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MEDIA RELEASE **30 January 2020**

COTA's calls for choice and control reinforced by new home care research

Older Australians want more choice and control over their home care, clear information about fees and quality, and independent advice to help navigate the system, according to new research hailed by COTA Australia as further proof of the need for stronger consumer rights to be built into the aged care system.

The study, conducted by the University of South Australia and released by Consumer Policy Research Centre, surveyed over 500 home care recipients, finding 65% wanted more choice in their care while only 17.9% wanted external bodies such as local government to allocate it for them.

A better home care model with enhanced support and guidance about package funding found the strongest support among respondents at 41%, while a further 36% wanted increased control over their home care package funding so they could hire professionals directly to provide the services they needed. Furthermore, 73.7% felt independent advice was important when choosing care providers.

Council on the Ageing (COTA) Australia Chief Executive, Ian Yates, welcomed this further evidence supporting the need for stronger consumer rights in the delivery of aged care services in the homes of older Australians.

"COTA's long standing calls to increase choice and control for older Australians receiving home care are more urgent than ever," said Mr Yates. "People need access to simple, useful, comparable information about providers so they can make the best decisions about their care, especially when it comes to fees, charges and quality of service.

"Importantly, this study also proves that price is not always the most important consideration for consumers. Referral from trusted individuals like healthcare professionals, friends or family were much more important, as well as quality and reputation.

"What this tells us is that older Australians are sick of an aged care lottery where they are forced to choose a provider without the right information and chance determines the quality of the service they receive. This is simply not good enough.

"COTA is pleased to be working with consumer-led partners delivering independent advice and guidance as part of the aged care system navigator trials. We will continue to lobby for greater consumer rights and supports so that all Australians are equipped with the information and control to determine their own care."

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The report titled 'Choosing care: the difficulties in navigating the Home Care Package market' is available from: https://cprc.org.au/publication/choosing-care-the-difficulties-in-navigating-the-home-care-package-market/

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.