

MEDIA RELEASE

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New Home Care packages a welcome but small step forward but delay in Royal Commission findings must not slow down reform

The 6,100 new Home Care Packages (HCPs) announced today by the Prime Minister and Minister for Aged Care are a welcome step toward meeting increased demand for home care, but much more remains to be done now for older Australians in greatest need, according to Council on the Ageing Australia (COTA).

COTA acknowledges that more than 50,000 new HCPs have now been funded by this Government since the 2018-19 Budget, a very substantial uplift in provision, but still well short of what we need, by the government's own standards

COTA Chief Executive Ian Yates says it's vital to reduce the waiting times for home care packages, aiming for a maximum two-month wait time after assessment before older Australians can receive the level of care for which they have been assessed.

"The 6,100 additional Home Care Packages announced today will mean that more people than ever will receive home care, but it's still unacceptable that people can wait for over a year for high care at home after they have been assessed as needing it," said Mr Yates.

"We know that older Australians want to live at home as long as they can. The Government must support them by fully funding home care so they can avoid moving out of their local community and into residential care before it's absolutely necessary.

"However, we still have a long way to go to ensure Australians receive proper care in a timely manner. Even with these additions, many people will be left waiting for more than 12 months before they can receive their high care, package."

The Government also announced the delay of the Royal Commission into Aged Care's Final Report until 26 February 2021. Mr Yates said the postponement still leaves the Government time to incorporate the findings into the May 2021 Budget.

"The Royal Commission is a critical opportunity to overhaul the way Australia delivers aged care," said Mr Yates. "This is a once-in-a-generation chance to enact major reform and ensure high quality and appropriate aged care is properly funded for the first time so that it available to all on a timely and equitable basis – which it's not now.

"Our aged care system must provide care that is consumer centred and controlled and grounded in the standards of respect and dignity for all consumers tailored to older people's diverse and individual needs. There can be no one-size-fits-all approach, every older Australian deserves the support to live their best life possible with appropriate support and care.

"The Government must seize this opportunity to transform aged care in Australia through major policy change and a major increase in funding in next year's Budget so that we move on from the Royal Commission with a clear and timely pathway to an aged care system – home and residential – of which Australia can be unequivocally proud."

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