

16 July 2018

By-election needs priority focus on the care of older Australians before it is too late

The peak bodies representing Australia's aged care industry are calling on candidates in the upcoming Federal by-elections to prioritise funding for care for older Australians.

These by-elections are an important opportunity to begin a national conversation on ageing and aged care, but instead they are becoming a wasted opportunity focused heavily on the popularity of our political leaders and their respective tax policies.

Today, there are 31,000 seniors in Mayo, 20,000 in Braddon and 27,000 in Longman who want to know more about the future of Australia's aged care system. These older Australians and their families are keen to know if they will be able to access affordable, high quality aged care close to home, now and into the future.

Industry experts have said the number of residential aged care providers recording financial losses is growing. March quarter 2018 data from StewartBrown indicates 43 per cent of residential aged care facilities recorded a loss, up from 41 per cent in the December quarter - up from 31 per cent in 2015-16. This latest figure rises to 58 per cent in outer regional, remote and very remote facilities.

"The under-funding of Australia's aged care system is an urgent issue for every Australian and every community – and should be front and centre of any campaign promising to speak to voters' concerns about services, jobs and growth," the CEO's of aged care peak bodies Aged & Community Services Australia (ACSA); Leading Age Services Australia (LASA) and The Aged Care Guild (The Guild) said.

Sustainable funding is needed to ensure care and services are available for the growing number of older Australians relying on age services now and in decades to come. With over 100,000 people on the national queue for home care packages, further investment in home care is also sorely needed.

The peak body CEOs said all candidates contesting the 2018 by-elections need to understand the scale of the challenge, and must advocate for, and deliver on the needs of older Australians in their communities if they are successfully elected.

"While the recent Federal Budget included positive measures such as an additional 14,000 home care places, and additional support for palliative care and mental health for people living in residential care, core funding is still the largest issue the sector faces," LASA CEO Sean Rooney said.

"Aged care services are part of the social fabric of local communities not only for the essential care and support they provide but also as a valuable generator of jobs and growth," ACSA CEO Pat Sparrow said.

"If residential aged care providers are not viable under the current funding levels, it makes it increasingly difficult to invest in new facilities and services," Aged Care Guild's Matt Richter said.

Immediate actions the peak bodies are calling for include:

- \$675 million per annum to respond to the gap between rising costs and stagnating subsidies in residential care
- At least, \$60 million per annum more for home care subsidies to respond to rising costs, as well as review of the overall level of investment to ensure that the roll-out of additional home care packages keeps up with the actual numbers of people in the national queue (currently over 100,000 people).
- Additional targeted support for those residential aged care providers that are struggling in regional and remote Australia.
- A sustainable aged care funding strategy that ensures we have an equitable and viable aged care system that delivers the services that people need and want into the future.

“As the representatives of the aged care industry in Australia, we are calling for candidates to prioritise ensuring a sustainable aged care system delivering the care and services people need and want into the future,” said the peak body CEOs.

“Older Australians in every electorate, deserve to be treated with respect, and have access to quality and responsive aged care services when and where they need them.”

Linked is a [key issues paper](#) detailing the issues and asking candidates: where do you stand on funding for aged care services?

MEDIA CONTACTS

Aged & Community Services Australia:	Emily Parkinson	0420 390 031
The Aged Care Guild:	Nathan Quigley	0429 692 491
Leading Age Services Australia:	Ashley Oliver	0458 011 009