



DEALS DONE, DOLLARS SECURED, BUT WHAT ABOUT STRANDED PATIENTS?

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National Seniors Australia (NSA) has questioned at what cost states and territories agreed to the \$25 billion for state and territory public hospitals secured in Friday's national cabinet meeting.

Premiers, chief ministers, and the Prime Minister agreed to \$24.4 billion in federal payments for hospitals through the National Health Reform Agreement and more than \$600m in further spending for the public system. But earlier promises of \$2 billion for aged care to speed up the discharge of older people stuck in hospital appears to have disappeared.

NSA Chief Executive Officer Mr Chris Grice said while increased funding for hospitals is always welcome, the funding agreement will not help older people receive the care they need outside of the hospital system unless some of this "new" money is used to fund aged care homes in suitable locations for those with specific needs.

"The number of days older people languish in hospital unnecessarily has been steadily increasing. Recent data shows more than 4,000 people have waited more than 35 days for admission to residential aged care or for support at home but hundreds more have waited for several months," Mr Grice said.

"For people with complex needs, such as dementia, hospital environments are inappropriate, they can be highly stressful and exacerbate symptoms. Long-term hospital stays can put patients at greater risk of acquiring infections, take a toll on loved ones, and have flow-on impacts for the hospital and health system contributing to delays in access for all.

"The states and territories flaunted stranded patients to secure more money for hospitals. Now NSA would like to see states and territories use some of that funding to address the root cause of the problem and to start building the necessary bricks and mortar now, especially given the \$2 billion promised for aged care has been forgotten.

"The only state or territory without a significant stranded patient issue is Victoria, which has invested in public aged care services for many years, including in regional areas and for people with high needs, such as dementia. This has resulted in lower numbers of older people stranded in hospitals.

"NSA would like to see the establishment of a taskforce across all levels of government to develop targeted solutions to ensure the needs of older people stranded in hospital are prioritised within the aged care system by addressing shortfalls in aged care services.

"Sure, a deal was struck and federal funding secured, but it has come at the cost to thousands of stranded patients whose plights have been forgotten.

"This isn't a deal only about dollars – it's about older people who built this country, shaped our communities, and who deserve aged care support and a place to call home."

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