

MEDIA RELEASE

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Urgent reform needed so all Australians can Age Well

Australia's ageing population will not be properly cared for into the future unless comprehensive changes are made to the system now, said Australia's peak aged care consumer organisation COTA today.

COTA Chief Executive Ian Yates said today's release of the 2011 Aged Care Approvals Round (ACAR) shows the current system is unworkable and can't provide the support and care people need now let alone the more than threefold increase in need predicted by 2050.

"The ACAR results paint a woeful picture of the current state of our age care system," Mr Yates said.

"A massive 24,000 community care places were applied for this round, reflecting people's desire to receive support and care at home for as long as possible and not be prematurely forced into residential care.

"That only 1,724 were allocated shows a huge need is not being met.

"Residential care beds are significantly undersubscribed because the current funding arrangements mean residential high care is not viable so there are no real incentives to invest in new facilities.

"Also many providers know that Australians want to have support and care at home rather than in residential care so they have applied for packages not beds.

"Clearly the current system based on planning ratios is failing older Australians. If we can't meet the needs of the population now, how will we cope in five, ten or twenty years as our population ages?"

Mr Yates said the opportunity to avert a real crisis for older people was fast slipping away.

"Today's ACAR results starkly emphasise the need for immediate bipartisan support for comprehensive reform as recommended by the Productivity Commission.

"We are already struggling to meet the needs of our older Australian's and we can't afford to wait any longer to make comprehensive change.

"All Australians deserve the right to age well. They deserve the quality, dignity and choice which the current system can't deliver.

"I once again urge the Government and Opposition to come together and commit to real and lasting changes to the system for the benefit of all Australians."

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