

MEDIA RELEASE

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Older Australians call on the Senate to pass Aged Care Reform Bill this week.

Council on the Ageing (COTA) Australia, the peak body and leading advocate for older Australians, is calling on the Senate to pass the *Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment (Royal Commission Response) Bill 2022* without delay, to get much needed and overdue reforms in place, including an Independent Pricing Authority, a Star Rating system for providers, a Code of Conduct for aged care workers and providers, new powers for the Quality and Safety Commission, and other consumer protections.

COTA Australia is calling on all Senators to support the Bill's quick passage - which the government has given the highest priority - warning that older Australians interests and wellbeing is already at risk because the Bill did not pass Parliament before the Federal Election.

Ian Yates AM, Chief Executive of COTA Australia, says "We have already experienced significant delays in implementing key Royal Commission recommendations because this Bill became a political football before the election, but that is now water under the bridge. The Bill has been brought back to Parliament as an urgent priority matter and needs to be passed without delay."

"This Bill implements reforms recommended by the Royal Commission, has passed the House without opposition, and all its provisions, except for an uncontroversial provision on Star Ratings, have already been through a Senate Committee and **passed by the Senate itself before the election**", Mr Yates said.

"It is simply essential that the Bill's measures are enacted as fast as possible. This is about the right of older people to receive quality care, adequate funding, strong protection, and transparency right now."

The Bill includes:

- Implementation of the new residential aged care funding tool that brings higher funding
- The creation of an Independent Pricing Authority for aged care that will mean aged care will be properly funded based on real costs, including higher wages
- A Code of Conduct for workers and providers
- Giving the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission power to ban people who do the wrong thing
- Publication of provider financial information for better transparency
- Strengthening controls over the use of restrictive practices in aged care
- Stronger governance requirements on aged care providers so they are more accountable to both government and their consumers

Mr Yates said all these measures are urgent and cannot wait for the full reform package in the new Aged Care Act, which is scheduled to be enacted by mid-2023.

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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.