

## MEDIA RELEASE

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# Four Corners highlights unacceptable breaches of aged care standards and professional and medical standards

Appalling incidents of neglect and system failures in aged care catalogued by the ABC highlights the need to continue reforms to protect older Australians in nursing homes, says Australia's peak consumer body for older Australians.

COTA Australian Chief Executive Ian Yates welcomed the national spotlight that the Four Corners programs will further place on failures in our aged care system.

Mr Yates said examples of residents being left alone for hours; the failure to provide basic needs such as showering, incontinence pads and food; and the overuse of antipsychotic drugs for long term control of behaviour, often without patient or family consent, are disturbing and unacceptable, but not new.

"Last night's Four Corners program demonstrates why COTA has advocated so long and so forcefully for governments to review the standards, regulatory framework, workforce culture and funding of aged care so that these kinds of issues are addressed and corrected, and the quality of care improved," he said.

"We don't just need more aged care staff – ratios of poor staff will make matters worse - we need people working in aged care who want to be there, who care about the residents, who have proper training and support, and are backed by proper clinical management," Mr Yates said.

COTA called on the Australian Medical Association, the RACGP and Australian College of Nursing to review professional practice in relation to long-raised issue of the overuse of antipsychotic drugs in aged care.

"The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care and the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia also have an important role to limit the overuse of antipsychotic drugs in aged care."

"What is most disturbing is that every case highlighted on Four Corners last night was a breach of existing aged care standards, and some were a breach of professional clinical standards, but apparently none were the subject of formal complaints; and all that is totally unacceptable in modern Australia."

The new Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission, which will come into effect in January next year, will also provide more robust avenues for families and whistle-blowers to raise the alarm, and the Commission is tasked with engaging residents and families more effectively in its work.

"Let's be clear, neglect is abuse. Every single resident in a nursing has the right to be treated with dignity and respect - and staff, management and Boards of aged care bodies have a responsibility to ensure that occurs.

"Every aged care worker with examples of abuse and neglect must report such cases to the Australian Aged Care Quality Agency on 1800 978 666, which can be done anonymously."

Mr Yates said older residents and their families, as well as policy makers, also need a definitive understanding of exactly how much it costs to provide aged care services.

"COTA has long called for an independent cost of care study so that all decision makers understand what funding will be needed in the years to come.

"The Royal Commission must be specifically resourced to ensure it can answer the question of how much funding is needed to provide high quality care for older Australians. This will then allow Australia to have a clear conversation about how best to fund the gap," Mr Yates said.

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