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**COMPLETE OVERHAUL OF AGED CARE SYSTEM NEEDED**

Many of the recommendations from the Counsel Assisting the Aged Care Royal Commission back the AMA’s long-standing calls for a complete overhaul of the aged care system, AMA President, Dr Omar Khorshid, said today.

The Counsel Assisting made 124 recommendations, including a new Aged Care Act based on human rights principles for older people, mandated staffing ratios in nursing homes, increased access to health services, and a new and independent process for setting aged care quality standards.

“Long before our first submission to the Royal Commission, the AMA has been calling for systemic reform to recognise that health and aged care are two parts of the same system that should be geared towards optimising the health and wellbeing of older people,” Dr Khorshid said.

“For too long, older Australians have been left without enough nurses and trained staff to care for them, in conditions that often could most kindly be described as unsatisfactory, and in a system that discourages ongoing care from their family doctor.

“The recommendations have proved us right.

“We have called for GPs to be put at the centre of planning for older people, and Counsel Assisting agrees. We’ve also called for minimum staff to resident ratios, including 24/7 access to registered nurses, and Counsel Assisting has called for changes.

“We have called for reforms that improve the capacity, capability, and connectedness of the aged care workforce. We welcome a focus on workforce planning for aged care.

“The recommendation for a demand-driven system to ensure that older Australians who need aged care get that care recognises that the current capped model is not working.

“This recommendation, if implemented, will result in a significant increase in resources for the care of older people.

“The AMA supports reducing the inappropriate use of antipsychotics. However, there must be a balance between the need to ensure the resident’s safety, and the safety of those around them, while respecting their right to dignity and self-determination, including acknowledging previously expressed or known values or wishes.

“While we welcome the recommendation for greater involvement of geriatricians in aged care prescribing, GPs, who are the main medical practitioners to visit aged care facilities, will still need to prescribe these medications from time to time – for the safety of the patient, the other residents, staff and visitors.”

The Counsel Assisting’s recommendations are extensive and the AMA will be reviewing these carefully as it prepares its next response to the Royal Commission.

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