

## MEDIA RELEASE – FEDERAL BUDGET 2017

9 May 2017

### **Budget Aged Care measures welcome - except one**

Leading peak seniors' advocacy organisation COTA Australia welcomed several additional commitments to the continuing aged care reform process in tonight's Federal Budget but expressed concern about delays in moving on key reforms.

Minister Greg Hunt has announced that the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) that was to be merged with the Home Care Packages (HCP) program by 1 July 2018 will now be extended by two years, delaying this important and essential reform step.

COTA Chief Executive Ian Yates said that the extension of CHSP had been expected as there is now a wider reform process underway, because of the Aged Care Reform Roadmap recommended by the Aged Care Sector Committee and strongly supported by COTA.

"We welcome the requirement that under new CHSP contracts for this period providers will have to focus more on increasing older people's independence and quality of life through restorative and re-enabling support services," Mr Yates said.

"However, **COTA is opposed** to contracts for Regional Assessment Services (RAS) being extended for two years because we urgently need the creation of an integrated aged care assessment service – combining the RASs and State-based Aged Care Assessment Teams (ACATs).

"An integrated Aged Care Assessment Service is an essential building block in the aged care reform process and its development should proceed without delay," Mr Yates said.

"COTA also urges the government to announce a firm commitment to promptly implementing the Aged Care Reform Roadmap to provide timely and seamless aged care across home and residential care with full consumer control over care packages and beds.

"If this does not happen soon then deferring the merger of CHSP and HCP programs will turn into "more of the same", which is not good enough and will impede real reform.

"COTA warmly welcomes additional funds for upgrading the My Aged Care Gateway aged care services" Mr Yates said, "but this needs to be the first in a series of such investments in making My Aged Care work properly.

"COTA similarly welcomes confirmation of significant funding for the new Medicare and aged care payments system that will in time enable consumers and families to have direct control over their home care packages.

"We also welcome funds for development of an aged care workforce strategy led by the aged care sector peak bodies" Mr Yates said which should be informed by the current Senate Inquiry into workforce needs.

**Media contact: Ian Yates 0418 835 439, Olivia Greentree 0439 411 774**