



## **THE HON KEN WYATT AM, MP**

Assistant Minister for Health  
Federal Member for Hasluck

### **TRANSCRIPT**

**Speech – LASA Congress  
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E&OE...

Good afternoon.

I'd like to start by thanking LASA President Graeme Blackman and CEO Patrick Reid for inviting me to speak with you today.

Unfortunately Minister Ley was unable to join me, however she sends her apologies and I am very pleased to be here.

The LASA National Congress is in fact my first industry event since becoming the Assistant Minister and what a great first aged care gig this is – giving me the opportunity to engage with so many industry representatives.

Aged care was certainly served well by Senator Fifield and the Department of Social Services, but now it has come home.

I believe that we can support older Australians – and their carers – better with aged care in the portfolio that includes health.

We will do this by continuing the reforms implemented by Mitch Fifield and by better integrating aged care with health services.

As we all know aged care is not all about health. But there is no doubt that bringing the aged care portfolio back to Health, and to the Cabinet table, will add value.

We know aged care plays an important role in the overall health system and better integration will benefit all Australians, particularly those over the age of 65.

I will come back to health and aged care integration a little later.

This is a time of significant change for the way we approach aged care in Australia.

The demographics demand it. You know this better than I do.

The key point for Government and industry is that Australia's rapidly ageing population is characterised by longevity, diversity and a desire for independence.

The current generation of older Australians want to have a much greater role in decisions about their care – and this will accelerate as the baby boomers begin to need services.

This is the challenge we face as a society – how best to support this diverse demographic, giving them the choice and control they seek while making sure that the Australian taxpayer can afford it.

The current reforms take us quite some way along that track but – as the industry agrees – there is still more to be done.

When there is a change of Minister, people inevitably wonder whether existing policies and initiatives will continue or be subject to change by the new broom.

I want to take the opportunity today to put clearly on the record that the aged care changes announced in the 2015 Budget will continue and the day to day business of delivering quality aged care will also continue as usual.

With my Ministerial colleagues – Sussan Ley and Fiona Nash – we will implement, monitor and tweak as need be.

While it's early days my role will evolve, and my focus will be on the implementation of service delivery.

So on that note I want to speak briefly about 2015 Budget initiatives which are all in various stages of development and implementation.

Industry has an opportunity now to comment on two key reforms. And I really want to hear from you.

As you know from February 2017 home care packages will be attached to, and follow the consumer. This approach will deliver far greater choice and control to individuals. At the same time, it strengthens the aged care systems ability to deliver more innovative services, now and into the future.

The Department of Social Service released a consultation paper to get feedback from the sector on key policy and implementation decisions. You have until 27<sup>th</sup> October to have your say.

There is also a Departmental consultation paper on the development of the Short Term Restorative Care program. Supporting people to regain maximum independence after a hospital stay or avoiding going into hospital altogether is incredibly important work. Getting the design of this program right is important so again please make sure you take the opportunity to let us know your thinking. On this one you have until the 19<sup>th</sup> of October.

Developmental work on other 2015 budget changes, including the development of a single quality framework and private market provision of accreditation services, is well underway. You will see and engage with the Department more on these over the coming months.

And excitingly from 1 January 2016 the new independent Aged Care Complaints Commissioner will commence operations. This change will give people confidence that any complaints they have will be independently managed and addressed. As it separates the management of complaints from the Department's role in funding and compliance it should also give the sector greater confidence.

In addition to these developing reforms we are already busy implementing system changes to better support older Australians.

I am aware that the Department and the industry are in the process of bedding down a series of changes to information and assessments for consumers.

My Aged Care is now the entry point to aged care services and from 1 July this year that included undertaking assessments.

This was a significant change and, inevitably, some clients, assessors and service providers faced unexpected challenges.

The Department has been responsive to these operational challenges and has continued to work with our delivery partners to ensure systems and processes reach a steady operational state as quickly as possible.

While it's not yet operating perfectly I understand that it has improved and referrals are now flowing.

I know there are other issues that still need to be addressed.

Government is committed to continuing to develop and improve My Aged Care.

And I thank you for working with us to that end.

I am also aware of the work being done to develop and deliver the best possible dementia support in aged care services.

The Health portfolio is now responsible for both the health related elements – such as research – and the care for older Australians living with dementia.

There are an estimated 340,000 Australians living with dementia and an estimated 1.2 million people involved in caring for them.

