

Community Care

AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS ACTION PLAN
COMMUNITY CARE
HEALTH AND AGEING

The Australian Democrats support community-based and home-based care services and programs for younger people with disabilities and for older Australians. Community care assists people to stay in their homes with confidence and comfort for as long as they wish, rather than forcing them prematurely into residential care. Carers are a vital component in supporting people to remain within their home environment. Recognition and support of carer needs is essential in community care reforms.

Our Action Plan

- an immediate 20% boost in funding for the Home and Community Care (HACC) program with annual indexation and growth funding in real terms of at least 10% per annum;
- an increase in the number and resourcing of Australian Government funded care packages to ensure they meet current and projected care needs;
- give Local Government the principal responsibility for delivering home and community care programs funded jointly by the Commonwealth and State Governments. This will remove confusion and administrative waste and improve access to services;
- develop a single accreditation system for both residential and community based aged care services, which includes a quality assurance system to make sure that all community care services meet high standards;
- increase recognition and support for prevention and early intervention programmes that assist people to maintain their health and decreases the need for higher levels of care, with particular emphasis on memory loss, physical activity and nutrition;
- promote the extension of innovative programmes, such as 'Homeshare' where frail older people in need of assistance in their home are matched with a younger person who can benefit from low cost accommodation;
- improve training opportunities in psycho-geriatric care, dementia and the management of challenging behaviour for both formal and informal care providers;

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- additional funding for support services for carers and income support options for carers of older people , assessed as needing residential care, with training and monitoring to ensure quality care standards;
- increased funding for more flexible respite services; and,
- the provision of culturally and linguistically appropriate care for older Australians from indigenous and non-English speaking backgrounds.

The Issues

93% of people over 65 years of age live in the community and most want the choice of remaining at home with support if needed rather than move to some form of institutional care.

It has been estimated that at any one time up to 400,000 older people and people with a disability rely on community care services to remain living in the community and this number will increase.

Our ageing population and changes in the pattern of family life mean that people are relying on good quality community care.

Despite the social and health benefits associated with community care and the hard work done by many of the groups that provide services, many people miss out.

The 1998 ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers found that 1 in 4 households of people over the age of 65 reported needs that were not being fully met.

Due to the demand exceeding the services that are currently funded, most groups can only provide care to those who are most ill and dependent or they must ration services.

The system for providing community care services and for funding them is incredibly complex - both for people wanting to access the services and for those who are providing them.

Although Australia's carers contribute billions of dollars in unpaid labour and savings in care costs, they receive a mere \$98 a fortnight for their efforts and the vital role they play in assisting aged people to remain independent. There needs to be more choice open to carers about the type and extent of support they can receive.

See also: Residential Aged Care and Carer action plans.