



The Hon. Scott Morrison MP

Prime Minister

The Hon. Greg Hunt MP

Minister for Health

Senator The Hon. Richard Colbeck

Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians

The Hon. Stuart Robert MP

Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme

JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

Monday 25 November 2019

RESPONSE TO AGED CARE ROYAL COMMISSION INTERIM REPORT

The Morrison Government is taking strong action to respond to the three priority areas identified in the Aged Care Royal Commission's Interim Report released on October 31, by increasing home care packages, reducing chemical restraints, and getting younger people out of residential aged care.

The Royal Commission's interim report is clear - as a country, the Government, the Aged Care Sector and the entire Australian community, we can and must do better in providing improved support for our older Australians.

We will deliver a \$537 million funding package to respond to the Interim Report, across the identified three priority areas, including;

- investing \$496.3 million for an additional 10,000 home care packages;
- providing \$25.5 million to improve medication management programs to reduce the use of medication as a chemical restraint on aged care residents and at home, and new restrictions and education for prescribers on the use of medication as a chemical restraint;
- delivering \$10 million for additional dementia training and support for aged care workers and providers, including to reduce the use of chemical restraint; and
- investing \$4.7 million to help meet new targets to remove younger people with disabilities from residential aged care.

Increasing the number of Home Care packages

The additional 10,000 home care packages will be focused on the Royal Commission's identified areas of need and is strongly weighted towards level 3 and level 4 packages, which provide a high level of care.

These packages will be rolled out from 1 December 2019.

Since the 2018-19 Budget, the Government has invested \$2.7 billion in 44,000 new home care packages.

We have also more than doubled the number of home care packages available to a record 150,412 this financial year, up from 60,308 in 2012-13 under Labor.

Better medication management and dementia training

The Royal Commission has identified an over-reliance on chemical restraint in aged care, therefore from 1 January 2020, we will also establish stronger safeguards and restrictions for the prescribing of repeat prescriptions of risperidone.

Doctors will still be able to prescribe it but will be required to apply for additional approval if risperidone is to be prescribed beyond an initial 12 week period. These changes have been developed following recommendations from the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee, and in collaboration with doctor's groups and the broader health sector.

Education resources for prescribers will also be developed to support the appropriate use of antipsychotics and benzodiazepines in residential aged care and targeted letters will be sent to high prescribers.

Funding for medication management programs will be increased by \$25.5 million, including support for pharmacists to ensure more frequent medication reviews can occur.

The Royal Commission directed that restraint must only be used as a last resort, and amendments to regulations will make this clear.

The Government is also providing an additional \$10 million over two years from 2019–20 to increase dementia training and support for aged care workers and health sector staff.

This will better equip them to manage behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia, deliver best practice dementia care and comply with the new standards for reducing the use of physical and chemical restraints in aged care.

We have also responded immediately to the Royal Commission's findings on antipsychotics in aged care facilities by declaring "*Quality Use of Medicines and Medicines Safety*" a National Health Priority.

Younger people in residential aged care

In March, the Government announced the Younger People in Residential Aged Care Action Plan. Since this time there has been a reduction in the number of younger people in residential aged care, including a decline in the number of younger people entering the aged-care system.

However, in response to the Royal Commission, the Government will strengthen the initial targets of the Younger People in Residential Aged Care Action Plan.

The new targets, apart from in exceptional circumstances, will seek to ensure there are;

- No people under the age of 65 entering residential aged care by 2022;
- No people under the age of 45 living in residential aged care by 2022; and
- No people under the age of 65 living in residential aged care by 2025.

The Government will invest \$4.7 million to help remove young people from residential aged care and further support these goals by:

- establishing a Joint Agency Taskforce (JATF) between the Department of Social Services, Department of Health and National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) to develop a new strategy that builds on the Action Plan and takes action to ensure these new targets are met;
- establishing a specialist team within the NDIA to prevent younger people with a disability who are eligible for the National Disability Insurance Scheme from entering aged care. The specialist team will grow to 80 complex support needs planners by end March 2020 to find suitable accommodation and match participants to vacancies;
- working with industry to identify all available Specialist Disability Accommodation and Supported Independent Living supports across the country to develop a database of existing and new housing options available now and in the future; and
- undertaking a detailed analysis of younger people currently living in aged care, as well as up to 2,000 young people at risk of entering aged care, to better inform new policies and pathways to find alternate accommodation.

Building on longer term reforms

These measures will complement the major reforms the Morrison Government has been undertaking to improve standards, oversight, funding and transparency in the care of older Australians.

In line with the long-term direction as identified by the Royal Commission, we will also progress further measures, including;

- providing simpler aged care assessments by creating a single assessment workforce and network; and
- establishing a single unified system for care of our elderly in the home.

We will unify the Home Care and Commonwealth Home Support Programs, in line with the Royal Commission's direction to deliver a seamless system of care, tailoring services to the needs of the individual.

These changes will be guided by the final recommendations of the Royal Commission and will have the goal of improving care and ending the wait for home care packages.

Simplifying the system for consumers

The Government will streamline assessment by creating a single assessment workforce and a single network of assessment organisations that are able to undertake all aged care eligibility assessments.

This will help people to be connected to care sooner, reduce duplication and inefficiencies, and stop a revolving door of assessments where vulnerable older people get sent to multiple organisations depending on the programs for which they are eligible.

Key reforms continue

The Royal Commission's final report is due on 12 November 2020, however the Government's rigorous oversight of the sector and reform program continues.

The Government has established a new independent aged care watchdog in the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission, upgraded Aged Care Quality Standards and introduced regulations to minimise the use of restraints, and we are developing a Serious Incident Response Scheme.

The Government is also expanding the powers of the Commission, with the new Commissioner responsible for the approval of aged care providers, compliance and enforcement actions in relation to the care being provided, and the administration of the responsibilities of approved providers to report assaults.

While we undertake these reforms we will continue to deliver record funding for older Australians of \$21.7 billion in 2019-20, growing to an estimated \$25.4 billion in 2022-23, up from \$13.3 billion in 2012-13.

There will be more work to do across aged care as we continue to listen and respond to the issues raised by the Royal Commission.

Like every Australian, we were appalled by the revelations of the Interim Report, however we will do everything we can to build an aged care system of the highest quality.

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