

## **GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE JUST SCRATCHING THE SURFACE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 25 November 2019**

National Seniors Australia, the country's peak membership body for older Australians says the government's response to the Royal Commission is just not sufficient.

We want a government to lead, not drip feed.

Much more is needed to urgently address a waiting list in which people are dying.

While welcoming the prioritisation of higher needs home care packages, National Seniors Chief Advocate Ian Henschke says it does nowhere near enough to deal with the more than 100,000 older Australians waiting for a package which meet their needs.

"The government's response to fund an extra 10,000 places is less than the number of people who died last year waiting for a package," Mr Henschke said.

"The Royal Commission into Aged Care was told that 16,000 people died in one year waiting for a package and the government's funding announcement barely addresses ten per cent of the current waiting list."

Earlier this year, Ms Fiona Buffinton, Assistant Secretary of the Department of Health, told the Royal Commission that \$2 billion to \$2.5 billion was needed to fix the problem.

"By the admission of the government's own health department, today's funding announcement of \$496 million for the packages is only a quarter at best, of what is needed to fix this tragic mess, in which older Australian are dying," said Mr Henschke.

"Not only are they dying, but last year 13,000 older Australians were placed into residential aged care against their wishes, because there were not enough home care packages available."

National Seniors welcomes extra money to train aged care workers to deal with patients or residents with dementia but would like to know how many workers that amount will train.

"The Royal Commission identified this as a major issue leading to the abuse of dementia suffering residents in aged care," said Mr Henschke.

"However, the government's own figures show that there are at least 360,000 aged care workers in the sector, so what we would like to know is just how many of those workers will be trained by \$10 million worth of funding?"

In its pre-budget submission to be presented to the government this week, National Seniors has proposed a training program for mature workers to be retrained in aged care to address both the shortage of qualified workers in the sector, as well as the growing number of over 55s currently on Newstart because they cannot get work.

“This innovative solution would solve the two biggest issues that older Australians face as we go into 2020,” Mr Henschke said.

**ENDS**

**Mr Henschke is available for comment**