

MEDIA RELEASE

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CHA: Make aged care an entitlement like Medicare

Aged care should be made an entitlement available to every person who needs it, according to a community aged care policy blueprint released today by the nation's largest non-government provider of hospital and aged care services.

Helping more ageing Australians to live in their own homes longer would reap huge psychological rewards for individuals, save taxpayers money, and free up hospital beds, Catholic Health Australia (CHA) CEO Martin Laverty said in releasing the policy blueprint.

"Australia has a rapidly ageing population and not nearly enough residential aged care to accommodate them," Mr Laverty said.

"Most people would choose to stay in their own home for as long as possible, if given the choice. At the moment, many don't have that choice.

"Access to aged care should be an entitlement, not a privilege."

CHA's community aged care policy blueprint, *A Better Way Forward*, outlines how older Australians can achieve a better quality of life while allowing Government to save money by broadening access to at-home aged care.

"Most Australians assume aged care is available to all. It's not. Under an old Howard Government formula, it's rationed," Mr Laverty said.

"This is not understood until a crisis hits a family and there is a scramble to find care. It's time we did away with the rationing system.

"The Federal Government's aged care program currently allocates only 22 per cent of its care support to enabling people to live in their own homes.

"If Government instead adopted consistent care package across community care and residential care services, people would be able to choose whether to stay at home or move into a residential service."

The community care policy blueprint recommends:

- Scrapping the Howard Government's *Aged Care Act 1997* allocation formula for funding aged care places, and replacing it with a 'Medicare' style entitlement;
- Setting care payments in both residential and community care services at equal amounts, to create choice as to whether care is delivered in a person's home or in a residential aged care facility;
- Benchmarking a quality level of care, and basing care payments on this benchmark, and;
- Abolishing the current Aged Care Assessment Team structure, and replacing it with a nationally administered network of aged care access centres.

A Better Way Forward is available for free download at www.cha.org.au/policy