

MEDIA RELEASE

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From the outside looking in - a report card on aged care election promises

From the outside I could look like a dear old soul who is 'doddering around' because I have nothing else to do and no-where else to go but inside I may be suffering. My suffering may not be from some debilitating pain but due to the confusion that has overtaken me by memory loss, changes in personality, loss of ability to perform tasks that I used to take for granted and a growing apathy and withdrawal from polite society. I have dementia and I will continue to have dementia and my hope is that enough people around me will acknowledge that my condition is common and requires some understanding and that they will have the compassion and wisdom to assist me live my life as full and as normal as is possible under these circumstances. A grand fan at www.thegrandplan.com.au

Saturday's election result is unlikely to generate urgently needed assistance for older Australians and the organisations and individuals who provide aged care services, the Campaign for Care of Older Australians (CCOA) said today.

CCOA Chair Greg Mundy said overall the ALP and Coalition aged care policies did not measure up to CCOA's Grand Plan for caring for older Australians.

"They have acknowledged some of the challenges in meeting the needs of older Australians without committing to policies that will fix aged care services to deliver what older people need and expect. At best they have proposed more trials, time-limited funding measures and deferred major decisions," he said.

"The Greens' policy demonstrates a sound understanding of the issues and reforms needed in aged care and their influence in the Senate will be vital.

"However, the winner of Saturday's election will determine the direction for aged care in the short and long term.

"We need the right plan, The Grand Plan, and action now for more than a million older people who depend on aged care services today, their families and friends and more than 300,000 dedicated aged care workers. We need a grand plan in place for the next generation of older Australians."

A detailed report card is attached.

The Grand Plan policy and more Grand Fan comments are available at www.thegrandplan.com.au

CCOA comprises the peak bodies and national service providers of residential and community based aged care services.

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Aged & Community Services Australia, Aged Care Association Australia, Anglicare Australia, Baptist Care Australia, Catholic Health Australia, Churches of Christ Living Care, Sir Moses Montefiore Jewish Homes, Lutheran Aged Care Australia, The Salvation Army Aged Care Plus, The National Presbyterian Aged Care Network, UnitingCare Australia

	<i>Labor</i>	<i>Coalition</i>	<i>Greens</i>
An independent assessment of care costs to determine an effective funding structure	NO	NO	YES
An immediate increase in the cap for residential care, extended to community care, indexed until reforms are finalised and implemented	NO	YES – 1 year for residential care NO – for community care	YES
Flexible payment options for accommodation	Deferred to Productivity Commission Inquiry	Deferred to industry agreement	Issue acknowledged
Creation of one, flexible community care program with flexible funding levels to meet individual and changing needs of older people	Federal responsibility for all community programs	Streamline packages only (no detail)	YES
A plan to address workforce issues including appropriate funding for wages and an investment in workplace development	Range of initiatives but no overall plan	NO	YES – Range of initiatives in an overall plan
Entitlement based on assessed needs	NO	NO	YES
Demand driven, rather than supply driven, services	NO	NO	YES – Not limited by service availability
Readily available access to services	NO	NO	NO – But more community care packages promised
Consumer choice for all services including health and disability support, housing, community and residential aged care, and who delivers them	Trial consumer directed care	Rebalance care ratios in favour of community care to increase choice	Consumer directed funding model based on flexible use of funding
Flexibility in price and payment methods for care and accommodation	Referred to Productivity Commission Inquiry	Referred to Productivity Commission Inquiry	Referred to Productivity Commission Inquiry
Promotion of independence and wellness	NO	YES – Some specific initiatives	YES – Some specific initiatives plus a reform priority
Commitment to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into aged care, and a resolve to implement major reforms	Aged care reform is second term priority	Productivity Commission Inquiry to be considered in agreement context, but commitment to reform directions	Commitment to reform consistent with Greens' policy

Each Party's policy contains some good initiatives, not specifically proposed by CCOA, which will support the development and implementation of a Grand Plan for the Care of Older Australians. However questions remain:

Labor	Coalition	Greens
<p>The Government is standing on its record and has referenced programs announced in this year's Federal Budget. The Government has established the Productivity Commission Inquiry (announced at COAG on 20/4/2010) and introduced significant health and COAG reforms, some of which will benefit aged care. Particularly noteworthy is its commitment to make all aged care programs/services the responsibility of the Federal Government and the establishment of a national aged care access and assessment service.</p>	<p>One of the strongest features of the Coalition's policy is the development of an industry agreement with aged care providers. A partnership approach is critical for successful reform. It should be noted that funding for new initiatives in the policy will come from cancelled government programs with no new funding.</p>	<p>The Greens' policy provides a timely response to the immediate pressures facing aged care and demonstrates a good understanding of the issues and reforms needed in aged care. The creation of a Minister and Office for Older Australians would be a positive step towards elevating the needs of older people and aged care services.</p>
<p>But Will the ALP commit to fundamental reforms and will it address short term funding issues to ensure no older person is disadvantaged now or in the future?</p>	<p>But Will the Coalition establish a federally funded and controlled aged care program and work with all stakeholders, including older people and their families, on designing and implementing reform? Will the agreement provide the basis for transitioning to a fundamentally reformed aged care system based on choice, access and sustainability?</p>	<p>But How will the Greens work with Government to prioritise reforms and achieve expenditure increases in aged care?</p>

The winner of Saturday's election will determine the direction for aged care in the short and long term. More than a million older people, their families and more than 300,000 aged care workers are relying on the next government to deliver significant reforms in aged care. The real work – creating and implementing a Grand Plan for aged care – starts on Monday. It has to be the right plan.

The Campaign for Care of Older Australians Group (CCOA) is made up of the peak bodies and faith-based national service providers of residential and community aged care currently serving the overwhelming majority of older Australians needing care and support.

