



**BAPTIST CARE AUSTRALIA**



**23 April, 2018**

## **IMMEDIATE ACTION NEEDED TO INCREASE ACCESS TO HOME CARE**

A coalition of leading church and not-for-profit aged care peak bodies is calling for immediate action to tackle the increasing number of older Australians waiting to access appropriate home care.

Recent data shows the number of people on a waiting list for a Home Care Package (HCP) has grown to nearly 105,000 people, including 40,000 people who have been allocated a lower package than they have been approved to receive.<sup>1</sup> Also, more than half of those waiting for level 3 and 4 HCPs are in the queue for more than six months.

In addition, it is still not clear how current funding commitments will meet the projected need of about 140,000 HCPs by 2021/22 – an extra 66,000 packages.

The aged care sector has been working hard with government to implement reforms that enable older people to remain living their own homes for as long as they choose to.

In a positive step, the February 2017 *Increasing Choice in Home Care* reforms made the number of people waiting for a HCP transparent. This will support planning to better meet the needs of older Australians.

The Government's recently released additional 6,000 Level 3 and 4 HCPs are welcome, but this has alleviated only a small amount of pressure in the system.

"It is important for people to get the care they need at home for their quality of life and also to avoid or defer a move to costlier permanent residential aged care. An inability to access a home care package when it is needed may severely limit the support choices of an older person," the peak bodies said.

We recommend:

- Increasing investment in home care, including immediately releasing more HCPs, in particular more level 3 and 4 HCPs, to directly reduce the number of clients waiting for care and support;
- Ensuring adequate resourcing of a skilled, integrated assessment service to ensure the prioritisation process is as effective and efficient as it can be;
- Reducing the wait time for commencement of support services for those on the waitlist by:
  - Putting systems in place to flag situations where people – especially those in special needs groups – need support to navigate the process of finding a provider once a HCP is assigned, and to provide that support; then
  - Reducing the decision-making period for activating a HCP from 56 to 28 days; and
  - A review of unspent funds in HCPs to ensure maximum use of available funds to support individual's needs.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gen-agedcaredata.gov.au/Resources/Reports-and-publications/2018/Mar/Home-care-packages-program-data-report-1-October-%E2%80%9393>