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ACSA CEO: Budget demonstrates commitment to the future of aged care

Tonight's 2018-19 Budget demonstrates a Government commitment to the future of aged care services, particularly home care, and the older Australians that rely on it, Aged & Community Services Australia chief executive Pat Sparrow said.

"With over 100,000 older Australians waiting for Home Care Packages, the additional 14,000 packages announced tonight (along with the 6,000 packages announced in December) are urgently needed to address some of that demand," Ms Sparrow said.

ACSA also welcomes the announcement of the Aged Care Approvals Round creating 13,550 residential care and 775 restorative care beds - along with \$60 million in capital funding to meet ongoing demand.

"The Government also announced its in-principle support for the transition of residential aged care places to the consumer.

"It is pleasing to see there is funding for a feasibility study before any changes are made. This will be critical to ensure thorough planning and forethought, including identification of the timeframe required for the significant adjustments and changes such a move would require," Ms Sparrow said.

"The ongoing delivery of residential care in remote, rural and regional communities is absolutely paramount and this can only be achieved with funding certainty into the future.

"The \$50 million Quality Care Fund to assist providers transition to the new Aged Care Quality Standards provides some additional financial support for residential aged care providers" Ms Sparrow said. "However, with 41% of aged care providers making a loss, rising to 56% in remote and rural areas, we need a serious examination of residential care funding to ensure its long-term sustainability.

"Funding is being provided to bring together the aged care assessment services and to make much needed improvements to the user experience of My Aged Care. In addition, face-to-face service trials should assist people to access the system more easily."

Other useful measures in the Budget include:

- a \$105 million commitment to remote and rural communities with the expansion of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care (NATSIFAC) program to improve access to culturally safe aged care services in remote Indigenous communities; and
- \$102.5 million to support older persons' mental health access both in the community and in residential care.

"The Government's measures for aged care in today's Budget are practical but our view is they should form part of a longer-term commitment to the sustainable provisioning of aged care services into the future," Ms Sparrow said.

"We want to further this discussion with Government and the community on how best to plan and provide for the future care services needed for our rapidly ageing population."

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