

MEDIA RELEASE

July 13, 2017

COTA welcomes next steps in aged care reform, but government must not falter in achieving greater choice and control

COTA Australia welcomes the Federal Government's release of the discussion paper on an integrated care at home program to support older Australians, as part of its ongoing commitment to the aged care reform program to give consumers greater choice, control and quality.

Minister for Aged Care, Ken Wyatt, released the discussion paper early this morning, mapping out the next steps and issues to be considered in the proposed merger of the Commonwealth Home Support and Home Care Packages Programs.

Chief Executive of COTA Australia, Ian Yates, said "We welcome the government's continuing intention to complete the merger by 2020, noting that this already represents a delay in the original intention to create a single home care program with greater consumer control by the original start date of July 2018."

"There are a number of issues that will need to be addressed between now and the 2020 merger, including whether any block funding needs to be retained, streamlining means testing, and approved provider arrangements.

"It is absolutely imperative that we maintain the momentum to have a single program commence in July 2020 so that older Australians get the choice and control they now have in Home Care Packages across the larger home care service sector," said Mr Yates.

"An integrated aged care assessment service, seamlessly combining the My Aged Care, Regional Assessment Services, and Aged Care Assessment Teams, should be developed urgently so that it is given due time to work in practice, ahead of the 2020 merger.

"This integrated aged care assessment service must be completely independent of providers and while it will be under the auspices of the federal government, it must be multidisciplinary in approach.

"We are witnessing a massive shift in aged care delivery in Australia, with older Australians looking forward to the promise of a system that will soon offer choice and control across all aged care.

"This discussion paper should be a step in the right direction to significantly improving the ways in which home care services are delivered to older Australians.

"The government must not let the concerns and interest of a few providers stand in the way of directions agreed by the sector as a whole through the National Aged Care Alliance and the Aged Care Roadmap. already developed by the government's own Aged Care Sector Committee.

"Faltering on the reform journey is simply not an option.

"The clock cannot be turned back now – this is an issue that will affect millions of older Australians and their families for decades to come.

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COTA Australia is the peak policy development, advocacy and representation organisation for older Australians, representing COTAs in every State and Territory and through them over 500,000 older Australians.