



Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck
Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians
Minister for Youth and Sport

January 1, 2020

Important changes to improve the quality of aged care start today

The quality of aged care provided to senior Australians will be significantly strengthened as Government measures come into effect today.

From 1 January 2020, the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission will be bolstered with additional functions and responsibilities to safeguard the sector into the future, supported by a series of targeted investments aimed at improving compliance and quality.

In addition, new restrictions for prescriptions of the drug Risperidone today mark a tangible step toward reducing the level of chemical restraint used in aged care.

The changes support the Government's initial response to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety's Interim Report.

Minister for Aged Care Richard Colbeck said while important Government reforms – including the development of a new funding model – would continue, waiting for the final recommendations from the Royal Commission was vital to ensure long-term sustainable change.

“As the Government has said all along, with all matters of quality of care, investment in compliance and preventive actions will be undertaken as and when required,” Minister Colbeck said

“But it is important that the key long term challenges investigated by the Royal Commission are explored thoroughly to ensure the development of a sturdy response and recommendations for future reform.”

The additional functions and responsibilities for the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission are aimed at creating a one-stop shop for aged care regulation, while strengthening regulatory oversight of the sector – a recommendation of the Carnell Paterson Review.

The passage of the Aged Care Legislation Amendment (New Commissioner Functions) Act 2019 resulted in the transfer of aged care regulatory functions of the Secretary of the Department of Health to the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commissioner from today.

The additional functions include the approval of aged care providers, compliance and enforcement action for non-compliance and the administration of approved providers' compulsory reporting of assaults.

Meanwhile, Minister Colbeck said restrictions for the drug Risperidone, effective from today, would now require doctors to apply for additional approval if the medication is required for more than a 12-week period.

“The Royal Commission identified an over-reliance on chemical restraint as a priority concern in aged care and the Government has taken this action among other measures to ensure senior Australians receive the care they expect and deserve,” Minister Colbeck said.

Education resources for prescribers are also being developed to support the appropriate use of antipsychotics and benzodiazepines in residential aged care, he said.

The Government is also continuing its record funding for aged care in 2019-2020 through a further \$623.9 million investment in a series of targeted measures, including the Government's \$537 million response to the Interim Report in November which included 10,000 new home care packages, and other measures to ensure quality in the sector.

Minister Colbeck said the investments to date represented a significant down payment by the Government on the key areas identified as requiring action by the Commission as it awaits the recommendations to be contained in the Royal Commission's Final Report, to be delivered by November 12.