

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**COTA welcomes Labor's tough stance on poor performing residential aged care providers; looks forward to home care announcements.**

Council on the Ageing (COTA) Australia, the peak body for older Australians, welcomes announcements today by the Labor Opposition that will increase funding transparency, establish a General Duty of Care to protect residents and workers, and put bad providers in jail if they deliberately breach it.

In addition, Labor announced it would appoint a dedicated Aged Care Complaints Commissioner within the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission and give the Commission new investigative powers and the ability to apply civil penalties for any aged care provider who punishes residents, families or workers that complain.

COTA Australia Chief Executive, Ian Yates, said he was pleased Labor was supporting COTA's long standing call for a tough cop on the beat in aged care, with increased powers and penalties.

"Civil penalties if providers punish someone for complaining and criminal penalties for breaching a General Duty of Care demonstrates that Labor is taking seriously the neglect reported by the Royal Commission," said Mr Yates.

"This industry needs to get rid of its far too many bad eggs and lift the standards for all - something its peak bodies have consistently failed to do, so we welcome the industry regulator having the strongest powers."

"We have also long argued that beyond penalties, whoever is in government must ensure that the consistently poorest performing providers are taken out of the industry. The extra powers for the Quality and Safety Commission should be extended to include that, and we look forward to discussing this with Labor.

Mr Yates said that some of the announced measures announced by Labor match the Government's response to the Royal Commission's recommendations, which we welcome, while others indicate that the ALP is working through the Royal Commission's recommendations and signalling its own priorities.

"We are pleased to see Labor set out a clear and forceful response to the neglect reported by the Royal Commission over two and a half years ago, and its Final Report over a year ago," Mr Yates said.

"Reforming aged care is not an easy task - there are few silver bullets and there are still too many poorer quality providers. We look forward to more details of the Opposition's plans and to working with Labor on the measures they have foreshadowed.

Mr Yates also again called on Labor, and all parties, to commit to the implementation of the Royal Commission recommendations and timeline, which now include the Government's response, and the detailed planning and consultation already well underway.

"In particular, we look forward to hearing the Opposition's policies to support the more than one million older Australians receiving care and support in their home, including Home Care Package recipients, who due to the accelerated rollout of packages by the Government, now exceed the number of people in residential care. Planning of the new Support at Home program is well advanced and is a high priority for older people and their families.

"COTA again welcomes Labor putting aged care front and centre in the forthcoming election. We have come a long way since 2007 when neither party released an aged care policy.

"In this election we need comprehensive policies from all parties that really deliver for older Australians."

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