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package and receiving services blew out from 118 days in 2023-24 to 245 days in 2024-25, latest Productivity Commission data reveals.

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The PC report also shows the median wait time for a permanent place in a nursing home jumped from 136 days in 2023-24 to 162 days last financial year.

State governments say more than 3000 older people are stranded in public hospitals awaiting an aged care bed as they seek a new multibillion-dollar hospital funding deal with the Albanese

government.

The federal government has previously offered \$2bn to help pay for this bed block as part of the negotiations.

Anthony Albanese will meet premiers and chief ministers on Friday to try to reach consensus after years of failed talks, but if no agreement is reached the South Australian government will go into caretaker mode on February 21, pushing any resolution further into 2026.

In-home care includes services ranging from assistance with showering to domestic cleaning,



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meal preparation, transport and allied health. Residential aged care is for when older Australians can no longer look after themselves at home.

Last financial year the federal government spent \$36bn on aged care overall, a number that's set to rise as the population rapidly ages.

The 2023 Intergenerational Report states the number of Australians aged 65 and over will double in the next 40 years, and for those aged 85 and over it will triple.

But funding their future care is proving a significant challenge, made harder as the Albanese government looks to bring accommodation and services up to standard after the damning aged care royal commission report in 2021 found glaring systemic issues.

A significant part of the government's response to the royal commission was to bring in a new aged-care act, prioritising in-home care in line with the preference of older Australians. It also mandated more minutes of nursing and general care for aged-care residents.

But while the government

brought in some urgent reforms such as increasing daily care minutes, it deferred the starting date of the new aged-care system from July to November last year to help the sector manage the transition.

And while the 2025-26 budget committed to providing 83,000 new home-care packages in the 2025-26 financial year, the government initially stalled in releasing any new packages as it waited for the new in-home care regime, Support at Home, to start in line with the new act.

Amid pressure from the Senate and advocacy groups, Aged Care Minister Sam Rae released 20,000 packages in September, but these were criticised as being "interim" only, providing around 60 per cent of full funding until the new system came into place.

Even with the budgeted package allocations, the demographic-led demand continues to outstrip supply. Documents tabled in Senate estimates in December said that as of October 31 there were 107,281 older Australians waiting for a home-care package after being assessed as needing one, and a further 113,150 waiting for an

assessment to be completed.

Residential aged-care beds are also falling short of demand. An analysis by Bolton Clarke in October found the number of operational aged-care places added into the system in 2024-25 was 800, compared to 2200 in 2023-24 and 1500 the year earlier.

"Bed growth is being outpaced by increases in demand, with the number of aged-care residents increasing by about 5000 people per year in 2024-25, 2023-24 and 2022-23," the report stated.

The consequence of these shortfalls is that older Australians decline in health or die while waiting for a home-care assessment or for their package to come through, or they are unable to properly care for themselves at home as they wait for a nursing home bed.

Family members are often left to take up the additional burden unpaid, and that is if the older person is fortunate enough to have someone.