



## Quality aged care

**\$2.2 billion**  
total package value

**\$531.4 million**  
extra in-home care

**\$32.1 million**  
for dementia care

**\$111 million**  
strengthened quality  
and safety

### Summary

**The 2024-25 Budget includes \$2.2 billion to strengthen the quality of aged care services and connections that underpin quality aged care. It will improve wait times for older Australians seeking in-home care, bolster the aged care workforce, deliver an enhanced quality and safety regulator, and better technologies for the aged care sector.**

Significant improvements in aged care have been made in line with the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety recommendations. Aged care residents now have 24/7 nursing and more care time, aged care workers are taking home better pay and aged care providers are more transparent and accountable.

The Budget will promote stronger links between aged care and health systems to ensure older Australians get the medical support they need in a safe, comfortable environment.

An extra 24,100 Home Care Packages in 2024-25 will reduce wait times to an average of 6 months and support more Australians to access in-home aged care than ever before.

The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission's strengthened capability will ensure protections for older people in response to the Independent Capability Review recommendations.

The new rights-based Act will put older people at the centre of aged care to ensure people accessing Government-funded aged care services get the respect and quality of care they deserve. In preparation for the new Act, technology systems and digital infrastructure will be upgraded across the aged care sector. This Budget will invest in attracting and retaining aged care workers.

This includes funding to support an increase in the number of home care workers in regional, rural and remote areas where workforce shortages are the most acute, and the extension of programs to support better career pathways for nurses in aged care.

As part of the Strengthening Medicare package, states and territories will be supported to upskill residential aged care workers, and deliver outreach services, virtual care and complex care outside of hospital settings. The Transition Care Programme will be extended and reviewed to continue short-term care for older people recovering from a hospital stay.

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## **Better dementia care will be delivered through investment in services and support for people with complex care needs, as well as readying the health system for new diagnosis and treatment advances.**

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The new Aged Care Act will put older people at the centre of aged care. It will also support the Government's response to the Aged Care Taskforce. These reforms are crucial to create a sustainable sector that delivers high quality care. The Government is continuing to consult with older Australians and stakeholders to ensure there is broad support for reforms to improve the standard of aged care.

## **Who benefits**

### **Older Australians will benefit from a quality aged care system, with faster access to in-home care, a strong workforce and better links between aged care and health systems.**

Extra Home Care Packages will address Australia's increasing demand for in-home aged care. An extra 24,100 packages will help older people to remain independent in their home and community for longer (\$531.4 million). These new packages will complement the roll-out of the Single Assessment System from 1 July 2024, which will provide older people with a single entry point and needs assessment for aged care.

The Budget will deliver a stronger regulatory framework and a well-resourced, capable regulator to protect older Australians accessing aged care services, and ensure a high standard of safe, quality care (\$111 million).

The Government is committed to growing the workforce to meet the demands of Australia's ageing population.

Improved staffing solutions will create better conditions for the aged care workforce (\$88.4 million), including funding to:

- grow the home care workforce in regional, rural and remote areas, where workforce shortages are the most acute
- support better career pathways for nurses in aged care.

The new Act will mean older people, their families and carers will know their rights, know what to expect from aged care providers, and know they will be protected if they complain.

Under the new Act, aged care providers will operate in a better regulated, transparent and accountable system. Aged care workers will work in an environment that recognises their important role and prioritises safe, high quality care.

Underpinning the aged care reforms, including those dependent on the new Act, significant technology and platform maintenance and enhancements will be funded to ensure critical aged care digital systems will remain contemporary and comply with legislation (\$1.4 billion).

Improved systems will help older people, their families and carers, access aged care services and reduce administrative burden for aged care providers by better integrating aged care and health systems.

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## **Older people will get the health care and support they need to remain independent in their home or an aged care facility when they no longer need to stay in hospital. They will experience better connected services between aged care and health systems, reducing hospital stays and medical costs.**

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As part of the \$1.2 billion Strengthening Medicare package, states and territories will be funded (\$882.2 million) to deliver:

- programs that help older patients avoid unnecessary hospital admissions and to be discharged into a more appropriate care situation sooner if they are admitted
- hospital outreach services in the community and virtual care services
- training to upskill residential aged care workers to care for older people with cognitive decline and complex care.

To further support older people to move out of hospital settings, the Transition Care Programme will be extended to help people recover from a hospital stay with short-term care. The successful dementia program, Acute to Residential Care Transition Service, will expand to every state and territory.

Dementia continues to be the leading cause of disease burden in Australia for those aged over 65.

People living with dementia will be supported to successfully transition from hospital to aged care services and fund clinical in-reach services for people through the Specialist Dementia Care Program (\$32.1 million). It will also enable Australian Dementia Network researchers to continue to ready the health system for promising new dementia diagnostic and treatment options.

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**Pensioners and Commonwealth Seniors Health Cardholders, will enjoy cheaper medicines thanks to a freeze on PBS co-payments for up to 5 years. It means that while their pension rises each year with inflation, the cost of the medicines they rely on won't.**

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This is on top of the introduction of 60-day prescriptions, which have already halved the cost of many common PBS medicines for older people with an ongoing health condition.

Aged care residents will also have convenient and affordable access to lifesaving vaccines with no out-of-pocket expenses through the National Immunisation Program Vaccinations in Pharmacy Program (\$0.9 million). For the first time, pharmacists will be funded to provide free flu and other National Immunisation Program vaccines at residential homes.

Funding for residential aged care homes to engage an on-site pharmacist will help to ensure residents get the safest and most appropriate medication.



## Case study

Eleni is 86 and loves living in her town where she can visit the local library, meet friends for coffee or pop down to the shops. Due to issues with her blood pressure, Eleni recently had a fall, and she is now finding it harder to walk and to care for herself.

Thanks to additional Home Care Packages, Eleni has been able to more quickly access the care she needs in her own home. Eleni's personal care worker recently moved to the area and is getting training in mobility care. She helps Eleni to get a walker, making it easier for Eleni to continue her community social activities.

Eleni also gets assistance from her doctor through virtual care services to manage her blood pressure. She logs on through her phone while sitting at her kitchen table. Her doctor agrees that Eleni is now stable on her treatment and to continue her medication she gets a 60-day prescription, which is cheaper on the PBS with her concession card. The co-payment she pays for her medication won't rise for up to 5 years thanks to the freeze announced in the 2024–25 Budget.