

Cut in Home Care Wait list welcomed, but where are the workers?

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National Seniors welcomed news the home care wait list has decreased by 25 percent in twelve months helping to ease an unacceptable wait time for 41,000 older Australians.

Chief Advocate Ian Henschke said the latest figures from the Home Care Packages Program Data Report show the number who accessed home care packages grew to 204,146 in September 2021 – an increase of more than 41,000 in 12 months.

“National Seniors has been urging the Federal Government to take action to better support older Australians with the appropriate level of support they need and when they need it,” Mr Henschke said. “After years of delays, exposed shamefully during the Royal Commission, we’re finally starting to see a significant drop in the wait list which has seen as many as 16,000 people die waiting, in one twelve-month period.”

Where are the workers?

Mr Henschke cautioned while the wait list is clearing, there are still thousands of people waiting for home care support at a time of unprecedented labour shortages.

“While National Seniors is encouraged by today’s news, we urge the government or whoever wins the next election, to urgently address the shortage of quality workers.

There’s already a successful pilot program to train mature age workers in home care. This must be rolled out across the country to entice mature workers, particularly women, back into the workforce.

“We also need to let pensioners work if they want to.” Mr Henschke added “New Zealand has a Labour force participation rate of almost 25% among those aged 65 and over. Ours is less than 15%.

Only 3.4% of Age Pension recipients work in Australia. Many want to work but are discouraged because they lose 50c in the dollar from their pension when they work more than 1 day per week.

The workers are there, they just need incentives and training.

National Seniors is pushing for changes through a range of policies in the run up to the election and we’re continually reminding those in charge that older Australians want to stay in their own homes for as long as possible. This is becoming a key election issue.”

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