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Reflections: One year on from implementation of major home care reforms in aged care

On the first anniversary of the *Increasing Choice in Home Care (ICHC)* reforms, Chief Executive Officer of Australia's peak age services body, Leading Age Services Australia (LASA) Sean Rooney, has reflected on the reform experiences and impacts to date.

Mr Rooney said the experience of consumers, providers and Government in the first year of ICHC implementation has been revealing.

"It tells a story of rapid change that has been characterised by a combination of increased choice, persistent challenges and emerging opportunities," Mr Rooney said.

"The range of issues identified reveal the complexity of operationalising choice, control and competition in the provision of home care services for older Australians."

One year on from the implementation of reforms that gives older Australians greater choice and control over in-home care and support services, it is pleasing that most consumers have found the portability of their Home Care Package (HCP), the flexibility of services to account for both care needs and preferences, as well as the transparency of HCP funding, a real strength of the ICHC reforms.

Notwithstanding this, Mr Rooney said the length of the national queue is of primary concern, reported as comprising over 100,000 older Australians not being able to access care at the level of their assessed need.

"It is urgent that more work be done to ensure that older Australians have timely access to care and support in their own homes," Mr Rooney said.

"Further concerns include low package activation rates, high rates of incorrect package withdrawals and substantiative amounts of unspent package funds among other things.

"It is evident from the data that the ICHC program is facing compounding challenges and that further financial and operational investment is needed to successfully implement the reforms."

Mr Rooney said Government responses to these challenges to date have been commendable but more work is needed.

"Looking towards this year's May Budget, a significant injection of funding will be required to address the current waiting list and to make the system sustainable in the longer term," Mr Rooney said.

"LASA made a [pre-Budget submission](#) in December 2017 which recommends immediate supports and medium to longer term reforms for home care.

"LASA has demonstrated industry leadership in working with our Members to identify key ICHC issues, consider appropriate solutions, advocate with authority and influence to enhance the delivery of this program on behalf of LASA Members and older Australians."

LASA notes the strong ongoing commitment to co-design, co-production and change management necessary to improve upon the initial implementation experience and facilitate continued stakeholder engagement in the reform process. LASA will continue to play a role in engaging with key stakeholders and maintaining its position of leadership throughout 2018.

Read LASA's report, [*Reflecting on the First Year of Increasing Choice in Home Care.*](#)

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