

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Aged care watchdog report recommendations important for improving outcomes for older Australians**

COTA Australia – the leading advocacy organisation for older Australians – welcomes today’s release of the independent capability review of the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission which includes wide ranging recommendations for improving the aged-care watchdog.

COTA Australia Chief Executive Officer, Patricia Sparrow, said it will be important to see the Commission improve the way it currently functions, but also take the necessary steps to ensure it is ready to operate under a new Aged Care Act based on human rights.

“There’s no question that we need to see culture change in the watchdog, and the sector more generally, to ensure rights are upheld across the entire aged care system.

“The review rightly identifies the need for a significant focus on improving the complaints system so that older people and their families are heard in a timely way, that the process addresses the actual complaint that has been raised, and that providers are held accountable when breaches have occurred.

“We look forward to seeing the new Act legislate a statutory Complaints Commissioner, with the appropriate regulatory powers. These powers should include conciliation pathways and an open disclosure framework. COTA Australia will actively engage with the Government on why this is important to older people and their families.

Ms Sparrow said she particularly welcomes recommendations around improvements in diversity and cultural capability.

“Older Australians and their representatives reflect this country’s diversity and it is important to ensure the Commission can support all of the people receiving aged care services.

“It will be important that the strengthening of the independent Advisory Council ensures the right balance of technical skills and the diverse voices of older people and their representatives, including those with lived experience.

“While the Commission has a regulatory relationship with service providers it must never be forgotten that it only exists to act on behalf of the community to ensure the safety and quality of the services provided to older people. Older people accessing aged care services must be front and centre in all considerations and developments.”

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