THE HON SUSSAN LEY MP
Minister for Health
Minister for Aged Care
Minister for Sport

MEDIA STATEMENT

30 September 2015

**Appointment as Minister for Aged Care**

Never has there been a more exciting time to live in Australia. We are living longer, more productive lives.

Currently 3.7 million Australians are aged over 65 with the number expected to balloon to 4.6 million in just 20 years.

Parents, grandparents, neighbours and friends – we all have someone near and dear to us who are in this age group and we all want to ensure they receive the support and care they need and in fact deserve.

What better time to embrace our older generations, the services and care they receive now and will receive over the coming generations.

That’s why I proactively put my hand up to bring responsibility for aged care back to health and give it a seat at the Cabinet table.

While some see our ageing population as a burden on the health system or a burden on society, I have always supported and celebrated that we are living healthier and, for the most part, happier lives.

Aged care is more than just residential aged care homes or facilities – after all only one in 11 Australians aged over 70 actually receive permanent residential care.

Studies have shown people are most comfortable when they can spend as long as possible in their own homes and communities. That is something we should always strive for and I’m determined to ensure older Australians continue to have this opportunity.

I believe that we can support older Australians – and indeed their carers – better. A key factor in this support is how our aged care services integrate and complement our health services.

Bringing the aged care portfolio to sit alongside the Ministries of Health and Sport will complement our integrated health system. We know aged care plays an important role in the overall health system and this move will benefit all Australians, particularly those over the age of 65.

During my consultations over the past nine months as Health Minister I have 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.

I have visited many facilities and have been impressed with many of the innovative models of care I have seen – especially those that link primary care with residential care.
The clinician and consumer-led Primary Health Care Advisory Group has been established to review primary health care services to ensure that patients receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time, keeping patients out of hospital longer.

This advisory group – which is due to report back to me by the end of the year – will make a number of recommendations about the out-of-hospital care of all Australians with aged care playing an important role.

We need to ensure that not only does our aged care sector support the needs of those currently accessing services – it must be ready for the next generation of Australians.

The platform has been set with a number of important reforms commenced under Minister Fifield. I now look forward to progressing those reforms and making them a reality for millions of Australians.

The challenges are great, but the opportunities greater.

As a Minister with a strong record of consultation, I look forward to working with the aged care sector, to hear their thoughts, ideas and aspirations.

I look forward to working with the Hon Ken Wyatt MP who in his role as Assistant Minister will work with me with a specific focus on Aged Care and The Hon Fiona Nash as Minister for Rural Health.

We are living longer, participating in the work force longer and older Australians – more so than ever – are living out their senior years with energy and enthusiasm.

Now that’s something to celebrate.

ENDS

Media Contact: James Murphy 0478 333 974