

## MEDIA RELEASE

12 May 2015

### **BUDGET 2015: Next big step in an aged care revolution**

Older Australians will strongly welcome measures announced in the 2015 Federal Budget to give them direct control of their own aged care funding packages, have access to an independent complaints system, and introduce a streamlined approach to home care delivery, leading seniors advocate COTA Australia said today.

COTA Australia Chief Executive Ian Yates said the changes in home care were a significant step towards an NDIS-style model for aged care and great news for older people and their families.

Currently, the funds for older people's home care packages are given to aged care service providers rather than the older person directly. This will change from February 2017.

"This is an important initiative by the Federal government and one that older people and the sector have been calling for over a number of years.

"Giving funding directly to the person in need of support allows that person to have much greater choice about what kinds of support best suit their needs and circumstances, who will provide it, and how.

"This will result in more older people being able to stay in their homes longer as they age because the services they purchase will more closely match their needs. It will reduce current inefficiencies in which people take a service because it is the only thing on offer, rather than one that is tailored to support them.

"It will also drive up the quality of service provision as older people will be able to shop around for the best provider to meet their particular needs and will be able to move from one provider to another if they are not satisfied with the service being provided. It will also reduce red tape for service providers who will then be able to put more resources into front line service delivery.

"Older people will also have more flexibility to use their funding for medium term needs, being able for the first time to save some of their care funds for something more significant - like a piece of equipment for which there is no other funding available.

"The only concern we have with this initiative is that older people will have to wait for it until 2017 - we would like it introduced earlier. We also wanted to see a timetable for the government to move residential care to this model and we hope that will happen soon."

Mr Yates also welcomed the decision to combine the Commonwealth Home Support and Home Care Packages Programs.

"Combining these two programs will ensure older people have a much simpler and smoother process to access care and again have more control over what support they receive.

"It will also result in higher quality service provision as service providers adapt and change to meet the needs of their clients and have less red tape to deal with."

Mr Yates also welcomed moving the aged care complaints scheme out of the department to the Aged Care Commissioner. COTA has long called for a more independent complaints scheme.

"Having complaints managed by an independent umpire will give older people greater confidence in how complaints are handled," he said.

These are all bold and important steps to a much more consumer focused aged care system.

**Media contact: Ian Yates 0418 835 439, Olivia Greentree 0439 411 774**

**COTA Australia is the peak policy development, advocacy and representation organisation for older Australians representing over 500,000 older Australians across every State and Territory.**