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LASA Says Pricing Transparency Vital to Success of Home Care System

Leading Age Services Australia has today backed Aged Care Minister Ken Wyatt's call for improved compliance by home care providers with pricing transparency requirements saying it is vital to the success of the home care system.

CEO Sean Rooney says ensuring older Australians seeking care in their homes are informed and empowered with regards to their choice of services and of service provider is fundamental to the success of the home care system.

"Transparency around pricing and administration fees provides consumers with the opportunity to make clear choices about the services they are purchasing and the value for money they are receiving.

"Any lack of transparency around pricing is in no-one's interests, including the large proportion of home care providers who are doing the right thing and taking great pride in the quality of care and value for money they provide to older Australians."

Mr Rooney said the home care system is being challenged by the implementation of significant changes, whilst also straining to keep up with growing demand, but overall it is meeting the needs of those receiving care at home.

"In this respect some of our Members have also reported some difficulties with accessing the My Aged Care portal to publish their pricing.

"LASA clearly recognises that some issues, such as variations of some home care prices – particularly administration fees and case management fees – are often a concern for consumers.

"We encourage home care clients with any concerns with any element of the services received, or the prices charged, to discuss this directly with their home care package provider.

"Under the Aged Care Quality Standards, home care providers must also have in place processes for addressing consumer concerns, and where consumers believe that this does not deliver a satisfactory result, they can also raise their concerns with the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission.

"The system is dynamic as it is presently meeting the needs of around 90,000 older Australians currently receiving services, whilst also seeking to address the needs of over 120,000 older Australians waiting for services on the national home care queue. Enabling older Australians to make informed choices about the services they receive or require is very important.

“It must also be said that providers of home care services are under growing pressure due to increased competition, and levels of funding provided not keeping pace with costs.

“The leading industry survey shows that earnings for home care providers have almost halved in the last two years to just \$3.49 per client per day.

“We are continuing to work with Government to ensure all providers are complying and note the consequences for providers who do not meet these requirements can include the withdrawal of registration and subsidies.

“I assure you that the sector is committed to ensuring that all home care program providers deliver quality services and value to older Australians, with no exceptions.”

Mr Rooney said that consumer research released earlier this week, while providing helpful insights into concerns with the home care system that had been taken on board by the sector, must be recognised as only a small sample that in the researcher’s own words is ‘not meant to be generalised across the sector’.

“In fact, a range of recent surveys and measures show 80 to 90 per cent satisfaction with home care services.”

Mr Rooney said LASA welcomes the fact that the upcoming hearings of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety will focus on home care.

“We fully support this Royal Commission as an opportunity for this country to build a better system to support the growing numbers of older Australians.”

About Leading Age Services Australia (LASA)

LASA is the national peak body representing and supporting providers of age services across residential care, home care and retirement living. Our purpose is to enable a high performing, respected, and sustainable age services industry delivering accessible, affordable, quality care and services for older Australians.

We represent providers of age services of all types and sizes located across Australia’s metropolitan, regional and rural areas. Consistent with the overall industry profile, 57% of our Members are not-for-profit providers, 33% are for-profit providers and 10% are government providers.

Our diverse and representative membership gives LASA the ability to speak with credibility and authority on issues of importance to older Australians and the age services industry.