



National Seniors Australia 2026-27 Pre-Budget Submission

January 2026

National Seniors
AUSTRALIA

50 YEARS
Impacting Lives

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NSA is a not-for-profit organisation established in 1976. With the help of our members and supporters, we seek to achieve better outcomes for all older Australians. We do this through our core advocacy and research activities and by providing information and services to older people.

Acknowledgement of Country

National Seniors Australia is located in Brisbane and Canberra.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land and waters in which we operate, the Turrbul and the Ngunnawal and Ngambri Peoples and honour and value their continuing culture and contribution and pay our respects to their elders, past, present, and emerging.

Executive Summary

National Seniors Australia (NSA) is the peak consumer body representing older Australians. With a community of around 280,000 nationwide, NSA is well placed to reflect the views of older Australians. Our priority is to protect, defend, and promote the interests of older people, both now and in the future.

Cost-of-living pressures continue to affect all, stretching household budgets despite Australia's strong economy. The 2026 Budget provides an opportunity to refine government policy to ensure that public spending is targeted to achieve positive outcomes for the country. The budget also provides an opportunity to leverage the experience, skills, and resources of older people to build a better nation.

This submission puts forward the following 13 policy recommendations to improve government systems and programs supporting older Australians:

- ensure a measured transition to a fair deeming rate;
- exempt work related income from the Age Pension income test;
- apply a targeted energy credit and increase the energy supplement;
- create a Pensioner Extra Concessions Card to support low-income pensioners;
- exempt excess proceeds from the Age Pension means test to support downsizing;
- increase the maximum rate of Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA);
- ensure people retain control over superannuation;
- increase the existing Major Bank Levy to ensure face-to-face banking via a Community Services Obligation (CSO);
- comprehensively review the private health system;
- create a targeted Seniors Dental Benefit Scheme;
- reduce the waitlist for Support at Home (SaH) to three (3) months by 1 January 2027;
- create a simplified aged care provider performance scorecard; and
- create a cross-government taskforce to address stranded patients in hospital.

This suite of policy recommendations will help to address cost-of-living pressures facing older (and younger) people and ensure older people feel that government is listening.



Chris Grice
Chief Executive Officer

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Key recommendations

Age Pension – Minister for Social Services

Recommendation 1: Create a fair and transparent method to set deeming rates and transition in a measured manner in line with regular indexation.

Recommendation 2: Exempt employment income from the Age Pension income test.

Concessions – Minister for Social Services

Recommendation 3: Apply a targeted \$150 energy credit to households and small businesses and apply “catch-up” (and ongoing) indexation to the existing Energy Supplement.

Recommendation 4: Create a Pensioner Extra Concessions Card to provide additional concessions and supports for pensioners with limited means.

Housing – Minister for Social Services; Minister for Housing

Recommendation 5: Exempt excess sale proceeds from the Age Pension means test to support downsizing into age friendly homes.

Recommendation 6: Increase the maximum rate of Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) and tie indexation to the rental component of CPI.

Superannuation – Minister for Financial Services

Recommendation 7: Ensure people retain control over their superannuation and implement a retirement phase performance test.

Banking and financial services – Minister for Financial Services

Recommendation 8: Ensure the availability of face-to-face banking services through a Community Services Obligation (CSO) funded by an increase in the existing Major Bank Levy.

Health – Minister for Health and Ageing

Recommendation 9: Direct the Productivity Commission to conduct a full review of the private health system.

Recommendation 10: Create a targeted Seniors Dental Benefits Scheme to help seniors access essential dental care.

Aged Care – Minister for Aged Care and Seniors; Minister for Health and Ageing

Recommendation 11: Reduce the waitlist for Support at Home (SaH) to three (3) months by 1 January 2027 by promptly releasing new packages.

Recommendation 12: Create a simple aged care performance scorecard to identify underperforming or unsustainable providers.

Recommendation 13: Establish a cross-government taskforce to develop solutions that ensure aged care services meet the needs of patients stranded in hospital.



AGE PENSION

Recommendation 1:

Create a fair and transparent method to set deeming rates and with a measured transition in line with regular indexation.

