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"A Vision for Support and Care of Older Australians"
Version 4

1. The Vision

Every older Australian is able to live with dignity and independence in a place of their choosing; with a choice of appropriate and affordable support and care services as and when they need them.

2. The Underpinning Principles

Older Australians deserve and are entitled to:

- live active, contributory and optimising lives in a manner of their choosing

- be supported in this aspiration by readily available affordable support and care in their own communities and homes

- expect that support and care services will be generated out of frameworks that promote wellness and wellbeing and assist them in realising their aspirations

- be treated with equity and fairness regardless of cultural background, geographic location, health, gender, sexuality and capacity, including their capacity to communicate needs

- exercise genuine choice and access client-directed support and care

- select from a range of support and care options that meet the aspirations, needs and preferences of a diverse older population;

- be the principal decision makers about when they may need assistance and the nature of that assistance, in conjunction with their chosen friends and/or family

- have the right to access affordable, effective and safe health and medical care at any age or capacity

- be supported in the removal of barriers and systemic limitations affecting the realisation of any of these principles

- know that their support, care and health services are underpinned by a commitment to quality improvement, evaluation and ongoing research

3.　What a reformed aged care system would mean for people

An aged care system that meets this vision and principles will ensure firstly that when something small, or even larger, goes wrong in an older person's life or becomes an impediment to their full participation in family and community, supportive arrangements are accessible promptly, and are fully responsive to the person's need, situation and preferences.

The goal of these support arrangements is to assist in any possible restoration of function or situation, or to facilitate and enable people to maintain or restore their participation in community despite the frailty or disability experienced.

Indeed as people experience other physical and/or mental challenges that may require more active care services, that goal still applies. As such needs emerge, people are be able to access an aged care assessment promptly which will result in them receiving an entitlement to a level of funding determined by the assessment instrument. They or their chosen representatives can use this entitlement to purchase support and care either through approved providers or through their own networks.

There are a wide variety of choices and options available to people, rather than predetermined menus. The mix of supports usually varies from person to person according to their own support networks; personal aptitudes, preferences and aspirations; varying impact of disabilities; and other personal circumstances. The support and care services are designed around these personal variables.

There is a range of readily available aged care services that are linked seamlessly into the broader health system. These include transition care after any acute health episode, so that no-one ever has an aged care assessment while in an acute care setting; and restorative and rehabilitative services to provide the greatest opportunity of getting back to full function after acute care.

Most people receive care and support in their own homes, whether that be a "family home" of long standing, or a retirement village, a community or publicly owned housing, or a private dwelling chosen by people as their own later life housing option.

Some people's needs or circumstances require them to access supported accommodation options. They may require constant care at a cost that can only be met in a supportive accommodation setting; or they may prefer the security of constant availability of support staff due to advanced frailty.

People contribute to the costs of care according to their capacity, and no-one fails to access care because they cannot afford it. The costs of accommodation are separate to care costs and people either purchase or rent or enter loan/ licence arrangements for accommodation as they choose.

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4. Fundamental reform is necessary to achieve this vision. The elements of the reformed system we need to put in place are:

Promoting a society for all ages

- high priority, well resourced and comprehensive initiatives to promote new and inspiring paradigms of the roles of ageing in our society; to stimulate positive and inspirational representations of ageing and to combat all forms of ageism

- a commitment to raising the profile of aged care and support by presenting positive images to demonstrate its significant contribution to enhancing the well being of older people

- acknowledgement that optimum aged care and support can only be achieved with significant improvements to other key public infrastructure; with government commitment to achieving key elements of this, including:

  o adequate public housing and support services;

  o mandatory adaptable, accessible and sustainable design standards for all housing;

  o an integrated public and community transport system designed around and to support and accommodate in a comprehensive way the needs and aspirations of the entire community including older people;

  o urban design that ensures public environments are safe and accessible for all ages

Consumer focused, user friendly and equitable

- accessible high quality information services which have a range of access portals linking to comprehensive, integrated and consistent data on a consumer-designed platform that supports informed decision making

- a well-resourced national aged care assessment service which provides high quality, rapid and seamless assessments based on multi-disciplinary skills and achieves consistent and equitable outcomes

- robust community-based support networks and arrangements designed to work with and strengthen individuals' capabilities and build on community and family networks and other social ties

- service frameworks or models in which the provision of care and support is designed around and responsive to the varied situations, lifestyles, needs, preferences and aspirations of older people

Entitlement to robust community care is front and centre - within a seamless continuum of care services

- the separation of the provision and funding of support and care services from the provision and funding of accommodation, so that choices about each are as far as possible independent of each other, enabling greater options and choices in both services and housing

- robust, flexible and consumer-focused community care which provides needs-based funding entitlements within a system providing client-directed care whether through self management or assignment to approved providers

- responsive and adaptable respite and temporary care options available as needed and more transition, convalescent and rehabilitation services and facilities

- at all levels and in all forms services allow and enable older people to enter, leave and re-enter as needed

- a variety of housing and supported accommodation options that meet adaptable, accessible and sustainability standards sanctioned by government, provided by a variety of government, charitable and private providers and of a range types and standards of housing, including sufficient accommodation for those who do not have the means to self-provide in the open market

- genuine integration of all aged care services within a more seamless continuum of health services from primary to planned and emergency acute to restorative, all equitably accessible by older people without discrimination

- access to appropriate and high quality palliative and end-of-life support and care from the earliest appropriate opportunity

Properly funded and flexibly and equitably financed

- independent benchmarking for care funding based on the full cost of responding to approved assessed needs with funding provided to individuals as an entitlement, not allocated through ratios or quotas

- user contributions to the costs of support and care services to be nationally consistent, transparent, equitable and affordable - with a variety of payment methods available. No one should be denied access to support and care due to financial incapacity

- flexible payment options for the cost of supported accommodation options which provide genuine choice in how user contributions are made (e.g. loans, periodic payment, deferred contributions, capitalised rent), using a statutory framework to ensure transparency, security and ensure like for like comparability

A framework of support for formal and informal carers and families

- formal acknowledgement and improved support for families, friends and community carers, including the development of long-term strategies to address their diminishing numbers in light of Australia's changing demographics

- Acknowledgement that family and informal carers have the right to cease carer roles for short periods or permanently

- A dynamic and resourced workforce planning regime with adequate funding to ensure sufficient skilled and appropriately qualified staff are attracted to and retained in aged care and respected for their work

Continuous improvement and quality control

- optimum services continuously improved through shared learning founded on evidence-based practice and well-supported research programs into all facets of ageing and optimum care and support

- funding for services that includes provision for optimal levels of continuing and recognised training and development for all staff and volunteers in aged care

- a competitively robust and dynamic accreditation system for approved ethical age care providers across the full range of aged care services including community, home, respite, and short and long term living options

- an independent national complaints service that meets the Australian Standard and is based on fostering feedback and complaints mechanisms from service level up, focused on prompt complaints resolution, enhanced learning and service and system improvement

- a monitoring and compliance regime that actively fosters consumer involvement in proactively identifying service quality issues, fully protects all informants and acts promptly and appropriately to identify, verify and correct malpractice, abuse and poor quality service

5. Reform Implementation

Implementation of these reforms will require broad support and the involvement of all stakeholders including most importantly representatives of and advocates for older people, aged care providers, industry and finance experts, and of course the Federal Government.

The complexity of aged care now and into the future will necessitate transitional regulatory arrangements and funding to move from where we are now to the vision outlined in this paper.

Older Australians deserve a care system that enables the same freedoms, choices and support as all other Australians.

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