THE HON KEN WYATT AM, MP

Minister for Health and Aged Care
Minister for Indigenous Health
Federal Member for Hasluck

SPEECH

Opening of Hammondcare, Wahroonga
10 February 2017

Before I begin I want to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet and pay my respects to Elders past, present and future. I also extend this respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here today.

I thank the Chairman of HammondCare, John Kightley, and Dr Stephen Judd [CEO, HammondCare] for inviting me today. I also acknowledge my Federal Government colleague, the Hon Paul Fletcher, the Minister for Urban Infrastructure, and the Member for Bradfield, and thank him for his presence today. It’s also good to be here with NSW Local Member for Ku-ring-gai, Alister Henskens SC, MP; and Danny Houseas [Manager, Community Development] from the Ku-ring-gai Council.

Last December I had the pleasure of touring another two HammondCare residential care facilities at the Pines and Southwood with Stephen and Angela [Ragus, General Manager, Residential Care, HammondCare]. I had the opportunity to view HammondCare’s dementia-specific model of residential aged care.

I’m always so pleased to be shown around places like HammondCare because I never fail to be impressed by the facilities, the services, and the level of innovative care residents receive. HammondCare really is leading the way in terms of aged care and particularly with regards to people with dementia.

How a community cares for vulnerable people is the measure of a just society. The people who built this nation deserve nothing less.

Today, with the official opening of HammondCare’s new dementia-specific, residential aged care home, we are clearly demonstrating that we are a society that cares. We are also saying that Australia, through organisations like HammondCare, is leading the way to provide the best of care in modern facilities that take into account the latest in thinking and services for people with dementia and their families.

Days like today make me very proud to be the Minister for Aged Care to see such best practice and innovation in the sector. As the Australian population ages, it’s essential that we have services that meet our evolving health and aged care needs.

The great news is that Australians, on the whole, are living longer and healthier lives. And aged care is adapting to a very significant demographic shift. According to the 2015
Intergenerational Report, by 2054–55 there will be nearly 2 million people aged 85 years and over. That’s up from around 500,000 people today.

We know that our older people, diagnosed with dementia, are in need of specialised care and HammondCare is rising to the challenge with this state-of-the-art facility.

Caring for people with dementia

In 2015–16, more than 1.3 million older people received some form of aged care. The vast majority received home-based care and support. Around 235,000 people with higher care needs received permanent residential aged care. Also in 2015-16, Australian Government expenditure for aged care totalled some $16.2 billion, more than two-thirds of which—$11.4 billion—was for residential aged care.

Residential aged care is not a one-size-fits-all proposition. Regardless of our background, we all want to feel empowered to choose the life we want, the conditions of our life, and the care that we access. We know that people who have dementia, and the highly skilled personnel who care for people with dementia, require a different model of care.

I’m pleased that the Australian Government has been able to provide support to HammondCare for a range of projects under our Dementia and Aged Care Services Fund. HammondCare—as a provider of Severe Behavioural Response Teams and as part of a consortium delivering the new national Dementia Behaviour Management Advisory Service—is delivering two key components of the Government’s comprehensive dementia support system.

Additionally, through Government-funded trials of ‘Dementia Dogs’ and ‘Arts on Prescription’, HammondCare is looking at new and innovative ways to improve the lives of people with dementia.

Keeping connected to the community in a variety of ways will always be an important part of ageing—no matter what a person’s personal or family circumstance might be. Living in the community where you grew up, worked or raised a family is equally important for that feeling of belonging and the simple continuity of living your life.

The challenge for the Government is to continue to press ahead and implement our ambitious aged care reform agenda for the benefit of all Australians. Streamlining and integrating aged care to make sure it is sustainable and responsive.

And I’d like to make just one more point. No government owns or controls Australia’s aged care system. We are partners. We are in partnership with you, and with the wider Australian community, to deliver the right conditions for a strong, flexible, innovative aged care sector.

We have to look after our old people and those with chronic conditions. We have to give them respect, after all, they have played their part in building our nation and helping provide the conditions that we enjoy and take for granted today. And together, we will build better communities and a better, kinder and more cohesive society will be the result.

It now gives me great pleasure to officially open HammondCare Wahroonga and I look forward to touring the facility with you.

For more information, contact the Minister's Office on 02 6277 4707