

MEDIA RELEASE

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COTA Australia welcomes terms of reference for Royal Commission, but cautions against delays to urgent reforms

Leading seniors advocacy group, COTA Australia, today welcomed the official establishment of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety and the development of the Letters Patent but again called on the Government to ensure the Commission will not result in the delay of ongoing urgent reforms to aged care.

COTA Australia Chief Executive, Ian Yates, said while the Government has given the Commission a broad remit, he believes the terms of reference for the Royal Commission largely reflect the key priority areas.

“COTA Australia commends the Government for its commitment to nourishing a positive national culture of respect for senior Australians and recognising the importance of equipping older Australians with choice and control,” Mr Yates said.

“While the Royal Commission announced today is in many respects a watershed moment in the history of aged care policy and reform, it could be a double-edged sword. The government must not sit on its hands and use it as an excuse not to act on the most urgent reforms.

“COTA Australia welcomes the focus of the Commission on strengthening the aged care workforce, recognising its critical role in delivering high quality and tailored care. This can start to be addressed immediately.

“It is great to see that the terms of reference recognise the wide diversity of older Australians and that the Government is aware that there are barriers many people face in accessing high quality aged care.

“COTA Australia welcomes the future-oriented approach to both the challenges and opportunities of aged care as the population ages, and the specific recognition of the need to look at what resources will be required to meet the needs of Australia’s ageing population.

“Both the Tune Review and the Carnell/Paterson Report into our aged care sector made significant recommendations, some of which are being implemented to improve regulation and transparency, but others have not been addressed, so it is important that the Commission will be taking into account recommendations from previous reports and inquiries,” Mr Yates said.

COTA Australia also commends the Government for identifying medication management, restraints, mental health and nutrition as specific areas for investigation by the Royal Commission.

COTA Australia Chief Executive, Ian Yates said the Government’s consultation process in the lead up to the formal establishment of the Royal Commission today - a process which received input from over 5,100 Australians, in addition to a raft of sector representatives – had clearly improved the scope and quality of the terms of reference, based on people’s experiences

“We strongly encourage the Government to resource the Royal Commission adequately to actively engage older Australians and their families during all stages of the Royal Commission. We thank all those who have been sharing their personal stories, as difficult as this may be. We welcome inclusion of a provision for some people who may require additional support to provide evidence,” said Mr Yates.

“We are cognisant of the time and processes involved with a Royal Commission, but we don’t want a situation emerging where the Government slows down on reform until the final report is delivered in April 2020.

“Earlier this month we outlined COTA’s five priority fixes that need to occur in the near future to address the well documented failures in our aged care system.

“We simply cannot wait until 2020 to implement much needed reform to the aged care sector and we look forward to working with the Government to address the pressing, immediate challenges facing our older population,” said Mr Yates.

Media contact: Bronte Kerr 0411 676 269, Ian Yates 0418 835 439