

Aged care reforms must not be put in 'too-hard' basket

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'The appalling neglect of too many older Australians, with some unable to access support at all and others receiving substandard care, requires reforms that must not be put into the too-hard basket', says Alison Verhoeven, Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association (AHHA) Chief Executive.

'Our broken aged care system is not new, but it was only when the ABC Four Corners investigation, *Who Cares?*, was screened in 2018 that the Australian Government acted by establishing the Royal Commission into Aged Care.'

'Interim reports and detailed research published during the course of the Commission's inquiry have seen some limited responses from the government including some additional investment in home care packages - but overall, the response has been slow and superficial,' says Ms Verhoeven.

'The findings of the Royal Commission are so serious that reforms are urgently need to be stepped up.

'The Government must not allow the Commissioners' divergent views relating to governance and funding to get in the road of doing what's right for older Australians.

'We elect our governments to provide leadership, and to make the sometimes tough decisions to ensure all Australians, including older people, can aspire to the best possible lives.

'At the very minimum, action is needed now to:

- Increase the number of home care packages, and ensure that people are receiving packages at the level they have been assessed as requiring in a timely manner
- Reduce the number of younger people in residential aged care, and ensure their access to appropriate accommodation and care services
- Ensure people living in residential aged care are provided with appropriate personal care services, healthy food, and support to live comfortable and meaningful lives
- Improve wages and employment conditions for aged care staff
- Ensure aged care staff are appropriately qualified and receive professional development, including in palliative care and dementia support
- Ensure funding is available to support the employment of registered nursing staff in residential aged care services 24 hours a day
- Improve support for general practice services in residential aged care, including MBS funding for regular health checks
- Improve the regulatory and complaints processes to ensure both accountability of aged care providers and opportunity for residents and carers to put forward complaints and have these responded to effectively
- Improve transparency on how taxpayer dollars are used by aged care providers.'

'We cannot put off these urgent requirements with excuses about limited budgets.

'If the Australian Government can find money to invest in over-budget submarine and Joint Strike Fighter projects, it is surely only reasonable to expect appropriate resourcing to care for older Australians,' says Ms Verhoeven.

More information about the AHHA is available at ahha.asn.au. This release is available [online](#).

The Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association (AHHA) is the national peak body for public and not-for-profit hospitals, Primary Health Networks, and community and primary healthcare services.