

MEDIA RELEASE

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Royal Commission welcome but must not delay action on urgently needed reforms already in train and in the wings

Peak older persons advocate, COTA Australia, today welcomed the Royal Commission into aged care for the spotlight it will throw on the challenges facing aged care over the next two decades, but warned it must not delay significant reforms now underway and in the wings to improve safety and quality standards for the 1.3 million older Australians using aged care services.

COTA Australia Chief Executive, Ian Yates said that while the Commission does its work the Morrison Government must continue to focus on implementing recommendations of a string of inquiries into the sector over recent years.

Mr Yates said greater consumer control and choice, tighter regulation of aged care quality, improved capacity of the aged care workforce, and greater transparency are all absolutely critical to improving safety and quality in our aged care system.

“We know now that these changes need to happen, and the government should get on with them while the Royal Commission does its work to prepare for the future”, Mr Yates said.

“Chronic systemic failures in our aged care sector must be addressed to prevent any repeat of the tragic events at Oaken and ensure older Australians get the support they need, when they need it.”

“Both the Tune Review and the Carnell/Paterson Report into our aged care sector made significant recommendations on how we can and must improve regulation, funding and transparency in our aged care sector,” Mr Yates said.

“Some of those recommendations are in train and must not stall – such as the new Quality and Safety Commission, funding for even more high-level home care packages, and a strategy to improve the quality and sustainability of the aged care workforce to appropriately meet current demand.

“These are urgent reforms that must still be implemented as a matter of urgency and cannot be delayed while we wait for outcomes of a Royal Commission that will run well into 2019.

Mr Yates said he welcomed the Prime Minister’s comment that the Royal Commission “will be in addition to, not instead of, the actions we are taking”, and will seek urgent clarification of the detail of that.

“Key recommendations in the Tune Review regarding funding of aged care have not yet been endorsed by government and need to be part of the Royal Commission’s focus, but also need parallel action by government – for example to reduce the huge waiting times for Home Care Packages which leave people at risk in the community without support.

Mr Yates welcomed reports that the Government will consult on the terms of reference and said COTA would actively contribute to those conversations based on the wide range of information it receives from consumers and the community.

“We want to see the terms of reference require the Royal Commission to investigate whether Government is funding aged care appropriately to ensure consumers are getting the right levels and choice of care, in particular in remote and regional areas who often have little access or choice in aged care services.”

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