

MEDIA RELEASE

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Rudd's hospital reform paints over cracks in aged care system

Queensland's peak industry body Aged Care Queensland (ACQ) says the announcement of the Rudd Government's hospitals reform strategy has failed to address the needs of older Australians.

ACQ CEO Anton Kardash said aged care providers were disappointed the announcement pushed the long-awaited reforms to the sector back to the bottom of its list.

"I am encouraged by the Prime Minister's interest in reforming the health care system, but I would be disappointed if it reversed the progress we had made as an industry in fixing the cracks and flaws in the aged care system," Mr Kardash said.

Mr Kardash said the industry was concerned about the lack of attention given to aged care within the proposed structural reform package.

He said the long lead time on the introduction of the reforms would leave providers and our older Australians holding out for change that could take years to even make it on to the Government's radar.

"Nearly 50 per cent of all hospital admissions are people aged over 65. A properly functioning health care system is a continuum that includes a well-funded aged care sector. Any attempt to 'fix' the hospital system will fail if the pressures on residential and community aged care are not addressed at the same time.

"If the Government genuinely wants to reform the health sector then it can no longer afford to treat aged care as an afterthought," Mr Kardash said.

"The aged and community care industry already struggles against funding pressures with 40 per cent of the industry running at a loss. We are now under very serious financial pressure and the failure to address the immediate aged care needs will inevitably put at risk the level of services our industry can provide to the frail and elderly," Mr Kardash said.

"The aged care industry needs immediate additional support and investment in services for older Australians and their families. There needs to be a greater contribution both from Government and those who have the capacity to pay.

"An aged care reform blue print is needed and the industry stands ready to work together with Government to create solutions and implement reform. Only together can we build a better future for older Australians," Mr Kardash said.

Mr Kardash said the Prime Minister had agreed to prepare a video message to address the Queensland providers at the ACQ State Conference this month. Mr Kardash said he hoped the Prime Minister would use this opportunity to discuss his vision for aged care within this new health system reform process.

ENDS

Contact: Gemma Ward, Cole Lawson Communications on 07 3221 2220.

Post PO Box 995 Indooroopilly Q 4068 **Tel** 07 3725 5555 **Fax** 0737158166
Office 6 Pavilions Close Jindalee Q 4074
Email acqi@acqi.org.au **Internet** www.acqi.org.au



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