

MEDIA RELEASE

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COTA welcomes increased funding to aged care reform package in MYEFO

Council on the Ageing (COTA) Australia, the peak body for older Australians, has welcomed the announcement of further funding for aged care reform in today's Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

Some of the MYEFO measures will consolidate implementation of measures in the government's response to the Aged Care Royal Commission announced as the centrepiece of the May Budget; others will extend the response by resourcing initiatives that were not finalised by May.

COTA Australia Chief Executive, Ian Yates, said: "We welcome the government's more than \$636 million over 4 years funding of important existing and new commitments to the aged care reform package, including:

- Initiation of the new position of Inspector General of Aged Care in advance of the position being legislated in the new Aged Care Act due by 1 July 2023, at a cost of \$8.8 million.
- \$229 million over two years helping further address the higher needs of older people with a disability excluded from the NDIS, for which mainstream aged care is not resourced to do properly. We note more needs to be done here.
- funding of \$27 million to underpin new aged care provider governance requirements to lift leadership capability in aged care providers.
- expansion of the Community Visitor Scheme, to reach over 4,000 more residents at a cost of over \$34 million - but we note that this will still leave many without visitors, and decisions still need to be made on upgrading the scheme to give Visitors a more active role in monitoring issues being experienced by consumers
- \$154 million investment in ICT build for both the new Support at Home program and the better "Business to Government interface" (B2G) that is essential to improving consumer choice or providers, and better quality monitoring and financial reporting measures in the reform package, while reducing red tape.
- additional funding of over \$64 million for the Business Improvement Fund and the Structural Adjustment Fund to support industry restructure – COTA has always argued these should be funded on an "as needed" basis to weed out poorer providers, so this is very welcome.
- Funding for retention of nurses; and allowing students on visas to work more than 40 hours per fortnight to enable them to work more hours in aged care.

"In most of these the MYEFO funding is an initial investment and more will be required, especially in additional disability funding and the ICT builds" Mr Yates said ; "We expect to see those further commitments announced in the March 2022 Budget.

COTA also welcomed extra resources for the work of the Age Discrimination Commissioner. Mr Yates said, "While this is welcome as the Commissioner is not well funded, we also need action by government to strengthen the Age Discrimination Act to enable the Commissioner to tackle age discrimination as a systemic problem, like gender discrimination is tackled, rather than relying on individual complaints."

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COTA Australia is the peak policy development, advocacy and representation organisation for older Australians, representing COTAs in every State and Territory and through them over 500,000 older Australians.