

## MEDIA RELEASE

2 January 2019

### Consumers welcome new Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission

Australia's leading older persons advocate, consumer peak body COTA Australia (Council on the Ageing), has welcomed the launch today of the new Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission, which combines and replaces the former Aged Care Quality Agency and the Aged Care Complaints Commission, and in 12 months will also incorporate the Department of Health's aged care compliance and sanctions powers.

COTA Australia Chief Executive Ian Yates said the Commission, headed by new Commissioner Janet Anderson PSM, "is another significant step towards stronger monitoring and enforcement of quality in Australia's aged care system, supported by a regime of unannounced visits by assessors, and new, more consumer-focused aged care standards from 1 July".

"These are welcome steps towards rebuilding confidence among older Australians that they will always receive safe and appropriate aged care in residential services or their own home," said Mr Yates.

Consolidating Australia's aged care inspection powers into an independent "one stop shop" was recommended by Kate Carnell AO and Professor Ron Paterson in their 2017 Review of National Aged Care Quality Regulatory Processes, set up after the failures at the Oakden aged care facility in SA.

"We have supported the creation of this Commission which means consumers and families now have only one place to go if they are worried about any aspect of care and not able to resolve this with their provider" said Mr Yates.

"We have also successfully advocated for the new aged care standards that place outcomes for residents and home care recipients at the centre of aged care regulation", said Mr Yates. The new standards have now been legislated and providers start being assessed against them from 1 July.

"COTA has also worked with the Government and Parliament to ensure the engagement of aged care consumers and their families is a central feature of the recently passed Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission Act, to ensure consumer voices are never again ignored and consumers are fully engaged in ensuring quality care is delivered."

The new Commission will also have a Chief Clinical Advisor, who will deal in part with the widespread misuse of physical and chemical restraints; and the Commission and government are consulting with the sector on the introduction of a Serious Incident Response Scheme and new ways of comparatively rating compliance with the aged care standards and making those ratings transparent.

Mr Yates said that the government needs to go further still and give consumers direct control over their aged care funding, as recommended by successive inquiries and the government's own advisory body, the Aged Care Sector Committee.

"This was announced in principle in the last Federal Budget but the development of an implementation plan has been delayed and needs to be given the highest priority" Mr Yates said, adding that "this measure will enable high quality providers to expand their services in response to consumer preference - rather than being tied down in red tape – and put an end to poorer quality providers being able to survive purely because there are no other choices available."

"The new Commission is a vital step forward, but it cannot do the whole job – we need a concerted array of policy measures and increased funding to raise the bar for the whole aged care sector", Mr Yates said.

**Media Contacts** – Ian Yates 0418 835 439; Hayley Conway 0484 313 466