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AGED CARE FUNDING BOOST WELCOME, BUT DOES NOT ADDRESS WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

Today’s announcement of an additional \$106 million for the aged care system is a much-needed boost for a sector that has been neglected for far too long, but does not address the urgent workforce challenges facing the sector, AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, said.

The Federal Government today announced an extra \$16 million for the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission, \$40 million to support services in regional, rural, and remote areas, and \$50 million to support residential aged care providers and their staff to improve quality and standards of care.

“Older Australians are among our most vulnerable people, and they deserve the best care possible,” Dr Bartone said.

“The AMA has long been advocating for the introduction of an independent Aged Care Commission that provides a clear, well-communicated, governance hierarchy that brings leadership and accountability to the aged care system.

“We are pleased that the new Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission will receive a further \$16 million to do its job of policing quality and supporting our elderly citizens should the system fail them.

“We also welcome the decision to bring forward the appointment of a new Chief Clinical Adviser. The Adviser should be a medical practitioner, as doctors are qualified and experienced in dealing with complex clinical issues.

“Aged care in regional, rural, and remote areas presents a unique set of challenges, compared to metropolitan areas.

“The AMA *Position Statement on Resourcing Aged Care* called for more resources to improve infrastructure in these areas so that older people do not have to travel long distances to receive appropriate care, and this additional funding will help.

“Transitioning to the new Aged Care Quality Standards will result in significant policy and process changes for aged care providers.

“Government and aged care providers must ensure that this transition does not restrict staff’s capacity to provide quality care. The funding for training and support will help with this.

“While the AMA welcomes today’s announcement, the Government must address the workforce challenges and issues facing aged care.

“The Aged Care Workforce Strategy Taskforce has not yet received a response from the Government to its report, *A Matter of Care – Australia’s Aged Care Workforce Strategy*, which it delivered on 29 June 2018.

“Too many stories have come out, revealing sub-standard care from under-trained, inappropriate aged care workers.

“Too many residential aged care facilities are relying on lesser-trained personal care assistants instead of registered nurses to deliver care.

“The aged care sector needs resources for a regulated minimum numbers of nurses, available 24 hours a day, in line with the care needs of residents.

“The *AMA Aged Care Survey 2017* found that having sufficient numbers of registered nurses available is the top priority for doctors visiting residential aged care facilities.

“Doctors who visit facilities must also be appropriately remunerated for the visits and the increasing amount of unpaid non-contact time involved, including locating the patient, filling in scripts and paperwork, talking to relatives, renewing scripts over the phone, and phone calls to staff while back in their surgery.

“The Government must also address the 108,456 older people waiting for an appropriate home care package.

“The 20,000 additional packages announced in the May Budget are not nearly enough to ensure that older people are getting the care they need, in the environment they want to remain in, as they age.”

The *AMA Aged Care Survey 2017* is at <https://ama.com.au/article/2017-ama-aged-care-survey>

The *AMA Position Statement on Resourcing Aged Care* is at <https://ama.com.au/position-statement/aged-care-resourcing-2018>

12 September 2018

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