

NATIONAL AGED CARE ALLIANCE

ATTENTION: Aged care/health/political reporters

27 May 2009

AGED CARE LEADERS CHALLENGE GOVERNMENT TO ACT

Key stakeholders in Australia's aged care sector today called for sweeping reform to the nation's \$10 billion system of residential and community care.

The National Aged Care Alliance (the Alliance) comprising consumer, provider, professional groups and unions, meeting in Canberra stated:

The time to start the reform process is now. The report of the recent Senate Inquiry, tabled just before the budget, identifies a pressing need to rejuvenate aged care and to fix some long-standing problems.

Evidence given to the Inquiry by the Australia Government Department of Health and Ageing shows a long-term decline in the hours of care being provided to each resident and each client of community care programs. This is due to the failure of Government subsidies to keep pace with costs over a long period of time. This decline in service levels must be arrested.

Witnesses to the Inquiry demonstrated the precarious financial state of aged care services, threatening our ability to care for an ageing population. We cannot afford to let the system collapse.

The report from the Inquiry calls for action, including high level discussion between the Minister for Health and Ageing and stakeholders. The Alliance represents all the parties and extends an invitation to Government to sit down and discuss what needs to be done.

Aged care was largely ignored in this year's budget but we can't afford to be complacent about aged care. With this Senate report and the forthcoming Health and Hospitals Reform Commission report, aged care reform needs to be high on the Government's agenda now.

The Alliance stands ready to support the Australian Government in this process. We should be the core of the aged care forum the Senators have proposed. We know the issues are complex and not restricted only to funding. The Alliance has the range of skills to deal with them. Its members represent all of the key constituencies - except Government.

We need to start dealing with this problem right away, it will take time to get our system ready for our ageing population and we need to start now.

For comment:

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Membership of the Alliance comprises:

Aged and Community Services Australia; Aged Care Association Australia; Alzheimer's Australia; Australian Nursing Federation; Anglicare Australia; Australian and New Zealand Society for Geriatric Medicine; Australian Association of Gerontology; Australian General Practice Network; Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association; Australian Pensioners' and Superannuants' Federation; Australian Physiotherapy Association; Baptist Care Australia; Carers' Australia; Catholic Health Australia; COTA Over 50's (Councils on the Ageing); Diversional Therapy Association of Australia; GeriAction; Health Services Union; Legacy Co-ordinating Council Incorporated; LHMU; Lutheran Aged Care Australia; OT Australia; Palliative Care Australia; Pharmacy Guild of Australia; Royal Australian College of General Practitioners; Royal College of Nursing Australia and UnitingCare Australia.

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