



16 MAY, 2024

## 'No aged-care reform, too few homecare packages'

The Australian, Australia

Page 1 of 1

# Budget2024

## 'No aged-care reform, too few homecare packages'

### OPERATORS

STEPHEN LUNN  
SOCIAL AFFAIRS EDITOR

Aged-care advocates have rebuked the Albanese government over the pace of reform after Tuesday's budget offered no response to the recommendations of its own taskforce.

There was also disappointment that only 24,100 additional homecare packages were funded, far lower than expectations given the ageing population and growing demand for older Australians to remain in their own homes for as long as possible.

With most of the budget's \$2.2bn new aged-care funding committed to funding IT upgrades and digital infrastructure, advocates for a sector facing significant financial challenges were looking for a more comprehensive reform road map.

"The decision to neglect the aged-care taskforce recommendations in this budget is incredibly disappointing and frustrating," Catholic Health Australia aged-care policy director Laura Haylen said.

"With most facilities operating at a loss and many at risk of closure, we are running out of time to secure quality and sustainable aged care for our loved ones.

"Every day adds more to the cost of fixing the system, and leaves more older Australians languishing in our hospitals for lack of quality care options in their community. There is no excuse for delay," she said.

Retirement Living Council executive director Daniel Gannon said there had been "radio silence" on the government's response to the taskforce recommendations, key among them that older Australians with the means to do so pay more for components of their care including accommodation, food and cleaning.

"Given the government is the judge, jury and executioner of this taskforce and having already had five months to consider their own findings, non-communication signals one of two things: it's either bad news for consumers or it's bad news for operators," Mr Gannon said.

Stephen Muggleton, chief executive of independent not-for-profit aged-care provider Bolton Clarke said "a speedy response on aged-care funding reform is needed because every day that we delay now means more people stuck in hospital in years to come due to insufficient residential care."

Peak provider advocacy group Aged and Community Care Pro-

viders Association chief executive Tom Symondson said the failure to address the taskforce recommendations, even some indication of direction, was "a big problem."

"We need to see the government's response and we need all sides of politics to get behind these reforms," Mr Symondson said.

"The majority of providers continue to struggle to keep their

doors open and the sector has lost billions of dollars over the past five years, hampering investment while demand for services is growing. It can't go on."

Mr Symondson was also concerned about the lack of new homecare packages, noting ACCPA had called for an additional 80,000 and Tuesday's budget allocation was 24,100.

Council on the Ageing chief executive Patricia Sparrow also flagged alarm about "only 24,100 additional homecare packages" being funded.

"Older Australians should not be left stranded in hospital, forced into residential aged care, or die waiting for support that never comes," Ms Sparrow said.

She also noted that deep in the budget documents the government confirmed there would be a delay in the introduction of a new aged-care act until July 1, 2025, two years on from the date recommended by the aged-care royal commission.

"Despite announcing the finishing line, we're still no clearer on the starting line for the parliamentary processes to commence," Ms Sparrow said.

Older Persons Advocacy Network chief executive Craig Gear agreed. "We are disappointed to see the budget papers indicate that the new aged-care act will commence on 1 July, 2025, rather than this year, which we have strongly advocated for," he said.



Haylen



Muggleton