

01 May 2019

## **Coalition’s seniors investment welcome: National Seniors Australia**

National Seniors Australia has welcomed the Morrison Government’s announcement of investing in research into better care for seniors and training for age care providers but says all parties are ignoring the dire need to boost home care packages.

The government’s announcement targets significant shortfalls in the way Australia cares for its senior citizens and goes some way towards addressing National Seniors election demands for a better age care system.

Chief Advocate Ian Henschke said today’s announcement by the Coalition plus Labor’s commitment to free dental care for pensioners and health card holders were a long overdue recognition of seniors issues in this election campaign.

“Now the parties must address the key health issue facing older Australians and their families today – demand for level 3 and 4 home care packages has way outstripped supply.

“We are calling for the tripling of level 3 and 4 home care packages.

“That will go some way to addressing the more than 100,000 frail older Australians on the waiting list, and provide care rather than see so many die while waiting,” Mr Henschke said.

He said it was hoped that the Aged Care Workforce Research Centre and skills program would prioritise the need for all age care workers to have basic dementia training.

“It is unacceptable that there is no mandatory training now. Trained staff would better manage dementia symptoms, help ease the high incidence of conflict in residential care, and assist in reducing physical and chemical restraints,” he said.

Mr Henschke said it was also pleasing the government recognised the importance of addressing the problem of loneliness.

“The \$10 million Seniors Connected Program is a timely initiative to counter the rising incidence of loneliness and isolation plaguing many older people,” he said.

**National Seniors Chief Advocate Ian Henschke is available for comment.**

**Media contact: 0488 047 380.**

The full *Federal Election 2019 Policy Priorities of Older Australians* is available at [www.nationalseniors.com.au/FederalElection2019](http://www.nationalseniors.com.au/FederalElection2019).

### **Summary:**

#### **Fix pension poverty**

- Establish an Independent Age Pension Tribunal.
- Increase the maximum rate of Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA).
- Provide a subsidy to connect to the NBN or another appropriate internet service.

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**National Seniors was established in 1976 and is the largest independent advocacy group for older Australians.**

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- Expand the provision of basic dental care for pensioners, including those in aged care.

**Address aged care deficiencies**

- Triple the number of level 3 and 4 home care packages.
- Require all aged care providers to publish staff-to-resident ratios.
- Ensure all aged care staff in direct care roles have basic dementia training.

**Increase income in retirement**

- Retain access to franking credits for self-funded retirees.
- Reduce the asset test taper rate from \$3.00 to \$2.00.
- Exempt up to \$250,000 of home sale proceeds from the age pension means test.

**Arrest rising health costs**

- Require all specialists to publish fees on a public register and ensure that all GPs make patients aware of choice when referring to a specialist.
- Limit private health insurance premium increases to no more than CPI until reforms take effect.

**Protect pensioners from future rises in energy costs**

- Reinstate indexation of the Energy Supplement.

**Improve Centrelink wait times**

- Cut Centrelink telephone waiting times for older Australians and reduce age pension processing times.

**Protect older Australians from elder abuse**

- Accelerate efforts to create nationally consistent Powers of Attorney legislation and a single national register for these documents.

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