

Media Release

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Inspector-General of Aged Care welcomes prospective removal of co-payments for showering, dressing and continence support under Support at Home

Inspector-General of Aged Care, Natalie Siegel-Brown, has welcomed today's announcement by the Australian Government that older people will no longer be asked to co-contribute for particular essential personal care services under Support at Home; specifically help with showering, dressing and continence support.

Come October, this will make a real impact in alleviating the dire and predictable consequences the poorest older Australians are already facing, an impact highlighted as the most urgent risk in the Inspector-General's 2025 Progress Report. Seventy-five percent of people receiving home care, being forced to co-contribute, are full or part pensioners, meaning they bear the greatest brunt of home care co-payments.

"This is an incredibly important and life-changing decision by the Government, and I congratulate them on listening to the pleas of older people, their families, and advocates across the sector," Ms Siegel-Brown said.

"Since the introduction of co-payments in November, I have heard heartbreaking stories about people having to choose between taking a shower or having a meal, because they simply could not afford to do both. And from people who could not afford to purchase continence supplies – leaving them feeling embarrassed and humiliated when out in public.

"Today's decision is a practical recognition that allowing older people to go without essential daily support can drive worse health outcomes and higher costs elsewhere in the aged care system.

"Australia already spends around \$40 billion a year on aged care, and Minister Butler has today announced an additional \$3 billion to strengthen the sector, which we welcome. I consider there is scope to do more within this expanded budget to incentivise and fully fund other supports that maintain independence at home, and to keep analysing how co-payments for other types of home support may unintentionally push people into more expensive residential aged care.

Ms Siegel-Brown urged the government to go even further, to maximise the effectiveness of current aged care spending and people's human rights: "I encourage the government to seize this opportunity to keep reviewing which supports are treated as 'essential' under Support at Home, and how the co-payment settings may affect people's ability to stay well and remain at home.

"This is not about asking for even more money; but we can use this existing budget better.

"Residential care is the most expensive setting in the system. If people are entering earlier than they need to, if they are staying longer than is necessary, then the budget is being consumed at the wrong end of the system.

"A system that supports independence rather than dependency, intervenes early rather than late, and invests in connection rather than crisis would serve more people, with shorter wait times, and fewer emergency escalations.

"Fewer people would need beds, sooner, and the budget would work harder, for longer, for more people. That would be a true rights-based aged care system, and one that would deliver the biggest bang for the aged care buck," said the Inspector-General.

Media contact: Simon Kinsmore on 0455 949 554