

MEDIA RELEASE

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COTA welcomes proposed better protection of the wellbeing of older Australians in residential care

Australia's leading aged care consumer advocacy body, COTA Australia, welcomes the key recommendations of the *Review of National Aged Care Quality Regulatory Processes* by Kate Carnell AO and Professor Ron Paterson ONZM, released today by the Turnbull government.

COTA Chief Executive Ian Yates said the Review had "belled the cat" by recommending that the focus of government accreditation should shift to unannounced visits and that the gloves be taken off the complaints process by giving it real teeth.

The Review reaffirmed the need to strengthen regulatory protections for consumers while we go through the structural and cultural changes to transition the aged care sector to a more market-based system.

"The report recommends the current jigsaw puzzle of regulatory bodies be brought together into one agency to create a seamless crackdown on resident abuse, poor performance and to put an end to the "tick the box" approach to accreditation that some aged care providers have been using to their own advantage," Mr Yates said.

"COTA supports the recommendations to increase the number and scope of unannounced visits to aged care facilities which should occur no less than once a year. We welcome the greater focus on consumer rights and the recommendation that 1 in 5 nursing home residents be engaged as part of that accreditation process.

"Older Australians and, where they have them, their families, have the absolute right to expect that when living in nursing homes they are safe, well cared for, their concerns/complaints are addressed and they are treated with the utmost respect and dignity.

"Older Australians also have a right to expect that their complaints about poor quality services and care are taken seriously, acted on promptly and effectively, and that solutions achieved through the complaints process are not one-off but are dealt with by providers in a systemic way so they don't keep happening.

In its [submission to the Review COTA Australia](#) made a number of recommendations that the Review has adopted including the need for greater consultation with residents and their families during the accreditation process; an increase in unannounced visits; a transparent, published complaints process and the need for a consumer directed approach in residential age care that supports the best performing providers by giving control over bed licences to consumers rather than providers.

"The events in South Australia in which Oakden received Accreditation despite a long history of horrific incidents at the centre demonstrated systemic failures that had to be urgently addressed, and Minister Wyatt's initiation of the Carnell/Paterson Review was timely and appropriate.

"The Carnell/Paterson Report contains bold but realistic recommendations to strengthen and sharpen accreditation and complaints processes so that aged care providers uphold their obligation to provide the highest quality of care the community expect and pays for," said Mr Yates.

COTA Australia welcomes the recommendations put forward by the Carnell/Paterson report and the already released Tune Review and looks forward to working closely with the Government on the implementation of the recommendations, some of which will require further consultation and coordination with other reforms.

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COTA Australia is the peak policy development, advocacy and representation organisation for older Australians, representing COTAs in every State and Territory and through them over 500,000 older Australians.