



MEDIA RELEASE

Blueprint shows the way to avert aged care crisis

Australia's looming aged care crisis can only be averted if the Federal Government commits to aged care reform in 2012, leading aged care sector groups said today.

Releasing the *Australians Deserve to Age Well Blueprint for Reform*, the 28 members of the National Aged Care Alliance outlined the list of priorities for critical aged care reform over the next 12 months.

COTA Chief Executive Ian Yates said that by 2041 almost one quarter of the Australian population would be aged 65 or older.

"Without reform, this big increase will leave future generations to foot the bill and we'll see a shortfall in the quality and availability of services," Mr Yates said.

"Older people are calling for more support, workers are leaving aged care because they feel undervalued, and providers are frustrated because the current system doesn't support them to meet the needs of the communities in which they work.

"The *Australians Deserve to Age Well Blueprint for Reform* outlines a way for Government to responsibly prepare for our future starting in 2012 - before the situation gets any worse."

Priorities include:

- a timetable for reform;
- a simple entitlement-based system;
- a one stop shop for aged care information and assessment;
- greater choice and consistency for people to fund the care they need;
- the Aged Care Commission to guarantee service quality;
- an independent cost of care study;
- dementia risk reduction and research; and
- a high-level Aged Care Reform Council to drive the reform process.

Rod Young, CEO, Aged Care Association Australia urged the Gillard Government to uphold its commitment to reform in this term.

“It has now been seven months since the Productivity Commission findings were delivered. In the meantime older people struggle to get in-home care and respite services, we’re not building enough facilities to keep up with future demand and anyone trying to navigate the system is left frustrated and fed up.

“It’s time we saw bipartisan support on this issue and a long term plan for the future,” Mr Young said.

Louise Tarrant, National Secretary, United Voice, said the quality of aged care was in serious jeopardy unless reform addressed the wages and conditions of aged care workers.

“Staff turnover now runs from 25 per cent to 45 per cent annually,” Ms Tarrant said.

“How will we possibly attract the predicted 500,000 more workers we’ll need by 2050 if we can’t even keep the ones we have now?

“It is time our aged care workers got the recognition they deserve and were made a priority in aged care reform.”

Glenn Rees, CEO Alzheimers Australia, said there needed to be greater recognition of the need to plan for the dementia epidemic.

“Right now there are 280,000 Australians with dementia. By 2050 this is expected to be close to one million,” Mr Rees said.

“Over 50 per cent of those in residential care have dementia, a number that far exceeds the resources available to provide specialist care.

“We must invest in dementia risk reduction and research now to reduce the numbers of people with dementia in the future.”

The National Aged Care Alliance is a representative body of peak organisations in aged care, including consumer groups, providers, unions and health professionals, working together to determine a more positive future for aged care in Australia.

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