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SUPPLEMENTARY PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION: AGED CARE COVID-19 RESPONSE

UnitingCare Australia has made a submission to the 2020-21 Budget preparation process, which reflected the need for ongoing investment in the aged care sector. I am writing to you now to support continuation of funding for aged care services to meet the additional costs associated with managing the risks of COVID-19 for aged care consumers.

Since January, providers of aged care services in residential facilities and in the community have been doing their utmost to contribute to the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The most important actions that we as a community can take are actions to prevent entry of infection into aged care facilities, and to avoid community transmission associated with aged care activities. To provide safe services in the community, we have shifted from group to individual social supports and outreach, and have adopted enhanced infection control protocols. These actions contribute to infection control, but more importantly, provide interactions for a group of individuals at high risk of becoming socially isolated.

We believe it is therefore essential that the Budget include, in addition to public health measures such as sentinel testing, funding to maintain the additional measures that have been in place to date:

- \$15 per resident per day and \$5 per client per day for home care (paid to the provider rather than the package), paid as one off payments in September and February;
- continued 30 per cent increase to the Residential and Home Care Viability Supplements and the Homeless Supplement;
- continuation of grants for CHSP providers to claim costs associated with COVID;
- funding for paid pandemic leave for all employees and for single site worker arrangements, wherever they are required, so that providers can ensure that no worker is worse off;
- \$500m to strengthen and deepen the workforce to meet the demands of COVID-19.

Community transmission at some level is expected to continue for some time. This funding will help to keep older people who use aged care service safe, and wherever possible, connected in our community to make sure that they do not suffer the mental health impacts that come with the necessary restrictions on their day to day activities.

Warm Regards



Claerwen Little, National Director

