

MEDIA RELEASE

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Extra home care packages and other welcome aged care measures will provide relief for older Australians

Australia's leading seniors' advocacy organisation, COTA Australia, has welcomed 20,000 new high-level home care packages for older Australians over the next four years and measures to make our aged care system easier to navigate for consumers.

COTA Australia Chief Executive Ian Yates said the 14,000 additional packages added to 6,000 announced in MYEFO, together with increases already in the Budget projections, will mean an additional 34,000 Level 3 and 4 Packages over the next four years - an increase of 86 percent.

"With 60,000 people currently waiting for a package more clearly needs to be done but this will make a substantial difference," Mr Yates said.

The government will also allocate an additional 13,500 residential aged care beds.

"Being supported to age at home is the clear preference of older people in need of regular support in their daily lives and critical to their physical and mental well-being," Mr Yates said.

"If they are not able to access Home Care Packages on a timely basis many people are forced into residential aged care prematurely, or end up in hospital – neither of which are the best outcome for them and actually cost governments more than care at home."

Home care funding is the centerpiece of the government's aged care reform package announced in tonight's Budget.

The budget papers indicate over the forward estimates the total number of home care packages will be 151,500 by 2021-22 - an additional 63,910 packages, compared to current 2017-18 numbers (including the extra 34,000 high-level home care packages).

Mr Yates said following COTA Australia's Mental Health for Older Australians petition in 2017 COTA Australia particularly welcomes the \$102.5 million for older Australians mental health services including \$82.5M for older Australians in residential care and \$20M for Australians over the age of 75 years living in the community.

"We thank Ministers Hunt and Wyatt for championing equitable access to mental health services for older Australians," said Mr Yates

Other key measures include:

- \$7.4 million over 2 years to trial Integrated Consumer Supports, including help for older Australians to navigate aged care, in some case with help by other older Australians.
- \$14.8 million for a new assessment framework and a combined assessment workforce to make accessing aged care faster, simpler and more consistent around Australia.
- \$253.8 million over four years to establish the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission.
- \$32.6 million over four years to enhance the regulation of aged care provider quality to respond more quickly to care failures
- \$8.8 million over four years to provide transparency over aged care provider quality

COTA Australia is the peak policy development, advocacy and representation organisation for older Australians, representing COTAs in every State and Territory and through them over 500,000 older Australians.

- \$105 million for culturally safe aged care services in remote Indigenous communities
- \$32.8 million over 3 years for extra palliative care in residential aged care to ensure people can die in their place of choice

COTA notes that residential aged care providers will be provided with \$50M over two years to implement the new Aged Care Quality Standards which include a much stronger focus on “consumer outcomes”.

“Critical to implementing the new aged care standards will be incorporating older Australians and their families into residential aged care quality processes,” Mr Yates said.

“We hope this Government funding will ensure best practice in this area is developed over the next 12 months.”

“COTA is very concerned that the recommendation of the Carnell and Paterson Aged Care Quality Review, to have a Consumer Commissioner who will ensure that resident and family engagement is embedded in Standards compliance and quality improvement, is being sidelined in the Government’s plans for the Quality and Safety Commission.

“We will continue to exert pressure for this important recommendation to be implemented in one form or another, and if necessary we will pursue this during the legislative process to establish the Commission.”

Mr Yates said COTA also applauded the Government’s combining of the residential and home care funding from July 1, 2018 to create greater flexibility to respond to changing needs.

“We also strongly welcome the government’s announced support for changing residential aged care so that funding is in the hands of consumers and high quality providers will be allowed to expand to meet demand from people who want to access their service, and the commitment of funds to plan for this to happen,” Mr Yates said.

“However this change needs to be decided and legislated well in advance of the next Budget.

“This already happens with Home Care Packages and until then our residential care system will still be controlled by bureaucrats and providers and it is past time that older Australians should be able to choose their provider and the location of where they live, as repeatedly recommended by major reviews.”

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