



More choice and better care for older Australians

2015 Budget

Australians are living longer and healthier lives, and it is important that as Australians age, they retain control over choices about their care. We are implementing a system that is responsive and flexible, which meets the needs of older Australians, and empowers them to receive the services they want. At the same time, it strengthens the aged care system to deliver higher quality and more innovative services, now and into the future.

What was announced in the 2015 Budget?

Changes were announced in the 2015 Budget to ensure the aged care system in Australia continues to meet the needs of an ageing population. The Government's Aged Care Agenda will progressively move aged care from a welfare-style system to one that empowers older Australians to choose their own care services, through a market-based system. This will encourage care providers to offer competitive, high-quality and innovative services.

The measures announced in this Budget continue to recognise the contribution older people, and their carers, make to the Australian community and economy.

Increasing choice for older Australians receiving care at home

From February 2017, funding for Home Care Packages will follow the consumer so they are free to select any approved provider to deliver their care.

Eligible consumers will be able to select any approved provider to deliver their care, with funding for the package paid to the approved provider selected by the consumer. Packages will be portable, allowing consumers to change their service provider, including where the consumer moves to another location.

These changes will give older Australians greater choice in deciding who provides their care, and will establish a consistent national approach to prioritising access to care.

Importantly, there will be increased competition, leading to enhanced quality and innovation in service delivery, and reduced regulation and red tape for providers. These changes are a key step in moving to a less regulated, more consumer-driven and market-based aged care system.

Home Care Providers will also benefit from reduced red tape as they will not have to apply for home care packages through the annual Aged Care Approvals Round after 2015.

From July 2018, the Government intends to combine Home Care Packages and the Commonwealth Home Support Programme into a single integrated care at home programme.

These changes represent a significant shift in how care and support is delivered to older people and will involve consultation with stakeholders on the implementation and transitional arrangements.

A robust aged care complaints scheme

From 1 January 2016, the Aged Care Commissioner will have responsibility for handling aged care complaints, providing greater independence in this important safety net for older Australians.

More short-term restorative care

A new form of short-term restorative care will support older people to improve their capacity to stay independent, and in their own homes, longer.

This will allow aged care providers to develop and offer a range of innovative models of care. It will incorporate the current Transition Care Programme that assists older people to return to their own homes after a hospital stay, rather than enter residential aged care.

High quality care

The Government will work to develop options for establishing a market for quality assessment in aged care, and commence consultations regarding the establishment of a single consolidated and streamlined quality framework for all aged care services.

This will clarify expectations for consumers and streamline existing quality regulation for providers, supporting industry to meet the increasing demand for care.

As a first step, current cost recovery arrangements for accreditation services provided by the Australian Aged Care Quality Agency will be expanded. The changes will improve equity and accountability by ensuring that residential

service providers that use Australian Government services bear the associated cost.

Safeguards will be introduced to ensure that the increased cost to providers does not compromise their financial viability.

This change demonstrates the Government's commitment to introducing competition into accreditation services to help put downward pressure on these costs for providers.

Key facts

- The Australian Government will spend more than \$16 billion on ageing and aged care services in 2015-16.
- Home Care Packages will now be allocated to individuals rather than through providers.
- From February 2017, more than 80,000 people receiving home care packages each year will be able to choose who provides their care.
- Changes will increase competition, enhance quality and innovation and reduce red tape.
- From July 2018 the Government intends to establish a single care at home programme, providing improved services to more than 850,000 older people each year.
- The independent Aged Care Commissioner will have responsibility for handling aged care complaints.
- By 2021 there will be 2,000 new short-term restorative care places available to help older people to stay independent and living in their homes longer.
- The Aged Care Service Improvement and Healthy Ageing Grants Fund will be redesigned into a Dementia and Aged Care Services Fund to support older people living with dementia or who have diverse needs.
- Severe Behaviour Response Teams will assist in managing aged care residents with severe behaviours.
- A stocktake of government aged care workforce initiatives will refocus expenditure through the Aged Care Workforce Development Fund to improve the capability of the workforce to meet the increasing complexity of older people's care needs.

More information

For more information about this measure and other Department of Social Services' Budget measures, visit the [Department of Social Services](http://www.dss.gov.au) website (www.dss.gov.au).

For information about the 2015 Budget, visit the [Australian Government budget](http://www.budget.gov.au) website (www.budget.gov.au).