BUDGET 2005-06 - MORE CHOICE, BETTER AGED CARE SERVICES

The 2005-06 Federal Budget continues the Australian Government’s reforms to ensure the ongoing quality, diversity and availability of aged care services to meet the needs of Australia’s ageing population, the Minister for Ageing, Julie Bishop, said today.

“This Budget delivers $320.6 million over five years to make dementia an Australian Government National Health Priority and $207.6 million over four years to provide carers with more access to respite services,” Ms Bishop said.

“It also continues our commitment to ensuring the aged care sector is on a sustainable footing, by establishing the framework to consult with the community and the aged care sector about the long-term future of aged care.

“The Government’s reforms to aged care in 1997 and 2004 have laid the foundations for quality aged care for older Australians, including the rational and orderly expansion of aged care places, and improved qualifications and skills for the aged care workforce.

“The new consultation framework will enable all Australians with an interest in aged care to have their say on some of the longer term options proposed by the independent Review of Pricing Arrangements in Residential Aged Care (the Hogan Review). These included proposals to increase choice in residential and community aged care services, increased competition, and measures to ensure greater sustainability of the sector.”

Dementia will be an Australian Government National Health Priority with Budget funding of $320.6 million over five years.

“This will increase funding for research, treatment and support services for people with dementia and their carers, and is in addition to the $2.6 billion the Australian Government already provides in funding for dementia support each year,” Ms Bishop said.

“The new funding will help establish 2,000 new dementia-specific Extended Aged Care at Home packages, which provide the equivalent of high level nursing home care delivered to a person in their own home.

“This will enable more people living with dementia to remain at home with their families and carers in their community, rather than entering residential aged care.
“A key part of helping people to remain at home as they age is providing support for carers. Caring is a demanding, yet rewarding role. In recognition of carers’ needs the Australian Government has, since coming to office, delivered a fivefold increase in funding for the National Respite for Carers Program.

“This Budget will build on that increase by providing $207.6 million over four years for respite services, in particular for extended respite hours to help working carers, and more places for those in rural and regional Australia.”

The Government will also further increase choice in this Budget by removing the requirement for aged care providers to re-apply for Extra Service status every five years. Extra Service aged care places give older Australians who choose to pay more the choice of ‘hotel-type’ accommodation services. Lifting the five year limit will not only encourage more providers to offer Extra Service places, but also reduce paperwork for aged care providers.

Ms Bishop said the Budget continued the Australian Government’s commitment to its vision for a world class system of aged care that delivered high quality, affordable and accessible services to meet the individual needs and choices of older Australians.

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