

Every older person should be able to live well, with dignity and independence, as part of their community and in a place of their choosing, with a choice of appropriate and affordable support and care services when they need them.

Aged care services must be high quality and responsive to the diversity of need, with independent monitoring, transparent public reporting and accountability upheld.

Australia's population is ageing. The proportion of Australians aged over 65 years will grow to approximately 25% by 2055. As Australians age, they will require varying levels of care and support through aged care services. Currently, more than 1.2 million Australians receive aged care services, with the number of users expected to quadruple by 2050.

Aged care services are provided by a mix of public and private (for profit and not-for-profit) organisations and include a range of health and social care services delivered in the community and in residential aged care facilities.

In 2018–19, Australian Government expenditure on aged care was approximately \$20 billion, of which \$13.3 billion (or 66% of total expenditure) was spent on residential aged care services. Comparatively, the Australian Government spent \$5.9 billion on home care packages and support throughout the same period. Total Australian Government expenditure in aged care is expected to reach over \$40 billion by 2028–29.

Despite the introduction of the *Living Longer, Living Better* reform plan in 2012, the number of people waiting for home care packages remains significant. As of 31 March 2020, over 100,000 Australians were waiting for a home care package at their appropriate level, with an average expected wait time of more than 12 months.

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety (the Royal Commission) was established on 8 October 2018. Entitled *Neglect*, an Interim Report was delivered on 31 October 2019, with a final report to be delivered on 26 February 2021. The interim report found the aged care system fails to meet the needs of its older, vulnerable citizens and that a fundamental overhaul of the design, objectives, regulation and funding of aged care is required in Australia.

The Australian Government has committed \$500 million in additional funding to be spent providing more home care packages, improving medication management programs and preventing young people with disabilities being placed into aged care facilities.

Financial transparency surrounding the use of aged care funding is insufficient. The Australian Government has no established care quality outcome reporting measures for home care services and report on only three performance indicators for residential care.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has compounded existing problems within the aged care sector.

Since January 2020, over 600 COVID-19 deaths (from 1,400 total cases) have occurred in residential aged care facilities. Transmission has been purported to result from a broad range of factors, including staffing levels, casual staff working across multiple facilities, inadequate monitoring, poor communication, and insufficient personal protective equipment (PPE).

Workforce challenges are exacerbated by low wages and insufficient skills of some workers.

AHHA POSITION:

- ✧ The Australian Government must improve the availability of resources to compare the quality, safety, and cost of aged care services, and to receive accurate information about waiting lists for home care packages. This work should include a comprehensive review of the My Aged Care website.
- ✧ The Australian Government must significantly increase funding to improve access to home care packages, reduce waiting list times, and identify barriers to accessing home and consumer directed care.
- ✧ The Australian Government must continue to monitor aged care providers to ensure that they adhere to the chemical restraint guidelines outlined in the Quality of Care Amendment (Minimising the Use of Restraints) Principles 2019.
- ✧ In accordance with the targets outlined in the Younger People in Residential Aged Care Strategy 2020-25, the Australian Government must continue to take action to support younger people (under the age of 65) currently living in residential aged care facilities to find appropriate living arrangements.
- ✧ Aged care reforms must be guided by consumer input, evidence, and the recommendations of independent reviews.
- ✧ An independent body should be established to develop and oversee quality reporting for all Commonwealth-funded aged care services, including the development of a comprehensive reporting framework to ensure that data from individual aged care providers can be appropriately compared against evidence-based targets.
- ✧ Conflict of interest occurs when organisations determine need, assess eligibility for services and provide services. Such arrangements must cease.
- ✧ Access to primary health care, including oral health care, must be prioritised. The capacity to support palliative and end of life care must continue to be built into the aged care sector.
- ✧ A workforce strategy focused on skills, training, appropriate staffing ratios, appropriate remuneration and holistic care is required in the aged care sector. Informal carers must also receive adequate services and support.
- ✧ Aged care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people needs to be delivered in ways that are flexible, adaptable, and culturally safe.