

## MEDIA RELEASE

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# COTA Australia: 5 urgent fixes needed in aged care right now

Australia's peak advocacy body for older Australians COTA Australia today outlined the five priority fixes that need to occur in the near future to address well documented failures in aged care while the Royal Commission into aged care is conducting further investigation of the sector.

COTA Chief Executive, Ian Yates said ***Keep fixing Australia's aged care system*** sets out urgent actions the Government must implement in tandem with the Royal Commission if it is serious about aged care reform.

"Quite simply, our aged care system as a whole isn't up to scratch, and it needs to be," Mr Yates said. "While the Royal Commission will address major long-term challenges, other things should happen now."

"What we are suggesting isn't new. COTA, and successive government reviews and reports, have identified the changes that need to occur now to restructure the aged care system, so it is more responsive to people's needs and better meeting current demand.

"The Royal Commission rightly will take at least a year to hand down its findings, but these five priority actions are needed now to provide the quality care over 1.3 million older Australians urgently need and are entitled to."

To help fix some of the priority issues facing Australia's aged care COTA is calling for:

- 1. Funding in the MYEFO or 2019 Budget for 30,000 more high level Home Care Packages so no one waits more than 3 months for care; and getting the creation of one integrated Care at Home program back on track.**
- 2. Legislation by March 2019 to set a definite date for putting residential aged care places in the hands of consumers, not providers – as government has already done with Home Care Packages**
- 3. Compulsory publication of aged care services, staffing levels, price and quality performance by mid-2019 so consumers have information and transparency about which service is right for them**
- 4. More funding to build the capacity of the aged care workforce to deliver higher quality care**
- 5. All quality inspections of aged care providers to be totally unannounced at least once a year for all, with extra targeted inspections for at risk providers**

Mr Yates said too many older Australians are being forced into nursing homes against their will because of waiting times of up to three years to receive high quality home care packages.

"We must also as - a matter of priority - scrap our archaic bed licence system, which allocates beds to providers regardless of their quality or performance and forces people to go where a funded bed is available not where they feel comfortable or safe," Mr Yates said.

"Countless inquiries have recommended empowering residents of aged care services by placing residential aged care packages in the hands of consumers but there is still no firm date for when or how it will happen.

"Without this fundamental change there is absolutely no incentive for residential aged care providers to deliver care beyond the minimum requirements or pressure on lower quality providers to lift their game or get out of the industry."

COTA is also calling for more funding to secure the right quality and mix of aged care staff - "It's also critical that we have better staffing in aged care – not mandated ratios of more poor staff - but more positions where staffing gaps exist, real career pathways, better training and much better pay for the bulk of the workforce."

*Keep fixing Australia's aged care system – taking the next steps in tandem with the Royal Commission* is at:  
<https://www.cota.org.au/publication/keep-fixing-australias-aged-care-system>

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**COTA Australia is calling on the Government to prioritise 5 immediate fixes to Australia's aged care system in tandem with the announced Royal Commission into Quality and Safety in Aged Care. These cannot and need not wait. Below are quotes from COTA Australia Chief Executive Ian Yates on each of the 5 fixes:**

**1. Funding in the MYEFO or 2019 Budget for 30,000 more high level Home Care Packages so no one waits more than 3 months for care.**

*"Too many older Australians are being forced into nursing homes against their will because of waiting times of up to three years to receive high quality home care packages," Mr Yates.*

*"Further investment in home care packages is absolutely critical to providing older Australians with the option to stay at home as they age; and take some pressure off funding residential aged care."*

**2. Legislation by March 2019 to set a definite date for putting residential aged care places in the hands of consumers, not providers – as government has already done with Home Care Packages.**

*"We must also as a matter of priority scrap our archaic bed licence system, which allocates beds to providers regardless of their quality or performance and forces people to go where a funded bed is available not where they feel comfortable or safe," Mr Yates said.*

*"Countless inquiries have recommended placing residential aged care packages in the hands of consumers but despite in principle support from the government there is still no firm date for when or how it will happen.*

*"Without this fundamental change there is absolutely no incentive for aged care provider to deliver excellence in care or pressure on lower quality providers to life their game or get out of the industry."*

**3. Compulsory publication of aged care services, staffing levels, price and quality performance by mid-2019**

*"At the moment there's absolutely no obligation for aged care providers to publish any information that helps a consumer choose their provider including their prices, their quality performance, and their staffing levels, which is an outrageous situation," Mr Yates said.*

*"There must be both transparency and accountability so that older Australians have clear information they need to choose the service that's right for them. That includes access to information about complaints handling and reviews from other consumers."*

**4. More funding to build the capacity of the aged care workforce to deliver higher quality care.**

*"There are many, dedicated, compassionate professionals and carers in aged care, however there's no question we need better staffing across the sector – not mandated ratios (which could mean more poor quality staff) - but more positions where staffing gaps exist, real career pathways, more and better training and much better pay for the bulk of the workforce," Mr Yates said.*

**5. All quality inspections of aged care providers to be totally unannounced at least once a year for all, with extra targeted inspections for at risk providers**

*"At the moment so-called unannounced visits give providers 90 days notice that they will receive a visit before their accreditation expires," Mr Yates said.*

*"Once the new Quality and Safety Commission is in place we need to move to random visits at least once a year, completely unannounced - and more targeted visits for those providers who have a spike in complaints or other identifiable risk factors, to provide assurance that quality is being provided every day of the week, every week of the year – not just when accreditation visits are expected.*