

IAN YATES - NATIONAL PRESS CLUB ADDRESS - 13 AUGUST 2013

Recognise and acknowledge traditional owners, the Ngunnawal people.

Also thank the National Press Club for its interest in helping to try and make sure the needs of older Australians get the attention they deserve in the election.

Older Australians represent a larger proportion of the electorate than ever before. Almost 40% of voters are over 50. People 50 and over of course represent two or even three generations so there are a range of issues. But parents in their 80's are concerned that their children in their 50's constitute 1/3 of the long term unemployed on Newstart; and adult children in their 50's and 60's are concerned about the health service and aged care needs of their parents in their 80's and over.

COTA Australia, through its membership network of COTAs (Councils on the Ageing) around Australia, has a direct constituency of over 1,000 seniors organisations reaching over half a million seniors, plus over 40,000 individual members.

Today COTA releases its Federal Election Platform, *A New Deal for Older Australians*, which is based on input from seniors over the last few years through our Policy Councils plus direct feedback from our national election panel of nearly 900 members.

While COTA's policy involvements cover 23 different federal portfolios, *A New Deal for Older Australians* presents 30 recommendations across five key areas:

- tackling ageism and age discrimination
- access to quality health services for all older people

- participation of older Australians in the workforce for as long as they need or want
- access to quality aged care services when and where they are needed
- ensuring older Australians have a reasonable standard of living (including affordable and appropriate housing)

It is disturbing that many of our proposals reflect the fact that older Australians are still in many instances second class citizens, so tackling ageism in our society is a key underpinning issue.

The issues in our election platform are interconnected. If you don't have a job for the last decade of your working life before pension eligibility then not only don't you get to accumulate a retirement income above the pension you almost certainly accumulate debts, and have mental health and physical health issues.

Our election survey tells us that health and care are high on the agenda of older Australians, so the composition of today's panel is particularly appropriate.

16 months ago on 11 April 2012 I stood here and talked about the imperative for major reform of aged care to be brought down in the 2012 Budget, then only three weeks away.

Together with Lee Thomas, Federal Secretary of the ANF and Martin Lavery, CEO of CHA, we spoke on behalf of the National Aged Care Alliance whose then 28 member organisations had unanimously supported the National Aged Care Alliance Blueprint designed to implement the Productivity Commissions' *Caring for Older Australians* Report.

On 20 April the government announce the Living Longer Living Better aged care reform package. This fell short of the PC recommendations - which we said from day 1.

However we welcomed LLLB because it delivered, among other things:

- 80,000 new home care packages over the next 9 years which will enable hundreds of thousands of people to be supported and cared for at home, which they prefer
- these home care packages will be 'consumer directed' which means that older people will have much more say in what support they get, from whom, when and under what arrangements
- the introduction of a new Gateway to simplify access to aged care
- development of Quality Indicators for residential care which will give consumers and families a comparative measure of performance
- lifting the aged care provision ratio from 113 beds and packages per 1,000 people over 70 to 125 per thousand over the next 9 years

Since the middle of 2012, principally through the National Aged Care Alliance which has now grown to over 40 members, the sector has been fully involved in a collaborative way with the former Minister and the department in the process of implementing LLLB.

- The first phase of the Aged Care Gateway - *My Aged Care* - has been launched through a website and national contact centre, and is in the process of rapid development
- The first tranche of new Home Care Packages run on Consumer Directed Care (CDC) lines has been allocated
- New user charges with choice of payment method in residential care, and higher government subsidies for residential care, come into effect on 1 July next year

Work is progressing on these and other key areas of the LLLB reforms including the development of the new and comprehensive Home Support Program that commences on 1 July 2015. There are currently 15 National Aged Care Alliance Working Groups involving the department with the aged care sector. This is a big and complex reform that is changing the face of aged care.

We welcome the comment by the Leader of the Opposition in Sunday night's leaders' debate that " On this issue there isn't an enormous difference between the Coalition and the Government" and the commitment that " We have no plans to make significant changes to the system that the Government's put in place."

However LLLB did not go as far as the Productivity Commission and National Aged Care Alliance and COTA all recommended and indeed strongly campaigned for.

The National Aged Care Alliance Vision argued for the funding for care and support services to be linked to each recipient, so that the recipient and their family can determine how and where they receive their care and support, including the option to control how their funding entitlement is used.

Funding to be provided to individuals as an entitlement based on assessed needs, rather than being subject to quotas.

