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## **UnitingCare Australia and ACSA welcome funding for remote workforce to address disadvantage and keep families closer together**

UnitingCare Australia and Aged & Community Services Australia (ACSA) have welcomed a \$2 million boost in funding to support the implementation of regional and remote elements of the Aged Care Workforce Strategy, including the Remote Accord.

The two groups, who will be responsible for implementing the expanded programs, say the welcome boost will ultimately support the aims of addressing disadvantage and allowing older people to age where they have lived their lives.

UnitingCare Australia's National Director Claerwen Little said: "This is a high priority for us and our providers. Minister Wyatt has been a champion for people living in remote areas, many of whom, by the time they are older, have been impacted by a lifetime of inequality in access to health services.

"We have a leadership group that is ready to harness this once in a lifetime opportunity to link together the issues of workforce, integration of services and quality viable service delivery for our most disadvantaged and isolated communities.

"This funding will allow us to work with communities to help realise their own vision for the services that meet their needs.

"Although we will be working to develop remote workforce capacity, it will also create opportunities to activate local resources to deliver services the way they want them to be delivered," Ms Little said.

ACSA CEO Patricia Sparrow said: "The attraction, recruitment and retention of the workforce we need one of the most challenging issues facing aged care but in regional, rural and remote communities this is even more the case.

"Building skills and ensuring we have right fit workers in regional, rural and remote communities will help the often-smaller non-profit services survive and keep services locally available. That means keeping people in their community and families closer together.

"The new funding will allow ACSA to accelerate and extend the work of our Workforce & Industry Development Unit that has a proven collaborative model of workforce development for regional areas.

"While this funding is very welcome it's really only a first step in what is needed to make local services viable into the future as our population ages. The next is to make sure the Rural and Remote Supplement is increased to \$10 per day.

"We also need to explore new funding models in the longer term as part of the big discussion that is coming out of the Royal Commission.

“There are big challenges and opportunities in the decades ahead as we live longer and healthier. The answers are the responsibility of everyone: government, providers, families and older Australians working together with the wider community,” Ms Sparrow said.

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