

MEDIA RELEASE

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Long waits for home care putting older South Australians at risk

Dangerously long wait times for Federally funded home care packages have been labelled as “disrespectful” by South Australia’s peak body for over 50s.

Data released this week showed 10,578 older South Australians were yet to be offered their approval level of home care package, as of September 2020.

On average, they wait 206 days to get the level of care they have been assessed as needing. A decade ago, this wait was just 48 days.

“It is most worrying that 63% of those waiting for home care require a Level 3 or 4 package because their level of frailty and disability means they need frequent support for everyday living,” said COTA SA chief executive Jane Mussared.

“Around 800 older South Australians will die while waiting for the care they need, while as many as 1600 will be forced into residential care because they can’t wait any longer.

“The unnecessarily long waits disrespects older citizens and doesn’t value their place in the community.”

More than 3000 of the older South Australians waiting for a home care package reside outside of the metropolitan Adelaide area, compounding the challenges older people living regionally already face, such as social isolation and limited access to healthcare.

Ms Mussared said the wait times created extraordinary stress for older people and their families.

“The clear preference of older South Australians is to live at home and in their own community for as long as they can,” she said.

“With the right levels of support at home, this is very achievable, and they can continue contributing to and being part of their community groups, clubs and family lives.

“We urge the government to address these wait times, improve access to home care, and provide relief to these older people and their families.”

COTA Australia has challenged the Federal Government to increase funding for home care by the end of 2021, such that no-one waits longer than 1 month for the care they need.

While the Federal Government funded 23,000 additional home care packages for older Australians in October 2020, and an extra 10,000 in December, these allocations are against a national waiting list of 98,000.

COTA SA is an older people's movement and the peak body representing the rights, interests and futures of more than 633,000 older South Australians aged over 50.

For media interviews or more information, please contact:

Ben Smeaton – ben@communicate.net.au or 0488 940 010

Bec Tape – rtape@communicate.net.au or 0438 806 983