

**Senate Community Affairs Committee**

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

**Supplementary Budget Estimates 2016 - 2017, 19 October 2016**

**Ref No:** SQ16-000542

**OUTCOME:** 6 - Ageing and Aged Care

**Topic:** Support Packages

**Type of Question:** Written Question on Notice

**Senator:** Siewert, Rachel

**Question:**

Does the Government consider it is equitable to offer a lower level of care to some older Australians due to rationing of support packages?

**Answer:**

Current arrangements

If a client has been approved for higher level care (a level 3 or 4 package), they may be offered a lower level package as an interim measure until a more suitable package becomes available.

The client may be eligible to seek interim services under the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP), which can provide entry-level services including domestic assistance, personal care, home maintenance, home modification and nursing care. Any CHSP services delivered to home care packages clients would generally be paid on a full cost-recovery basis.

Home care packages tend to be a popular option and in some areas there may be a waiting period between an assessment by an Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT) and the time a client is offered a home care package by a home care provider.

A key focus of the 2015 Aged Care Approvals Round (ACAR) was the release of significantly more Level 3 and Level 4 home care packages relative to lower level packages, in recognition of consumer demand for higher level home care and sector feedback. In addition, the Minister for Aged Care varied the original Ministerial Determination in January 2016 to reassign an additional 400 Level 4 home care packages for allocation in the 2015 ACAR.

While the Australian Government continues to increase the total number of home care packages each year, there is a limit to the number of home care packages available. The length of time a client may need to wait to receive a home care package will depend on a number of factors, including:

- how many other people have approval for packages in that particular area;
- the number of providers delivering packages in that area; and
- whether a provider has a package available that meets the client's needs.

### Future arrangements

From 27 February 2017, the national prioritisation system will assign packages to consumers who have been approved for home care and have advised of their interest in seeking services. The national prioritisation system aims to provide equitable access to home care and allow for a fair method of distributing packages, whilst operating within expenditure forecasts.

Consumers will be queued for a package once they have been approved for home care and advised of their intention to seek services. A consumer's position in the queue will be dependent on:

- their relative needs and circumstances as determined through the comprehensive assessment undertaken by an ACAT; and
- the time that a person has been waiting for care.

While consumers wait for a package at their approved level, they will be able to access interim lower level packages. This will allow consumers to receive some home care while waiting for a package at their approved level and will be an option that is available to all consumers.