



## **New report exposes a long queue for home care packages & need for doubling of effort**

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**'National consensus needed'**

The long queue of 108k older Australians needing home care packages revealed in the latest [quarterly report](#) from the Health Department should be taken as a challenge to double-down on wider systemic reform.

The prospects for older Australians needing quality aged care services are uncertain with no federal funding plan that will cater for the projected 2 million aged 85+ Australians by 2055.

Catholic Health Australia (CHA) is appealing for a national consensus or 'grand bargain' that will once and for all put a plan in place to secure quality aged care services for Australia's current and future elders.

CEO Suzanne Greenwood said that as well as additional Commonwealth funding and policies to ensure access by all, a 'grand bargain' should include increased, and more equitable, contributions by those who can afford to contribute more towards their costs, in return for a choice of higher quality services when needed.

At 31 March 2018, the queue for home care packages had risen 3.7% to 108,456, (compared with 77,918 with a package at December 2017).

"There are now more people in home care than ever before, yet even more are in the queue to receive the right package at the right level. The queue confirms that older Australians want to live in their own home for as long as they can, preferring to remain on a waiting list for home care which will help them remain active and connected to their communities," Ms Greenwood said.

About 82,000 on the home care queue are receiving some level of support, either a lower level of package than their assessed need or through the Commonwealth Home Support Program.

"On the face of it, a large number of older people are not receiving an appropriate level of support. This mismatch of services with assessed need is a legacy of longstanding policy decisions and has existed for decades.

"What has changed for the better is the Government's shift to assign packages to eligible consumers, so that they can choose their preferred service provider, which has enabled data about unmet need to be collected for the first time.

"We absolutely advocate that older Australians should have choice of quality services when needed and choice about who provides them."

Ms Greenwood said that further investigation is required to understand the composition of the queue, whether individuals' care needs are being reliably assessed, and what is driving those with a package to underspend their package.

"To their credit, recent governments have taken steps to increase consumer choice of services, including by increasing the availability of home care packages and the proportion of higher-level packages. By 2021-22, there will be 151,500 packages, of which 50% will be high level. But more needs to be done now.

"A high reform priority must be to establish a funding solution to the rising cost to the community of aged care services, driven by demographic change and rising community expectations. The number of people aged 85 and over is projected to increase from just over 500,000 currently to around two million by 2055."

"It is time for a national consensus about how Australia will fund its future aged care needs." ENDS

Catholic Health Australia (CHA) is the peak industry body representing public and not-for-profit private health and aged care providers, caring for more than 1 in 10 Australians – 80 hospitals, 440 aged care facilities.

**CONTACT** Kerie Hull [kerieh@cha.org.au](mailto:kerieh@cha.org.au), 0417073659