

**14 April 2021**

## **UnitingCare Australia backs calls for major aged care reform ahead of the Federal Budget**

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UnitingCare Australia is calling on the Morrison Government to use the May Budget to adopt the priorities for reform detailed in the new [report](#) from the Australian Aged Care Collaboration (AACC): *Aged Care - The Way Forward*.

UnitingCare Australia is a member of the AACC along with other providers and peak bodies including Catholic Health Australia, Aged & Community Services Australia, Anglicare Australia, Baptist Care Australia, and Leading Age Services Australia.

UnitingCare Australia supports the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, which reported to the Government at the end of February, as the basis for reform.

National Director of UnitingCare Australia, Ms Claerwen Little, said that the Uniting Church in Australia’s service providers are looking forward to working with the Government and other stakeholder groups to make significant changes to the way aged care is delivered.

“This is not change at the margins, it is cultural and social change that is needed to embrace the diversity of our older people,” said Ms Little.

“The months and years ahead will be challenging for the sector, but ultimately worthwhile if Australia ends up with a system that genuinely protects the rights of older people to support when they need it.”

“Australia is rapidly ageing. Looking two generations ahead, almost a quarter of the population will be aged over 65. Australia must lay a solid foundation for the nation’s future as this demographic shift progresses.

“The AACC campaign seeks to affirm the ancient wisdom of ‘respecting our elders’ at a government level. We call on the Morrison Government to commit in the Budget to establishing a universal right for the elderly to access safe, timely, and high-quality care.

UnitingCare Australia stands behind the call for a rights-based Aged Care Act, and the immediate priorities identified by the AACC.

“This change is not symbolic. It will shift the aged care system at every level away from considering older people through an economic lens – ‘a cost burden on society’.

Putting the older person (and their carers) at the centre will require the Government to coordinate and fund the development of an integrated long-term support and care system that ensures the needs of all people living through the ageing process are met.

The new report from the AACC has examined the Royal Commission’s findings to identify a range of priorities, including:

- immediate funding for removing the home care package waiting list by December 2022
- development and implementation of a new uncapped and better integrated aged care program comprising respite, social supports, assistive technology and home modifications, and care at home and in residential services
- establishment of a regional network of 'care finders' and increased support for independent advocacy.
- appointment of an Inspector-General of Aged Care, independent standards setting arrangements, and an independent taskforce to direct and implement the reforms
- an independent aged care pricing authority to determine prices for aged care services based on annual costing studies which have regard to, inter alia, minimum casemix-adjusted staffing levels
- a joint Australian Government, employer and union application to the Fair Work Commission in 2021-22 to increase minimum award wages which includes provision for funding award increases
- improved access to the services of the wider health system by older people receiving aged care, including a new primary health care model, multidisciplinary outreach services, improvements to the Medical Benefits Schedule and a dental benefits scheme for age pensioners scheme and residents of aged care homes
- designing and implementing a national registration scheme for personal care workers.

*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. The UnitingCare network is one of the largest networks of community services in Australia, supporting 1.4 million people every year across urban, rural, and remote communities, with over 50,000 staff and 30,000 volunteers.*

*The UnitingCare Aged Care Network supports approximately 97,000 older people, comprising 8.5% of total residential beds and 10% of Home Care Packages nationally*

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