

8 August 2011

MEDIA RELEASE

Aged care reform proposals good foundation for improving life for older Australians

Australia's peak aged care consumer organisation COTA Australia said the Productivity Commission's final report, *Caring for Older Australians*, lays a solid foundation for a better future for seniors.

COTA Chief Executive Ian Yates said the final report leaves no room for doubt about the need for long awaited reform of Australia's aged care system.

"Many older Australians know too well the difficulties of accessing care services through a rigid system which fails to meet their needs," Mr Yates said.

"The Productivity Commission's proposal will mean:

- We move from a residential-based to a community-based system with most support and care provided in the home
- We move from a rationed system to one in which people have an entitlement to support and care based on a professional and timely assessment
- No-one will any longer be forced to either sell their home or pay an accommodation bond, although many people will do both because it suits them.

"Older Australians want and need appropriate and timely support to live out their lives in a manner of their choosing and for most people that means support and care at home for as long as possible.

"This report provides a sound starting point for changing the way services are delivered in the short term and well into the future.

"The introduction of a fair funding structure will ensure the system works and can be sustained to address the growing needs of our ageing population with government still paying the bulk of the costs.

"People, young, old and between, all seek to have control over their lives and no more so than when they need assistance to make the most of their life. This report returns control to older people and with it the capacity to maintain their independence, regardless of their financial circumstances.

"Under the proposed changes, consumers will also have a range of options to control how they pay for care services and if needed, specialised residential aged care accommodation. This would now include the option to use the equity in their homes to meet their costs of care and accommodation.

"For many Australians their homes are their major lifetime investment. That investment is not lost if it is used to pay for aged care, but appropriately reinvested to provide what we need, when we need it.

"We will be working with the government and other stakeholders in the coming months to ensure that a progressive package of reform is delivered in the 2012 Federal Budget."

Mr Yates said a flexible and sustainable aged care system is an integral component of a broader more inclusive agenda to foster the ongoing engagement and contribution of older Australians.

For further information: Ian Yates AM, Chief Executive, COTA Australia

M: 0418 835 439