Government is tackling dementia on the medical research front. We have boosted dementia research with an additional \$200 million allocated through the National Health and Medical Research Council.

As part of this funding, we have established a new National Institute for Dementia Research. This institute will prioritise and coordinate dementia research across Australia, and promote collaboration internationally.

Care of people with dementia is absolutely core business for all aged care services with approximately 50% of all aged care residents having dementia.

I know industry is waiting for the announcement and commencement of the new Severe Behaviour Response Teams (SBRT). A mobile workforce of multidisciplinary experts who will support residential care services delivering care to people with most severe dementia related behaviours.

The teams will assess residents exhibiting extreme behaviours, assist care staff in resolving the immediate crisis, develop a care plan, and provide follow up assistance as needed.

The idea for the teams came from the 2014 Ministerial Dementia Forum – another example of Government/industry collaboration.

What I can tell you today is that the open competitive process to deliver the SBRT has been completed.

A national service provider has been selected and the details of this will be announced shortly.

I want to mention one other really important piece of work that is occurring.

The work of the Aged Care Financing Authority (ACFA) will be critical in understanding the issues affecting the financial performance of rural and remote providers.

ACFAs earlier report on factors affecting the financial performance of residential care providers highlighted the importance of strong and strategic governance and leadership on the success of organisations.

But there wasn't enough information on rural and remote services to draw any firm conclusions which is why Government has tasked ACFA to look more closely at this issue.

This study will include both residential and home care providers. The study will include a large scale data collection exercise as well as a series of one-on-one meetings with rural and regional providers all over the country. Interested parties have already been able to make a submission to the ACFA to put their views and share their experiences.

Can I urge all rural and remote aged care providers to work with ACFA, because a collaborative approach will give us a better evidence base for policies that will work for Australians living outside main population centres.

We have always known that one size doesn't fit all and that provision of services in metropolitan areas is different than rural towns or areas which is different to service delivery in very remote or indigenous communities.

This study should help Government and the industry to think about how aged care services are best delivered in rural and remote areas.

One of the things you sometimes see in rural and remote areas is a greater integration of all health and human services on the ground.

The Multi-Purpose Service Model – which I know providers have been raising questions about and they will be looked at as part of ACFA's work – was originally designed with that intent.

I wanted to come back to the theme of integration because as I said before that is one of the real opportunities we have before us with aged care returning to the Health.

Over the past nine months, Minister Ley has been speaking with health professionals, touring innovative medical facilities and listening to the concerns of patients.

One of the key themes that has been highlighted right through these consultations has been the connection between health and aged care.

Minister Ley has visited many facilities and has been impressed with the innovative models of care she has seen – especially those that link primary care with residential care.

Just as there is reform in aged care so too is there reform in health care.

The Minister has also been looking at ways to improve mental health services and work will soon commence on private health insurance.

One of the major reforms in health is the creation of the Primary Health Care Networks (PHNs).

PHNs have a key role to play in local communities including the commissioning of health services. When we talk about commissioning we include a range of elements such as assessing and planning for local community needs, co-ordinating and linking services at the coalface right through to contracting service provision.

PHNs will develop collaborative relationships with GPs, primary health care providers and hospitals, with their boundaries aligned with local hospital networks. This will allow for better planning, and better management of resources.

This is the role they will play in health.

There will be variations in how PHNs operate to meet local community needs – one size does not and will not fit all. Again we will see differences in operations between metropolitan PHNs and rural and regional PHNs and that's as it should be. Because areas and markets differ and consumer choices differ too.

Part of this variation may also be the role PHNs could potentially play in aged care. We want to explore what this could be and the circumstances where it makes sense to have them involved.

And I look forward to listening to consumers and providers on this relationship between health and aged care.

This does not mean that I see aged care as purely about health care but I am always keen to explore new ways of delivering better care to all Australians.

A binding feature across these reforms areas is the central focus on the individual - what they need and want to live healthy and independent lives.

I'm excited to be implementing and driving reform across this portfolio.

By the end of this year the government will receive an aged care roadmap from the Aged Care Sector Committee which will provide future directions for aged care.

And I'm looking forward to working with all of you in delivering a consumer led, sustainable market based aged care system for older Australians.

Finally I'd like to thank each and every one of you – without exception – for the work that you do in supporting ageing Australians.

Thank you.

**ENDS**