



8 May 2018

Media Release

WELCOME NEWS FOR THOSE NEEDING HOME-CARE SUPPORT

Following the Coalition Government's past cuts to the aged-care budget of more than \$2bn as a result of adjustments to the residential care funding formula, the announcement of a \$1.6 billion aged-care and retirees package is welcome news.

The increase to the Pension Work Bonus Program, enabling aged pensioners to earn \$300 per fortnight without impacting on the rate of their pension, as well as the energy supplement to ease cost-of-living pressures, will enhance wellbeing of older Australians and reduce some of the pressure on available aged care support services.

Quotes attributable to Mel Ottaway, Executive Manager Aged Care at Uniting Communities:

"Uniting Communities welcomes the announcement regarding the release of additional aged care packages. The current shortage of packages or the lack of appropriate package levels is a common story relayed to our aged care teams."

"We frequently encounter people who have been assigned packages that do not meet their needs, as well as many people who are waiting for a home care package allocation and struggling to remain at home. This places additional pressure on carers and families who support their older loved ones. This struggle is heightened in rural areas where distances add to the complexity of the challenges faced".

"The absence of adequate home care packages that enable older Australians to stay in their homes for longer can result in their premature admission to residential care. This is both unnecessary and costly. The 14,000 new high-level home care packages over four years will decrease the more than 105,000 people on the national priority list for the home-care package and reduce pressure on other areas of the aged care system such as Commonwealth Home Support Programs and on families. While we welcome these additional packages, this number falls well short of those needed and does little to make a dent on the ever-growing waiting list."

"The introduction of additional home-care support comes at a very critical time for the aged care sector. Given that the residential aged-care sector will need at least 83,500 aged-care beds in the next ten years, the improved access to home-care support will hopefully take some of the pressure off the provision of residential services and families and carers."

"This positive Budget announcement and the additional funding for aged-care mental health services will enable older Australians to stay healthier and be productive for longer while enjoying living in their own homes and community."

For media comment:

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