



MEDIA RELEASE

Aged Care Royal Commission finds access to allied health a key factor in person-centred aged care

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Allied Health Professions Australia (AHPA) welcomes the release of the final report of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety. The Commissioners' findings that allied health care must be more accessible for older people to restore and maintain their physical and mental health, represent long-overdue recognition of the allied health role in appropriate care for older Australians. Their recommendations to embed allied health as an expected part of person-centred aged care must not be ignored by this government in its response to the report.

"The finding that access to allied health services – to maximise mobility, functionality, reablement and rehabilitation – should be an integral part of aged care, confirms what AHPA and our members have known for some time", said Claire Hewat, CEO of Allied Health Professions Australia. "We welcome this acknowledgement as part of a shift to truly person-centred care for older Australians."

"Allied health must be seen as a priority in our aged care system and part of a multidisciplinary approach to care", she said. "Thus far, it has not been. As a result, older people are languishing not living. There has been a lack of understanding about the preventive benefits of allied health interventions, and a tendency to provide reactive rather than proactive healthcare."

Allied health professionals provide personalised care that focuses on functionality and independence. In aged care, allied health professionals work directly with older people, and with support staff, to address conditions common in old age such as communication difficulties, hearing and vision impairment, depression and anxiety, memory loss and cognitive impairment, complex behavioural issues associated with dementia, chronic pain, mobility difficulties and fall risks, nutritional deficits and difficulties with swallowing. They may also be involved in palliative and end-of-life care.

"Allied health interventions are often seen as optional extras, but they should be seen as a core part of aged care. Assessing people's care needs when they enter the aged care system, understanding how allied health professionals can support those needs, and providing dedicated funding for allied health services are all important steps in providing high-quality aged care."

High-quality aged care requires a commitment to support the full potential of the allied health workforce to support the full potential of individuals, whether that involves maintaining functional independence or reducing risk of hospitalisation. The importance of access to allied health care has been recognised in temporary measures in response to COVID lockdowns in residential aged care. The Royal Commission's final report affirms that it is time now to address ongoing access to allied health across Australia's aged care system through structured approaches and targeted funding.



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CEO Claire Hewat is available for comment.

About Allied Health Professions Australia

Allied Health Professions Australia (AHPA) is a collegiate body consisting of 20 national allied health association members and a further 12 affiliate members with close links to the allied health sector. AHPA's members collectively represent over 130,000 allied health professionals across a range of settings such as health, aged care, disability, social services, education and justice.

A significant proportion of those allied health professionals provide essential care to older Australians. AHPA is committed to ensuring that all Australians, regardless of their background, socioeconomic status or age, can access safe, evidence-based services to support wellness, reablement and maintenance of functionality so that they can live life as fully as possible.

Please visit www.ahpa.com.au for further information about us.