

Aged Care: Australia Deserves Better

UnitingCare Australia is the national body for the Uniting Church's community services network and an agency of the Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia.

We give voice to the Uniting Church's commitment to social justice through advocacy and by strengthening community service provision.

Scrutiny & Opportunity

Australia's Aged Care sector is in the national spotlight. The Aged Care Royal Commission is examining the sector, scrutinising its failings in order to create a sustainable model offering high-quality alternatives for all.

Yes, there will be uncomfortable moments ahead for providers, but we do not shy away from this high-level examination.

Most importantly, the next 20 years provide an opportunity to embrace a system that better meets community expectations.

Real change takes time, vision and courage combined with resources and tangible, realistic actions. Currently Australia has no cohesive policy to deal with an ageing population. This needs to change.

As one of the most prosperous nations in the world, we can afford an increased investment in Aged Care.

Doing nothing is not an option.

Understanding the Challenge

It is a tragedy that an older person in need of support describes themselves as a **burden** to their family and the community.

That is the blunt reality of a system where:

- more than 130,000 qualified older people are currently unable to access home care services.
- residential Aged Care providers are struggling with insufficient resources.
- the current, rigid funding model makes it hard to offer the creative, "fit-for-purpose" services that people want.

Our Aged Care Network



213 facilities,
including **63** in
rural, regional and
remote locations



17,500 residential
aged care beds



10,000 Home Care
Packages



70,000
Commonwealth
Home Support
Program clients

All people deserve to be treated justly, accorded dignity and have their basic rights protected.

The Time to Act is Now

Leadership

The Federal Government must lead by example to **confront ageism** and **recognise the human rights** of older people. An important step towards this is the **creation of a Cabinet Minister for Aged Care**. The Government also should **lead a discussion** on the balance between public funds and individual contributions – with appropriate thought to fairness and equality of access.

Sustainability

An **immediate injection of funds** is needed to restore the \$3 billion stripped from residential Aged Care in the past decade. A viable Aged Care system must be **fully funded** to ensure access to quality services for all who need support. Funding levels cannot depend on the ideology of the government of the day – they must be **stable over the long term** to ensure appropriate care for consumers while providing certainty for providers.

Accessibility

Aged Care must be **easy to access and navigate**. It must **respect and support difference**, especially amongst the most vulnerable. It must support services **in rural, regional and remote areas**, so that older people can realistically choose to remain at home, within the embrace of their community and culture. A **seamless interface between Aged Care, the health care system and other community services** will save lives and increase efficiency.

Workforce

An effective Aged Care workforce is **skilled, paid fairly and respected**. Currently, the workers we expect to care for our loved ones are paid less than those in comparable positions in the health care or disability sector. *Australia's Aged Care Workforce Strategy* shows a way forward.

Innovation

We propose a “three horizons” approach that would allow the current system to evolve over time, testing and then implementing new models of care and support, inspired by successful examples from other countries. This could be achieved, in part, by **establishing an Innovation Fund** to encourage investment in a more flexible, responsive and better-managed system.



“We need political leadership. And then we need our champions across the corporate sector and all other parts of the community to have a national conversation about what it means to build a system of care based on respect and dignity.”

Claerwen Little,
National Director,
UnitingCare Australia,
in evidence to the Aged
Care Royal Commission.

*This is our opportunity.
Because Australia deserves better.*