



Exclusive

Government targets aged care 'over-servicing' by physiotherapists

The federal government believes aged care homes are wasting money on allied health services such as physiotherapists.

2 hours ago by Dana Daniel

PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NOT an April fool's joke -in 6 months' time 183, 894 nursing homes residents will not be funded for vital physiotherapy and allied health

The Australian Greens Senator Janet Rice on Wednesday 30th April officially lodged a petition to the senate president with 20,000 signatures which calls for separate and mandated minimum physiotherapy and allied health levels.

Separate funding for physiotherapy and allied health ends on October 1st, 2022, with a new funding system starting (the AN-ACC) which does not specifically require nursing homes to fund physiotherapy or allied health. This is exactly 6 months away from the 1st of April.

Campaign director for the stop #deathofalliedhealth, physiotherapist Alwyn Blayse flew to Canberra this week to meet with Senator Rice personally and lodge the petition at the Senate. He also met to discuss the lack of funding for physiotherapy and allied health with the Senator and other politicians sitting in the last two sitting days of parliament.

Alwyn Blayse says “The need for physiotherapy and allied health for older people is well established. Physio and allied health are literally a matter of life and death for older Australians. This is because regular allied health helps to prevent falls, keep moving and avoid the cost to the community of preventable hospital admissions and deaths. Physiotherapy alone has been shown to decrease falls by 55%. Allied health is considered a critical service by all sides of government, the department of health, The Royal Commission into aged care safety and quality, and the authors of the new funding system the AN-ACC.

It is shocking to think that physiotherapy and allied health will not be funded in six months, and that nursing homes are already well-advanced planning for university educated allied health professionals to be replaced by cheaper, less qualified yoga, tai-chi instructors and others.”

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Safety and Quality found that the current allied health levels of 8 minutes a resident a day were inadequate, and called for significantly more to meet international standards, up to 22 minutes a resident per a day. This level was called for by the authors of the new funding model also. The Morrison government agreed to this recommendation 38 in the Royal Commission final report that allied health was inadequate and more was needed, and then only funded the equivalent of 2 seconds a resident per a day.

“We are grateful to Senator Green and her staff, as well as the Australian Greens, for supporting the need for physiotherapy and allied health professionals' minimum levels to be mandated in aged care. They are listening to the community and 20,000 people who signed our petition worried about the lack of physio and other treatment they, their mums, dads, partners, and grandparents will get after October.”

The Australian Greens to date are the only party to call for the delay in implementation of



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the AN-ACC to include details of allied health funding. Senator Rex Patrick also supports the need for allied health to be included in the AN-ACC also. Labor has called for aged care fixes including on allied health but has not released detail yet on how this will be funded.

“We are calling for all those running for office in the upcoming election to publicly state their detailed position on the need for physiotherapy and allied health. If a politician doesn't support minimum mandated physio and allied health professional funding, then they are literally supporting the death of allied health in residential aged care. Any politician silent on this issue is also supporting an older person to have more falls and more pain and immobility that they will suffer without regular allied health.” Alwyn stated.

Concerns on the lack of detail around allied health were raised by both Labor and the Australian Greens during Senate Community Affairs public hearings. These concerns about Allied health not being included have been echoed since last year by professional associations including Services for Australian Regional and Remote Allied Health (SARRAH), Australian Physiotherapy Association (APA), Australian Health Professionals Association (AHPA) and Occupational Therapy Australia. Together these organisations represent over 200,000 allied health.

These groups have publicly stated that they are concerned about potential job losses for physiotherapists and allied health if the current funding model starts without specific requirements for allied health.

The need for allied health to be funded in the new AN-ACC funding model is also supported by Aged Care Collaboration that looks after 70% of nursing homes in Australia, and the authors of the model themselves, Professor Kathy Eagars and Anita Westera.

“I worry about what nursing homes, residents and families will think on Friday the 30th of September. I'm expecting a lot of people to be very unhappy when they realise that the allied health helping with pain four times a week won't be coming anymore. Its April fool's day today, but the fact that vulnerable people won't be getting physio in 6 months' time is definitely not a laughing matter.”

For more information visit: www.alliedagedcare.com.au/doac

ENDS

Lead physiotherapist and CEO AAC Health Group including AAC Allied Aged Care, Alwyn Blayse is available for further comment.

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