addressed these concerns with the nursing home, and I understand some effort was subsequently made by the CEO to provide palliative care training for the regular nursing home staff. However, I was also informed by the CEO that the home did not have the funding to provide the same standard of care terminally ill patients would receive in a hospice/hospital setting. I am sure my mother's situation was not an isolated incident, nor unique to this nursing home!

More work needs to be done to ensure our aged citizens get the same quality of end of life care that is provided to younger persons with similar medical conditions.

This is a serious equity issue! Please act upon it so my mother's suffering is not repeated in nursing homes across the country.

Yours Sincerely