Overview

- Deeming rates are used as part of the Age Pension income test to determine eligibility for the Commonwealth Seniors Health Card and to determine co-contributions for aged care services.
- NSA welcomed the commitment to raise deeming rates modestly in line with indexation after the three-year freeze was lifted from July 2025.
- However, we are concerned that if interest rates remain high and government quickly reverts to the old method used to set deeming rates, there could be significant financial impacts on older people:
 - hundreds of thousands of full and part pensioners would experience a significant cut to their pension;
 - some Commonwealth Seniors Health Card holders will lose this benefit; and
 - aged care co-contributions will increase subject to means testing.

WHAT ARE WE CALLING FOR?

- Restore confidence among retirees by government setting a fair and transparent rate for deeming and move in a measured manner towards this over time.
- The upper deeming rate should track in line with average one (1) year term deposit rate (which roughly tracks with the RBA cash rate – see Fig. 1). This would incentivise people to hold savings in higher yielding investments, such as superannuation.
- The lower deeming rate should reflect general transaction bank account rates (not term deposit rates). This would ensure older people are not penalised when holding less than the threshold (currently \$64,200 single and \$106,200 couple) in accounts that typically attract no interest because of the many conditions these impose.
- This new method should be phased in incrementally in line with indexation of the Age Pension in March and September until inflation and the cash rate moderate.

Budget impact

- This would result in a modest saving to government during the transition without having a significant impact on pensioners. Any short-term savings should be reinvested into other measures to support pensioners.

