

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Older Australians welcome Albanese Government's high priority on aged care reform as Bills introduced on first day of government business**

The introduction of two aged care reform Bills on the first business day of the 47<sup>th</sup> parliament is unprecedented and indicates a welcome priority for aged care reform, says Council on the Ageing (COTA) Australia, the peak body and leading advocate for older Australians.

Two aged care reform Bills are being introduced in this first business session - the *Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment (Royal Commission Response) Bill 2022* continues the implementation of the former government's aged care reform measures at the earliest possible moment; while the *Care Amendment (Implementing Care Reform) Bill 2022* implements the additional reforms that were a Labor election commitment and outlined in Anthony Albanese's Budget Reply speech.

"These Bills are crucial steps in a reform process that when fully implemented will ensure Australia will finally enjoy the quality aged care system all older Australians deserve", says COTA Australia Chief Executive, Ian Yates AM; "and to have them introduced today is testament to the fact that Aged Care Minister Anika Wells, strongly supported by Health and Aged Care Minister Mark Butler, has hit the ground running in her new portfolio."

COTA Australia is urging the Parliament to ensure the *Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment (Royal Commission Response) Bill 2022* Bill is passed swiftly through the Parliament in the current sitting fortnight. The Bill implements 14 recommendations of the Aged Care Royal Commission, including new residential care funding, Star Ratings for aged care providers, an Independent Pricing Authority for aged care services, greater financial and prudential oversight of providers, a code of Conduct for aged care staff, and stronger governance requirements for providers.

Mr Yates said "It was very disappointing that this Bill did not pass the last Parliament, as it has led to delays in getting key reforms underway, but that is now water under the bridge. Reintroducing it today is excellent; it has already been through Senate Committee scrutiny and parliamentary debate and should be passed forthwith."

The *Care Amendment (Implementing Care Reform) Bill 2022* provides for the implementation of election commitments, including three further Royal Commission recommendations. It includes registered nurses being onsite 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by mid-2023; giving the government the power to cap home care package fees and remove exit fees; and the publication of information on what providers spend on care, nursing, food, maintenance, cleaning and administration, and profits. This Bill will go through the normal Senate Committee process

"Consumers have long argued for greater transparency of information from and about providers, who have been protected by outdated legal provisions, and have declined to take their own steps to explain how they use taxpayer and resident funds" Mr Yates said; "so we welcome the transparency provisions in this Bill, as well as the other measures.

"We want to see this Bill also dealt with by Parliament as a priority measure and enacted as soon as possible. The Labor Government has an election mandate for these measures and older people have been waiting too long for reform. This is about the right of older people to receive quality care, adequately funded services, strong consumer protections and transparency – we can't afford to wait any longer," Mr Yates said.

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