We did not get the full National Aged Care Alliance Vision, or all aspects of the later National Aged Care Alliance Blueprint, out of this government.

In fairness, of all the LLLB changes the huge growth in homecare packages and making all home care packages operate on a "Consumer Directed Care (CDC) basis is the most significant.

- It's not perfect but it's a dramatic shift
- Not just a new set of rules or a different template
- It's a profound cultural shift – a new paradigm for aged support and care

It is about the fact that most people have managed their lives all their life and want to go on doing so, despite challenges they face. Some may not be able; some may not want to; but we know through experiences, research and evidence from other countries that many do, can and will

That actually most people can continue do that if the system allows and enables them.

Our aged care system developed as a provider -anchored system - increasingly regulated

- Providers get the beds, the packages, the dollars
- Providers and government set the menu
- The consumer fits in as best they can in a supply constrained system

What DO consumers want ???

- To have as much control as possible
- To make a contribution -to be interdependent not dependent
- To exercise freedom and choice and experience dignity

However, we didn't actually ask for CDC !

CDC contains its own contradiction – the package and the bed licence still goes to the provider, who is accountable for it to government.

This will limit the degree to which consumers can exercise full rights and control over their support and care.

We need to move beyond this to full entitlement as soon as possible.

In the NACA Blueprint we argued strongly for "entitlement" - which has two parts:

1. no more rationing – once assessed you get access
2. the consumer gets the control of the resources (the package, the bed licence)

This is the dominant theme of the next phase of the National Aged Care Alliance "Agewell Campaign"

COTA's *A New Deal for Older Australians* obviously also calls for the end of the current capped or rationed system and develop a system where the resources are directed to consumers' needs.

However we also call for the next government to:

- Undertake a study to determine the nature, and amount, of unmet demand.
- Create a national aged care assessment framework and tools based on the reablement approach.
- Establish a local physical presence for the *My Aged Care Gateway*.
- Establish a strong and independent complaints process and strengthen and expand the powers of the Aged Care Complaints Commissioner.
- Develop and implement a cohesive, rights based aged care advocacy program that holistically supports older people as they navigate and use the aged care system.
- Develop and implement an elder abuse support and prevention program that informs consumers of their rights.
- Develop and introduce initiatives that support older people to have choice in how they meet their aged care costs and live in accommodation that better meets their later life needs.
- Specifically examine the introduction of a HECS type scheme for older people to borrow against their equity in their home to pay aged care service costs.

The area of highest concern to older people in this election is actually access to high quality, affordable and appropriate health care. Carol and Glenn will talk about aspects of this but I want to note in particular:

- Older people want health care that focuses on promoting good health; health professionals that listen to and engage with them, seeing them as continuing contributors to community, family and the broader society in a whole range of ways

- We need to develop a new Commonwealth-State Palliative Care Agreement that includes a significant increase in palliative care funding to ensure all Australians receive good palliative care when and where they need it.
- We need to harmonise State and Territory laws around advance care planning and end of life decisions to ensure people's choices are respected and develop a national public education campaign around dying and palliative care that looks at what makes a good death and how people can make sure their wishes are respected.
- We need dedicated funding for older adult services in all future Commonwealth State agreements on mental health. and improved training and education for health professionals in the diagnosis and treatment of mental health problems for older people.
- We support the service initiatives identified by Alzheimer's Australia in their Election Manifesto 2013 and urge the next government in particular to provide an additional \$40 million investment per year for dementia research to help identify its causes, help with early intervention and find new treatments.
- Develop and implement a Healthy Ageing strategy that encourages older people to change their lifestyle and addresses the key risk factors around alcohol, nutrition, tobacco and exercise.

Summary

Today we are focusing on aged care and aspects of health care from the perspective of older people themselves.

COTA and Alzheimers Australia have been leading players in seeking aged care reform over the last few years.

However ageing policy is about a lot more than aged care. In releasing *A New Deal for Older Australians* today we are seeking to place some markers in the electoral sand:

- an ageing population is a contributing population that offers Australia many opportunities
- we are not making special claims - we are arguing for equity and fairness for older Australians in employment, health care, housing, income support and aged care
- as for all cohorts in the population that will mean making sure services, programs and supports for older people are co-designed to be appropriate to their needs
- and an end to ageism and age discrimination that results in current inequities through barriers, blocks and ignoring their needs
- and in aged care it's about continuing to move toward an aged care system that puts the older person at the centre, not just in nice words but through control over the resources to which they are entitled as full citizens even though they need certain supports - just as we are now going to do in Disability Care.