

19 October 2015

New Short-Term Restorative Care Programme Secretariat  
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Dear Programme Secretariat

### **Re: New Aged Care Short-Term Restorative Care Programme Policy Consultation Paper**

National Seniors is pleased to provide a submission to the New Aged Care Short-Term Restorative Care (STRC) Programme Policy Consultation Paper. With 200,000 individual fee-paying members, National Seniors is by far the country's largest organisation for the over-50s. For 40 years it has had a strong record representing older Australians in a broad range of community, business and government environments.

We believe that timely access to a high standard of short-term restorative care services will improve the capacity of older Australians to stay independent and live in their homes for longer. National Seniors supports the aims of the STRC programme, but has identified some areas of concern with the policy framework as outlined in the consultation paper.

#### **Restorative care places**

National Seniors is concerned that the number of places allocated may not be sufficient to meet continuing and increasing demand in the future, especially given that there will be no change in the overall aged care ratio. It is concerning that the places offered for the STRC programme are not in addition to the existing residential and home care places and will in fact reduce the number of residential care places available.

National Seniors recommends the increase in restorative care places be implemented in addition to existing residential and home care places to achieve a genuine expansion of aged care provision.

#### **Approval to lapse after six months**

National Seniors notes that a placement will lapse six months from the date of the Aged Care Assessment Team approval if the STRC programme has not commenced within that period. Given the early intervention nature of the STRC programme it is essential that the intervention occurs in an extremely timely manner. We are concerned, though, that the long wait times experienced by many home care service clients does not bode well for this to occur.

As a recent Productivity Commission report has noted, less than 60 per cent of new home care clients took up their care package within three months of being assessed<sup>i</sup>. As such, National Seniors is concerned that STRC programme clients may not receive the timely assistance they require and that this will place pressure on informal carers. Furthermore, we are concerned that the pressure on providers to deliver STRC services in a timely manner might inadvertently impact on the already long wait times for home care clients.

### **Eligibility under the STRC Programme**

National Seniors prefers Option 2, which allows an individual to access the STRC programme irrespective of whether that individual receives Commonwealth subsidised residential, home or flexible care. The eligibility under Option 1, which applies only to those people not receiving subsidised aged care, is too narrow and limits the benefits of the STRC programme.

Option 2 enables the STRC to be accessible by a wider range of older Australians and can contribute to improving the well-being of a greater proportion of them. We note, though, that the plan to amalgamate the Home Support and the Home Care CDC programmes by 2018 will have an impact on this, which should be taken into consideration.

### **STRC Programme places to be allocated via competitive process**

National Seniors prefers Option 2, whereby a provider of flexible care must also be a provider of either residential care and/or home care in order to receive an allocation of STRC places. This approach streamlines the application process as existing service providers have demonstrated they can achieve expected outcomes. Option 2 also facilitates client transitions between the levels of care they require.

In terms of the quality framework, National Seniors recommends an ongoing process for transparent and comprehensive evaluation including demand, availability, cost, outcomes and consumer satisfaction as the STRC programme rolls out.

If you have any questions regarding this feedback, please contact Ms Sarah Saunders, Deputy Chief Executive & General Manager Public Affairs on 07 3233 9105 or [s.saunders@nationalseniors.com.au](mailto:s.saunders@nationalseniors.com.au)

Yours faithfully

**Michael O'Neill**  
**Chief Executive**

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<sup>i</sup> Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision 2015. 'Aged care services' in *Report on Government Services 2015*. Productivity Commission  
<http://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2015/community-services/aged-care-services>