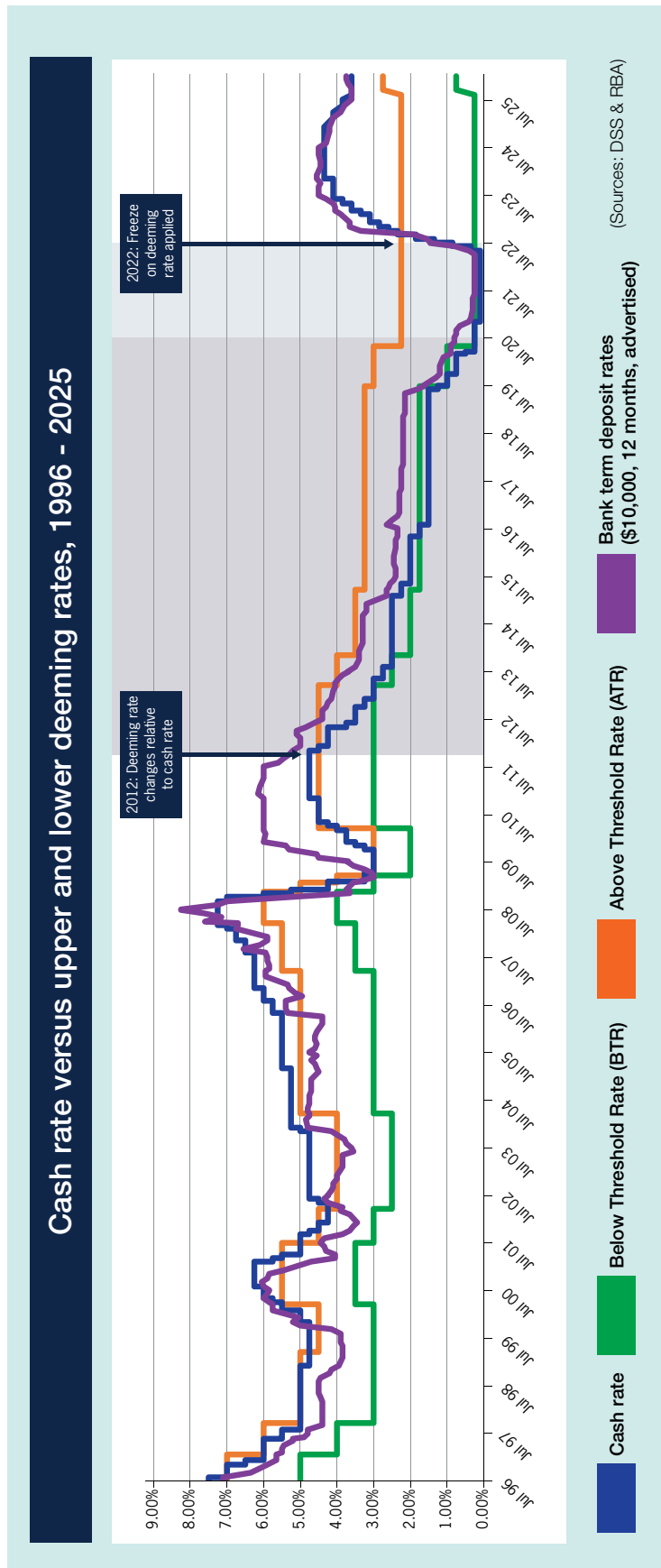


Figure 1: Comparison of RBA Cash Rate, deeming rates, and term deposit rate.
Data source [RBA](#), [DSS](#).

Recommendation 2:

Exempt employment income from the Age Pension income test.

Overview

- Latest [ABS](#) figures show 326,700 job vacancies. In some key sectors, such as health care and social assistance, job vacancies remain stubbornly high (59,600 or 18.2% of total vacancies).
- Current pension rules discourage older people from remaining in the workforce.
 - [DSS](#) data shows only 3.7% of people on the Age Pension declare earnings from employment.
 - A single Age Pension recipient loses 50c in the dollar from their pension if they work more than the rules allow.
 - Aged Pension rules are complex and confusing and cause many not to work or to work in the black economy to avoid impacting their pension.
 - This discourages some people from working past pension age, undermining the retention of mature and skilled workers at a time of high labour force demand.
- [Deloitte Access Economics](#) estimates a 5% increase in older worker participation (over 55) will result in a \$47.9bn increase to GDP (\$60bn in 2022).
- With women generally having lower superannuation balances, allowing them to retain their pension when they work, will help to address gaps in retirement savings and income, boosting financial wellbeing in retirement.

WHAT ARE WE CALLING FOR?

- Exempt employment income from the Age Pension income test to simplify the pension system and encourage more older people to remain in the workforce. Government could pilot the policy by creating a trial targeted at workers in the health and social assistance sector (e.g., aged care) first before rolling out to other sectors of the economy.

Budget impact

- According to [Deloitte modelling](#) the policy is estimated to be cost neutral if 8.3% of pensioners take up the opportunity to return to work from additional income tax raised (this estimate does not include other tax gains, e.g., additional GST from spending etc.).



CONCESSIONS

Recommendation 3:

Apply a targeted \$150 energy credit to households and small businesses and “catch-up” (and ongoing) indexation to the existing Energy Supplement (ES).

Overview

- Rising energy prices increase the cost of everyday goods and services, adding to inflationary pressures across the broader economy.
- NSA surveys consistently show the cost of energy as a key concern for seniors.
- Rising energy costs affect all but are acutely felt by those with limited means and those who cannot afford technologies, such as solar, that reduce energy bills.
- Rebates delivered via the [Energy Bill Relief Fund](#) have eased pressure on household budgets, and positively impacted [inflation](#).
- The ES provides income support payment recipients, including pensioners, carers, job seekers etc, with help to meet electricity costs, however, indexation of the ES ceased in September 2014. As such, its value relative to rising energy prices has declined year-on-year.

WHAT ARE WE CALLING FOR?

- The Federal Government should provide:
 1. An energy credit of \$150 targeted to Australian households and small businesses via electricity bills who do not have solar and/or batteries to ensure it is targeted at need.
 2. A one-off increase to the ES to bring the supplement to parity with past energy inflation (since September 2014) and reinstate indexation. For an Age Pension recipient, this would represent an annual increase of \$90 (single) and \$135.20 (couple). Indexation should use the energy component of CPI - if energy costs reduce, the supplement would reduce, thus incentivising government to maintain lower energy prices.

