

MEDIA RELEASE

18 April 2018

Older Australians welcome stronger, streamlined aged care quality and safety agency

Australia's leading advocacy body for older Australians and aged care consumers, COTA Australia, has welcomed the Government's announcement, reported in media overnight, that a new streamlined Aged Care Safety and Quality Commission will commence from 1 January 2019.

COTA Australia Chief Executive Ian Yates welcomed the announcement as "another significant step towards better monitoring and enforcement of quality in Australia's aged care system, together with the new regime of unannounced visits by quality assessors".

"These are welcome steps towards rebuilding confidence that older Australians will receive safe and appropriate care," said Mr Yates, "although government still needs to go further and give consumers direct control over their aged care funding, as recommended by several inquiries and this government's own aged care advisory body.

Consolidating Australia's aged care oversight powers into a single 'one stop shop' independent Commission was recommended by Kate Carnell and Professor Ron Paterson in their 2017 'Review of National Aged Care Quality Regulatory Processes' set up by Minister Wyatt after the failures at the Oakden aged care facility.

The Government's announcement includes that the new Commission will develop a transparent ratings system, showing how individual nursing homes perform against Aged Care Quality Standards – which means providers will start being measured against new and much more consumer focused standards on 1 July 2019 and the results will be able to be compared on the My Aged Care website.

"COTA has successfully advocated for new aged care standards that place outcomes for older Australians at the centre of aged care regulation. It is appropriate the new Commission explain in an easy to understand way how individual providers comply with the standards expected of them," said Mr Yates.

The Government's announcement also includes that the new Commission will have a Chief Clinical Advisor, who will deal in part with the misuse of physical and chemical restraints; and it will consult with the sector on the introduction of a Serious Incident Response Scheme.

COTA notes the Carnell/Paterson inquiry also includes a recommendation for the appointment of a "Consumer Commissioner" in the new Commission, to develop processes to ensure consumers and families receive full information about their rights and are supported and protected to exercise those rights.

"The atrocities at Oakden were only brought to light thanks to the tenacity and persistence of Oakden family members, demonstrating the importance of having strong consumer voices heard in aged care quality processes," said Mr Yates, "but we need to make it much easier, indeed normal practice, for consumers and families to be involved – that's why we need the Consumer Commissioner's role.

"COTA welcomes the opportunity to engage with the Government and Parliament to ensure the importance of older Australians and their families are legislated into the new Commission's framework to ensure such voices are never ignored again and fully engaged in ensuring quality care is delivered."

Ian Yates is overseas but available for print, radio or Skype comment from now until 8.30am and after 3.00pm. Acting Chief Executive Judy Gregurke is also available throughout the day for all media.

Media contact: Bronte Kerr 0411 676 269; Ian Yates 0418 835 439; Judy Gregurke 0408 694 317

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.