



Dying to receive home care

Home care wait list still a “running sore” six years after Royal Commission

22 October 2024

National Seniors Australia (NSA) has responded to reports of an 86-year-old South Australian who has applied to end his own life because of extended delays with home care support, as brought to public attention by Federal Member for Mayo Ms Rebekha Sharkie MP.

NSA Chief Executive Officer Chris Grice said the blow out for an approved home care package, up to 15 months for a Level 4 (the highest need), was appalling.

“This month marks six years since the establishment of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety. During NSA’s appearances before the Commission, we described the crisis with the home care wait list as a “running sore” with more than 128,000 older Australians waiting for much needed support at home,” Mr Grice said.

“While the wait list has steadily decreased since June 2019, wait times have shot up again since 2023, with more than 76,000 older Australians now waiting for home care support.

“The waitlist for home care packages has surged within the past sixteen months with around 47,000 more people on the wait list since June 2023. The services and workforce needed to meet this demand clearly have to grow, especially if the government is to once again meet its own three-month target from 2027. The government achieved one – three months in early 2023, it can do it again.

“To have a situation where an older person with a terminal illness applies to end his own life (using his state’s Voluntary Assisted Dying Scheme) because he understandably can’t wait any longer in pain and without care is appalling. NSA is grateful for his sharing his story and appreciates Ms Sharkie’s advocacy with the aim of ensuring home care receives sufficient resources, to reduce and avoid such lengthy delays.

“The proposed Aged Care Bill 2024 alters means testing rules to increase the number of home care packages available. However, this will not happen until July next year. This is far too late for people waiting now.

“The other issue is the proposed Act has no strict timeframes for the approval process, as we recently raised at the Senate Enquiry into the new Aged Care Act.

“As the Royal Commission heard all those years ago, people were receiving approvals for care long after they were assessed, in some instances they died waiting. Everyone agreed it shouldn’t happen but here we are again, having them same conversation, about the same situation.

“The other elephant in the room is workforce. It doesn’t matter how many additional packages there are if we don’t have the staff to deliver them. That’s why NSA continues to call for an exemption for care workers from the Age Pension Means Test as one solution to help retain experienced staff in the sector.”

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