Budget impact

- The cost of providing a \$150 energy credit to 10.8 million households would be approx. \$1.6 billion. If 4.2 million households with solar were excluded, the cost to the budget would be approx. \$992 million. The cost of supplying to one million small business would be \$150 million. The total cost to the budget would be approx. \$1.15 billion.
- A one-off increase in the ES for the 5.4 million people entitled to it would cost approx. \$141.5 million per year. This estimate accounts for variability in the payment across recipients. *Ideally, ES payments should be standardised to reduce complexity.*

Recommendation 4:

Create a Pensioner Extra Concessions Card (PECC) to target additional concessions and supports to pensioners with limited means.

Overview

- Commonwealth concession cards are used by all levels of government to provide access to subsidised services and concessions.
- All pensioners, regardless of their means, are eligible for the same concessions via the Pensioner Concession Card (PCC):
 - For example, a homeowning couple can currently have up to \$1,074,000 in assets (not including the principal place of residence) and receive the same concessions associated with a PCC as a couple with no assets and no home meaning there is no incentive or compensation for those who spend down their savings.
- There is no way to target additional concessions to those most in need or to deliver additional concessions to pensioners who spend down their savings in later life.

WHAT ARE WE CALLING FOR?

- PECC holders to receive all existing PECC benefits and additional concessions, e.g., higher concession rates on energy, council rates, medicines etc.
- The Commonwealth to use existing customer data to assess PECC eligibility.
 - A person's income and assets (adjusted for housing wealth) are already used to determine their Age Pension amount. This could be used to determine eligibility for a PECC based on appropriate criteria.

Budget impact

- Cost to the Federal Government would be limited to initial administration and promotional costs (unless new Commonwealth concessions were applied).
- The PECC will reduce the cost of providing new concessions, allowing government to do more with less.
 - For example, if approx. 20% of pensioners (500,000) were assessed as eligible for the PECC, the Federal Government could administer a targeted Seniors Dental Benefits Scheme (SDBS). If a PECC holder was eligible for \$500 per year for dental under the SDBS, this would cost \$250 million per year.
 - If government wanted to deliver the SDBS to *all* pensioners, it could use the PECC to provide a differentiated payment at a reduced cost to the budget, e.g., \$300 per year to 500,000 PECC = \$150 million; \$125 per year to remaining 2.16 million PECC holders = \$270 million; Total cost = \$395 million per year.
 - In comparison, providing a \$500 SDBS to all pensioners would cost \$1.3 billion per year.



HOUSING

Recommendation 5:

Exempt excess sale proceeds from the Age Pension means test when selling a principal place of residence to support downsizing into age friendly homes.

Overview

- Housing needs change as people age. [ABS](#) data shows 45% of households receiving a pension or government allowance have two or more spare bedrooms, some may be surplus to need.
- Housing, which once might have been suitable, can become challenging to maintain and unsafe, due to changes to capacity and mobility.
- [NSA](#) surveys suggest as much as a third of older people are open to the idea of moving - 50% of respondents want housing that meets ageing needs, 43% want a smaller property, and 40% seek lifestyle improvements. This research also highlights the cost of moving and the impact on pension entitlements as barriers to relocating to age-appropriate housing in later life.

WHAT ARE WE CALLING FOR?

- Excess proceeds from the sale of the family home (up to a reasonable cap) should be exempt from the Age Pension means test.
- The policy would be targeted at those most in need. Eligible recipients should:
 - be assessed as requiring an aged care Support at Home package;
 - be aged 80 or older and
 - have lived in their home for a minimum of 15 years.
- The policy could require that excess funds be allocated into superannuation – as a means to boost personal savings and income.

Budget impact

- The budget impact of this measure would be limited. People become less likely to consider downsizing in later life, often continuing in their homes until they require residential aged care or pass away, meaning there is limited revenue foregone from reduced pension outlays.
- In support of this, NSA research has found the proportion of people over 80 considering downsizing is much lower than those aged 50-79 (24% vs 35%). Similarly, the proportion who will never consider moving is significantly higher (38% vs 32%). Analysis of DSS administrative and ABS population data shows the proportion of population receiving a pension stabilises at about 80% after the age of 80 indicating limited change in this cohort.
- Incentivising these people to downsize will have positive impacts on housing and the economy, which will have flow on benefits for the federal budget.

