
PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION ON TRACK TO DELIVER FOR OLDER AUSTRALIANS

Uniting Care Australia has welcomed the release today of the Productivity Commission's groundbreaking draft report into aged care.

National Director, Lin Hatfield Dodds said at first glance the Commission's report has made bold recommendations that address the hard structural issues which threaten to undermine the future provision of quality aged care in the community and in aged care facilities.

"The Report's recommendations promise greater choice of aged care options for older Australians with a focus on prevention, restoration and rehabilitation and vastly improved access to a wider range of community-based and residential services," Ms Hatfield Dodds said.

"The funding and financing options in the report are a welcome departure from existing complex and inefficient arrangements.

"The number of people relying on aged care support is predicted to more than treble to 3.6 million by 2050. The system is already buckling under current demand for services and will not cope with the increased demand without a complete overhaul.

"While those who can, will be expected to contribute to the cost of their care and accommodation, safety nets, including mandatory quotas will ensure that all Australians get access to the care they need regardless of their capacity to pay.

"Ageing Australians overwhelmingly want to stay in their own homes, and in their communities. UnitingCare is pleased to see people's reasonable care choices will be accommodated and adequately funded.

"Significantly, the report recommends the government establish a single entry point into aged care, the Australian Seniors Gateway Agency, which will oversee the assessment of a person's needs and financial position. Funding will be directed to consumers instead of aged care facilities and services.

"People can pay for their accommodation via a lump-sum bond, or choose to make daily, weekly or monthly payments or to do a combination of a bond and regular payments. There will also be government support should people chose to draw down on the equity in their home. This initiative means that no-one need sell their family home. If people chose to sell their house they can avoid having the profit included in the pension means test by buying pension bonds.

"We look forward to more detail on models of care for people living in remote Australia. We also anticipate more discussion around workforce issues. Transition arrangements will also need to be carefully considered in the final report.

"Access to a full range of care and accommodation options is long overdue for older Australians. The Productivity commission's recommendations, taken as a package, comprise a breakthrough for aged care in Australia," Ms Hatfield Dodds said.

The UnitingCare network is one of the largest providers of social services in Australia delivering care to over 2 million people through 1,300 sites in remote, regional and metropolitan communities. The UnitingCare network provides community-based aged care in remote, regional and metropolitan communities in every state and territory. The UnitingCare network manages 12 per cent of all residential aged care places in Australia with over 12,000 aged care beds nationally.