JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

AUSTRALIAN DISABILITY & AGED CARE ORGANISATIONS

31 May 2022

END THE 'DO NOTHING' DECADE FOR SENIORS WITH DISABILITIES

It's time to end a decade of inaction over support for seniors with disabilities.

Right now, people over 65 with significant disabilities are denied the same care, support and services delivered to other Australians, simply because of their age.

To ensure the new Government and Parliament make this a priority, disability and aged care organisations are advocating the benefits of three straightforward reforms that can make an immediate difference:

1. A short term funding solution for people with high intensity support needs so they can receive the same standard care and support as other Australians with disabilities, regardless of when they were acquired.
2. A fair and transparent consultation process that prioritises the needs, choices and goals of people with disabilities aged over 65.
3. A streamlined solution that works for older people with severe disabilities as well as aged care and disability service providers.

We cannot wait for the Disability Royal Commission or other reviews to be complete before tackling this issue. The new Albanese Government can act now to deliver equality and fairness for people over 65 with disabilities.

These are the facts:

1. If you acquire a disability after you turn 65, there is no disability support available to fund your care.
2. If you were eligible for the NDIS during your life but were not accepted before you turned 65, you are not eligible for any Federal Government disability support.
3. People with disabilities over 65 must rely on Home Care Packages that are currently capped at $52,000 each year. However, the proper care for a 65+ year old person with quadriplegia costs more than $200,000 a year.
4. Funding and care shortfalls are currently met by family members who leave their jobs to become carers and sell their homes to fund support.
5. The current gap in funding places unbearable pressure on older partners who have their own care and support needs. They now spend their time fighting for funding in a complex system that should empower and support them.

These aged care and disability organisations are committed to working positively with the new Albanese Government. There is nothing more important than ensuring all Australians with disabilities get the care, support and funding they need.

ENDS

Contact: Louise Yabsley (Watt Advocacy & Communications) 0419 249 236

INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITIES

Anders Halvorsen OAM – Northern Rivers NSW

Anders is the Chair of Forward and has significant lived experience of this issue as a person with paraplegia. Forward Ability Support has played a dual role in his life, initially as a newly injured young man searching for community and support and since 2004, as an elected member of the Board.

Mark Hunter – Gold Coast QLD

Mark is a former school principal, author and Toastmasters International World champion of Public Speaking (2009). He has a spinal cord injury impacting his left side and uses a wheelchair for mobility.

Australian Disability & Aged Care Organisation:

Council on the Ageing Australia	Council on the Ageing (COTA) Australia is the peak body for all older Australians, advocating for their rights and needs to government and the community. Older Australians should be entitled to equal rights with all other Australians.
Forward Ability Support (formerly ParaQuad NSW)	Forward supports people living with spinal cord injury by providing clinical services, home & living support, resources and scholarships. They deliver services in NSW, Queensland and the Northern Territory.
National Disability Services (NDS)	NDS is Australia's peak body for non-government disability service organisations, representing over 1150 non-government service providers. Collectively, NDS members operate several thousand services for Australians with all types of disability.
Physical Disability Council of NSW (PDCN)	PDCN is the peak body representing people with physical disabilities across NSW. This includes people with a range of physical disability issues, from young children and their representatives to aged people, who are from a wide range of socio-economic circumstances and live-in metropolitan, rural and regional areas of NSW.
Spinal Cord Injuries Australia	SCIA supports and advocates for people living with spinal cord injury and neurological conditions nation-wide.
SpinalCure Australia	SpinalCure Australia is Australia’s leading not for profit promoting and funding medical research to cure spinal cord injury.
Spinal Life Australia	Spinal Life Australia, established in 1960, is an advocate and service provider with specialist knowledge and services for people with spinal cord injury and other physical disabilities. Our vision is for people with physical disability to live in an equitable, inclusive, integrated community, independently able to access every aspect of, and contribute to, the fabric of their region.