



## **Senator the Hon Santo Santoro Minister for Ageing**

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

9 May 2006

SS46/06

#### **FOCUS ON QUALITY AGED CARE SERVICES ACROSS AUSTRALIA**

The Howard Government will invest more than \$6.9 billion in 2006-07 in supporting older Australians, both in aged care homes and in their own communities.

The Minister for Ageing, Senator Santo Santoro, said a series of major initiatives funded in tonight's Budget would increase the already high standards of care in Australian aged care homes, at the same time as the Government continues to substantially expand the number of places to make aged care services available to more Australians than ever before.

The Budget commits \$108.3 million over five years for new initiatives, and funding totalling \$311.3 million over four years to extend existing programmes.

It also provides \$152.7 million for improved provision of hospital care, including in small rural hospitals, to older people who are eligible for aged care, as part of the major package of health reforms agreed at COAG in February 2006.

Senator Santoro said the new funding also provided concrete evidence of the Howard Government's commitment to recently announced reforms in the areas of security and service quality.

The funding measures announced in the Budget include:

- \$8.6 million over four years to pay for additional unannounced aged care home visits by the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency;
- \$1.8 million over four years to extend police checks to all volunteers participating in the Community Visitors Scheme;
- \$4.7 million over three years for a major expansion of the aged care Community Visitors Scheme;
- \$21.6 million over four years to identify and replicate best practice clinical care in aged care homes;
- \$13.4 million over four years for training for the community care workforce;
- \$24.2 million over five years to improve arrangements for aged care assessments;
- \$65.9 million over four years to continue two vital training programmes for nurses and aged care staff;
- 150 additional flexible places for care of older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; and

- \$19.4 million over four years to help offset the higher costs and recruitment difficulties faced by community aged care services in rural areas.

Senator Santoro said the Howard Government had continued its long and proud record of responding to the needs of older Australians, whether they relied on the professional care of aged care homes or continued to live independently in their own communities.

“This Government is committed to choice, quality and financial sustainability for aged care. The measures announced in this Budget will ensure these three elements continue to remain major features of the aged care landscape in this country.

“Much has been said about the challenges presented by Australia’s ageing population.

“We have demonstrated tonight that we are planning for these challenges, and are serious about meeting them.

“This Budget invests heavily in the safety of residents, the quality of care and the skills of the dedicated and tireless people who dedicate their careers to looking after the frail aged.”

**Media Contact: Andrew Park 0418 253 285**