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ACSA CEO: 2018-19 Budget must prioritise aged care funding

Aged & Community Services Australia urges the Federal Government to use next Tuesday's 2018-19 Budget to commit to the future of quality aged care with sustainable services for older Australians.

"This Budget needs to recognise the importance of aged care and the vital service it provides to older Australians not just now, but also as the population ages into the future," said ACSA CEO Pat Sparrow.

"The financial situation of many not-for-profit providers is critical right now and we need a substantive commitment by the Government in this Budget to address funding pressures on the sector and ensure the continuity of care for older Australians relying aged care services."

ACSA is calling on the government to:

- Support additional funding for residential aged care providers struggling to remain financially viable, particularly those in rural and remote communities supporting disadvantaged older Australians.
- Provide urgent funding to reduce the number of older Australians waiting to receive the required level of care at home.

Ms. Sparrow said it was incumbent on Government to ensure the Budget address the significant, and growing, number of Australians waiting on the national home care queue, with the latest numbers showing more than 100,000 individuals still without the appropriate package for their assessed level of need.

"We want the care of those older Australians prioritised in this budget. It is not acceptable to those waiting for home care, and their families, that a prolonged wait be allowed to continue indefinitely," said Ms. Sparrow, also pointing out the queue includes 40,000 people who have been allocated a lower package than they have been approved to receive.

"We are an ageing population with huge and rising demand for home care services, in particular, and this Budget, and the Government, needs to recognise the strain that demand is placing on older Australians, their families, and the providers responsible for their care," said Ms. Sparrow.

"This is an issue that drives at how we as a nation expect to support our older Australians to age comfortably, whether now or in coming decades, with access to quality care, be that at home or in residential care."

The Government also needs to outline in the 2018-19 Budget how current funding commitments will meet the projected need of about 140,000 home care packages by 2021-22 – an extra 66,000 packages.

With the financial viability of so many providers in the sector under strain, Ms. Sparrow said consideration needs to be given to measures to ensure the long-term sustainability of the sector.

ACSA is the peak body for Australia's not-for-profit, church, charitable and community-based aged care providers.

This requires assessment across the full spectrum of revenue levers such as private and public funds and insurance products, she said.

“Estimates suggest Australia will need another 83,500 beds over the next 10 years to meet the rising demand, and this issue needs to part of a longer-term sustainability strategy.

“Stability and security is what’s needed for those many older Australians dependent on aged care, as well as their families and the not-for-profit providers responsible for the delivery of quality care.”

~ENDS~

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