

## **NEW REPORT: LEARNING FROM OLDER AUSTRALIANS' CONCERNS IN PANDEMIC PEAK**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Wednesday 15 July 2020**

Lack of advice for unpaid carers, financial stress and frustration at panic buying top the list of concerns expressed by older Australians over five weeks of the national lockdown.

During the peak of the first wave of COVID-19, National Seniors asked older Australians what they were concerned about and what resources they needed during the pandemic.

More than a 1,100 people responded and their comments were documented in a new 33-page report titled, 'Older Australians' life and care during the pandemic'.

"We need to learn quickly from the first phase to do things much better in the second phase," says National Seniors CEO, Professor John McCallum.

A third of the respondents were older Australians providing care for a loved one, who said they needed:

- clearer guidance on care during the pandemic
- help with care planning
- increased support financially and practically
- recognition by health professionals of main carers' essential role in providing care.

Professor McCallum said the respondents had difficulty applying the COVID-19 social distancing rules while caring.

"These people are providing primary care including doing the shopping and were concerned they were putting both themselves and those they cared for at risk," he said.

"They were also worried that no one would be able to care for their loved one if they, the carer contracted the virus."

Older Australians, especially those relying on investment returns as retirement income said they felt financially "forgotten" by the government.

"Investor retirees take pride in not relying on the government for support, suddenly they lose their income and feel they are not even acknowledged by the government," said Professor McCallum.

“We’re looking to the Retirement Income Review to take action on this.”

Respondents also expressed anger and frustration at the panic buying at the start of the lockdown, especially the run on medicines which left many fearful about securing supplies.

However, Australia had many positive initiatives focused on seniors.

In late April, the Government funded call centre ‘Wellbeing Checks for Senior Australians’ was set up by peak consumer bodies from the start of May 2020. The call centres provided contact points for informal carers to get information, help or simply reassurance.

As well, thirteen age care peak bodies and consumer advocacy organisations, including National Seniors, developed with industry a nationally consistent Industry Code for visiting residential care homes during COVID-19.

COVID-19 presented the government with the challenge of responding rapidly and effectively to a high risk, complex and rapidly evolving crisis but a hidden legacy will be the issues of loneliness and isolation that have been caused by the shutdowns and social distancing.

Read the full report here:

<https://nationalseniors.com.au/research/health-and-aged-care/covid-19-older-australians-life-and-care-during-the-pandemic>

**-ENDS-**

**Professor McCallum is available for comment**

**For media enquiries, contact National Seniors Australia**