

Media Release

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Calls for equal access to cancer care in Australia, as February 4 marks World Cancer Day

New data reveals the divide between regional and metro areas when it comes to accessing cancer care

This World Cancer Day, Cancer Council is calling on the Federal Government to ensure all Australians have access to optimal cancer care during COVID-19, and beyond.

This includes calls to introduce telehealth services to support access to specialist allied health, such as physiotherapy, psychology, nutrition and more, and supportive care services such as financial and practical assistance, from within local communities.

Dr Tanya Buchanan, Cancer Council Australia CEO, noted that cancer outcomes in Australia are among the best in the world, but that these are not experienced equally across the country.

“All Australians, regardless of where they live or receive treatment, should expect high quality cancer care, information and support, yet data shows that those living in rural or remote areas of the country face an increased risk of dying within five years of cancer, compared to those living in urban areas,” she said.

“We need greater support for those living in regional areas when it comes to cancer navigation systems and care, to ensure that everyone has access to information, resources and care that can provide them the best cancer outcomes,” added Dr Buchanan.

Data from the ABS indicates that migration out of Australia’s capital cities is continuing to rise, with figures from 2021 setting a new net loss record for capital cities. This came as 66,300 Australians made the move to regional and rural areas. Cancer Council argues that there is a renewed urgency to tackle inequalities, given that so many Australians are leaving the cities due to the repercussions of COVID-19.

Associate Professor Rob Zielinski has patients who rely on access to telehealth services because they live in regional areas. “As more people make the move to live regionally, there is more demand for better access to care. Thanks to telehealth, I have patients who are now able to undertake a post-operative review via video with a surgeon that will save them from having to undertake a 500km round trip for a 10-minute appointment.”

“Greater access to services such as telehealth can give people affected by cancer more choice in their treatment, more convenience, and give them and their carers timely access to essential care at home,” he said.

Consumer research by YouGov shows that people living in regional areas are indeed feeling the geographical divide when it comes to provision of cancer treatment: more than 1 in 4 Australians living in regional areas believe that access to cancer care is not equal among everyone, but nine in ten Australians are in support of measures to ensure equal access to cancer care, regardless of location.

In addition to greater access to optimal cancer care via telehealth services, Cancer Council is calling for the adoption of an approach to ensure all Australians with cancer have the support

they need to access information and care. This would include the introduction of a system to help people navigate health services with telehealth processes, artificial intelligence solutions, and supportive care nurses where relevant.

Cancer Council is asking Australians to show their support for equal access to cancer care by taking the cancer-free pledge to continue to move towards a cancer free future. To take the pledge or find out more visit www.cancer.org.au/take-the-pledge.

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For media enquiries please contact:

Cancer Council Australia Media Team, media@cancer.org.au, (02) 8063 4109 (diverts to mobile).

See Cancer Council's [website](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

About research:

This study was conducted by YouGov in January 2022. The sample for the study was comprised of 1,010 Australians aged 18+ and was weighted by age, gender and location, to be representative of the Australian adult population aged 18+ or older.

The questionnaire was designed by YouGov, in consultation with Cancer Council Australia.