



MEDIA RELEASE

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## Twelve aged care consumer peaks propose aged care reform plan

Twelve leading aged care consumer organisations, led by the Council on the Ageing (COTA) Australia, have issued a detailed joint response to the Final Report of the Aged Care Royal Commission, identifying the key reforms the Federal Government must implement in the upcoming Federal Budget to ensure its response to the Royal Commission gets off to a flying start.

In their joint statement the consumer organisations set out the package of urgent reforms the Morrison government must deliver in the next 12-18 months to build a high quality aged care system that's grounded in human rights and which treats older people with respect for their diversity and capacities, ensures greater control over their care and support, and delivers appropriate, safe and timely services, and fair value for their dollar.

Key among the suite of actions that the signatory organisations want to see initiated in the next year are increased transparency from aged care providers, minimum staffing levels, wage increases for workers, stronger powers and a more versatile toolkit for an independent quality regulator, and a new rights-based Aged Care Act.

"The last thing Australians deserve is the government kicking the can down the road on many of the key changes we need," says Ian Yates AM, Chief Executive of COTA Australia, on behalf of the group.

"The Government cannot get away with cherry picking a few recommendations now but saying it will consider the rest later. That will not wash with the many hundreds of thousands of older Australians who are looking to this government to deliver them hope that they, and their families, will enjoy a radically better aged care system than the one we have today.

"The government must not delay reform. We are sending a clear message to the Morrison Government that older Australians expect action now."

Drawing on the Royal Commission's final report, the joint statement lays out new arrangements for the governance of aged care that will strengthen aged care's independence, funding, quality control, provider integrity and accountability, while also securing greater consumer influence in the system by the wide diversity of older Australians. Critically, they recommend an Implementation Task Force to drive the reforms with an Independent Chair, and independent members as well as senior government officials.

"Much can be achieved in the next year to give older Australians genuine self-determination, hold providers accountable for failure to deliver quality care, to treat those who need support with dignity and respect, and to enable and reward excellence," said National Seniors Australia CEO Professor John Mc Callum.

Other immediate actions called for in the Statement include:

- Immediately increase home care and home support funding; ensure a maximum 30-day wait period for home care by no later than December 2022; and implement a single Care at Home program that provides individualized care by 2023.

- Require providers to publish real-time data on staffing, quality performance, financial information, and consumer experience.
- Abolish the Aged Care Approvals Round/bed licenses and give older people control of their residential care funding and put some competitive pressure on poor providers.
- Establish an Independent Pricing Authority just for aged care.
- Initiate a program of independent Care Finders to help navigate aged care, better information and more advocacy services.
- Develop a comprehensive workforce development plan to ensure we have the right numbers and mix of better paid, better skilled, consumer-focused and continuously improving workers.
- Provide much greater support for family and friend Carers including a major increase in accessible respite care and a network of Carer Hubs,
- Require a commitment to respecting diversity throughout aged care - in standards, in training, in accountability and in access pathways and service design, inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, CALD, LGBTI and rural communities and people living with dementia, with a mandatory Diversity Framework and Action Plans.
- Provide equitable access to health services including dental care, medication reviews, mental health services, allied health, and restorative care and reablement.
- Legislate a commitment to ensuring the lived experience of older people using care services is given real weight in accreditation, reviews, quality measurement, recruitment and every aspect of the aged care system.
- Develop a funding model that grows with needs and ensures sufficient taxpayer funding, balanced with consumer contributions that are fair, sustainable and simple to understand and administer.
- Commit to a timetable detailing when reforms will be commenced and implemented, and to co-designing them with older Australians.

“In the coming year, the Morrison Government can give older Australians more choice, control and transparency in aged care than they have ever been allowed before,” says Mr Yates.

“We recognise that the government faces significant challenges in implementing the Royal Commission’s recommendations in full, including the need for major budget funding and a major increase in workforce. But these must be met. This is Australia’s ‘line in the sand’ moment for giving us the aged care system we deserve and expect.”

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***The complete Joint Statement can be read here: <https://www.cota.org.au/news-items/joint-statement-by-aged-care-consumer-organisations/>***