

Neglect and harm: aged care needs a massive overhaul

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The story of neglect and harm detailed in the Interim Report from the Royal Commission into Safety and Quality in Aged Care leaves the Government no choice but to take immediate remedial action the Consumers Health Forum said today.

“Everyone who reads the report will be shocked at the scale of the problem. Even those who have been highlighting the problems for years will be looking at this with some disbelief” the CEO of Consumers Health Forum, Leanne Wells, said in response to the Interim Report.

“Many will be asking themselves, how could Australia as a civilised society have allowed this to happen? It is clearly a failure across the system, with apparent willingness to turn a blind eye and pretend the cases that were highlighted by advocates were the exception and that overall the standard of care was high. The extent of the neglect documented in this report dispels that myth.”

“It is important that the three areas identified by the Royal Commission as being most urgent are addressed immediately” said Ms Wells.

The Government could easily and quickly increase the number of Home Care packages, the only real barrier to that happening is the willingness of the Government to do it.

The overuse of chemical restraint and other related issues about medicines overuse and misuse in aged care must be addressed. This could be through the 7th Community Pharmacy Agreement currently in negotiation as well as other new programs. Many organisations including CHF have put forward ways to increase the role of pharmacists in better medication management and review in both residential and home care. With funding these could be implemented quickly.

Younger people with disabilities should not be going into aged care simply because there is no other solution: this is the antithesis of person-centred care. It is time to put in place a better approach. Many experts have proposed robust solutions: it is now incumbent on the Government, working with key stakeholders, to put some of these into action.

Beyond these three areas, CHF agrees with the Royal Commission and several other commentators, many of whom are among our members, that there needs to be a long-term

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structural reform of the sector. These solutions need to be led by the Government, but they need to be designed and implemented with everyone involved putting the needs and wants of the older people using these services at the centre of any reforms”.

“The community will want greater visibility of the state of play and performance of the aged care system. They will demand that reform include greater accountability and stronger measures to deal with poor care and neglect. They will demand that Government do everything it can to make sure that the older people who need support and care are safe and get the care they need when they need it.”

CHF’s submission to the Royal Commission can be found [here](#).

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