



## THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP

### Minister for Ageing

#### MEDIA RELEASE

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#### **Study Reveals Benefit of Community Care Programs**

A new independent study has found that home-based community care packages for older Australians improved their quality of life, kept them healthier and reduced the need to go into a nursing home.

The **Predictors Influencing the Change in Health Status of Elderly in Community Care** — or **PITCH** — study looked at the impact of community care programs on carers and care recipients. It was launched by Minister for Ageing Justine Elliot in Melbourne today.

“Studies like PITCH are important because they help inform policy makers and governments and assist in ensuring what we do in terms of new policies or initiatives is based on good solid evidence,” Mrs Elliot said.

Overall, the study, initiated by Bapcare and conducted by Monash University’s Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine, found that amongst community care package recipients, there was:

- No deterioration in physical and mental health;
- an increase in cognitive function, social networks were sustained; and
- A reduction in carer strain for the study’s rural participants as a result of receiving community care.

“Community care packages help older people stay in their own homes and remain independent instead of going into residential care,” Mrs Elliot said.

The study was conducted over a one-year period from mid-2006 and involved 550 randomly selected clients in Victoria.

(The study did take into account a range of factors, including death, movement to a nursing home and new on-set dementia.)

Mrs Elliot said Federally-funded Community Aged Care Packages and Extended Aged Care at Home Packages often delayed admission to residential aged care and maintained their independence by continuing to live within their community and their own homes, as most people tell us they wish to do.

“These packages generally allow care recipients to maintain their quality of life and in some instances, as this study shows, improve their quality of life.

“The need for these packages is going to increase as the population ages so it is vital we have evidence like this study to ensure we are supporting best practice in community care.”

Baptcare also expects that the findings of this research will increase awareness in the sector of the impact of factors like location and socio-economic status on both carers and care recipients.

Mrs Elliot said the Australian Government recognises the challenge for community care as the population ages.

“The Government recognises the ageing of the population will place pressure on aged and community care services, and through the Budget we have provided more than \$40 billion over four years to aged and community care.

“In 2008–09 alone, we will be providing \$2.2 billion to community care — an increase of \$260 million compared to 2007–08. This is the most significant investment in aged and community care ever made by an Australian Government.”

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