

MEDIA RELEASE

9 May 2019

Older Australians in desperate need of care don't count in either Leader's vision for Australia's future, or even the present, while they die waiting.

The absence of any mention of aged care in last night's Leader's Debate is profoundly offensive to the more than 125,000 older Australians, and the more than 1,000,000 members of their families, waiting for a home care package, **many of whom die while waiting.**

The leaders ignored the biggest single issue facing older Australians and their families today and over the next three years, leading ageing consumer advocate COTA Australia says.

COTA Australia's CEO, Ian Yates, said 10 days out from the election, and 36 hours before the ALP releases its election policy costings, both parties are running out of time to release a plan to cut the time older Australians approved for high level care wait to get it – **currently up to two years!!**

COTA Australia has called on all parties to ensure no-one has to wait more than three months for a home care package that meets the needs government has already approved them as requiring.

Mr Yates asked: "How can both leaders ignore the fact that over a hundred thousand of our most frail older people are not getting the care the government has assessed they need? **If this is not a priority for the next government where are our values as a nation – are older people's lives discounted?**"

"Last night's failure to announce a commitment to a humane aged care packages policy is an appalling failure by both parties," Mr Yates said.

"The **Aged Care Royal Commission** has already acknowledged, early in its work, the scale of the waiting lists, the strain on families and the devastating impact on people waiting – whether being forced into inappropriate residential aged care or dying before they receive the aged care they need – and has said it must be fixed now.

Over a hundred thousand families are suffering from the stress and frustration of a system that is badly letting down their loved ones and nearly a million family members.

"This is not something that can be deferred for the next term of government", Mr Yates said – "all those in need will be dead, and hundreds of thousands more will have replaced them on the queue!"

Last night Mr Shorten pledged to release Labor's election costings this Friday and the ALP recently told the Adelaide Advertiser that it will have more to say "before the election" on tackling the aged care waiting lists. The Coalition last announced new home care packages in February 2019 but has not announced any plan to reduce the waitlist to an acceptable level.

"The single most important immediate action we need to deliver humane aged care in Australia is a commitment that no Australian waits more than three months for the right level of home care." Mr Yates said.

"The Health Department told the Royal Commission it would only cost between \$2 billion and \$2.5 billion to solve this. Older Australians cannot wait another three years to learn each party's plans to address this crisis. It doesn't need to wait for the completion of the Royal Commission, it can be done straight away, as a matter of urgency and humanity."

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