Recommendation 6:

Increase the maximum rate of Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) and tie indexation to changes in the rental component of the consumer price index.

Overview

- The rental crisis in Australia is worsening as rental prices and competition for housing increase.
 - [ABS](#) data shows the proportion of the population who are renters is increasing steadily over time (rising from 27% in 1999 to 31% in 2019). This trend includes a rising proportion of older people reliant on the rental market.
- While two one-off increases to Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) occurred in 2023 (15%) and 2024 (10%) this has not been enough to catch up to strong increases in rents.
- These gains will disappear if indexation continues to be attached to overall CPI and not specifically tied to the rent component of CPI.
 - According to the [ABS](#), the rental component of CPI increased 6.75% compared to 2.81% for overall CPI (over 12 months to September 2024), whereas the rental component of CPI increased by 3.81% compared to 3.24% for overall CPI (over 12 months to September 2025).

WHAT ARE WE CALLING FOR?

- Increase the maximum CRA payment by a further 5% and index future increases to the rent component of CPI (not overall CPI) in recognition that rents have increased faster than overall inflation.

Budget impact

- The cost of providing a further one-off 5% increase in CRA would be approx. \$900m over forward estimates.
- The budget impact of tying indexation to the rent component of CPI would vary depending on the trajectory of rental costs.
- Implementing indexation to rent provides an incentive for government to address rent pricing because it creates budget consequences from inaction. If rental costs fall relative to CPI, this would reduce indexation and budget outlay for CRA.



SUPERANNUATION

Recommendation 7:

Ensure people retain control over their superannuation and implement a performance test for retirement products.

Overview

- The pool of funds held in superannuation continues to grow – [\\$4.3 trillion dollars](#) at the end of the June 2025 quarter.
- Individual balances continue to grow, although it should be noted that most people have relatively low balances – the [median balance](#) for men and women was \$219,773 and \$163,218 respectively at age 60-64 (as of June 2023).
- While the success of superannuation has increased savings and income in later life, there will continue to be heavy reliance on the Age Pension as either a sole source or significant source of income in later life – especially as household debt rises.
- Access to capital is as important as regular income. According to recent [NSA research](#), access to lump sums and money to meet irregular costs such as health and aged care is critical in later life and the primary reason behind older people’s decision to hold capital.
- With Treasury’s focus on the retirement phase of superannuation, we must ensure any reforms designed to help superannuants make better choices, do not push older people into products or services that are not in their best interests, especially if these limit access to capital for later life expenses or expose people to [extreme risk](#).

WHAT ARE WE CALLING FOR?

- Treasury should:
 - Acknowledge super is money held in trust for everyday Australians, the product of their hard work, and theirs to use however they wish.
 - Avoid policies that compel or incentivise retirement income products that are not in the best interests of superannuants or open them up to extreme risk.
 - Focus on developing educational tools to improve superannuants understanding of the retirement phase of superannuation (and not be used to sell or promote inappropriate or excessively risky products).
 - Develop a performance test for retirement phase products to enable superannuants to easily identify if a product is achieving good (or poor) outcomes to support choice and weed out underperforming products and funds.

Budget impact

- The cost to budget is relatively small. For example, in 2020 the [Australian Prudential Regulation Authority](#) (APRA) was given \$2.8 million over four years to develop and implement the initial superannuation performance test.



BANKING AND FINANCIAL SERVICES

Recommendation 8:

Ensure face-to-face banking services remain available to communities through a Community Services Obligation (CSO) funded by an increase in the existing Major Bank Levy.

Overview

- Face-to-face banking is an essential part of the banking system. However, bank closures, especially in regional and rural areas, are making it difficult to provide cash and face-to-face banking.
- The shift to digital transactions for various products and services makes it challenging for banking institutions to provide face-to-face banking services.
- Banking services are increasingly being supported via [third parties](#). Bank@Post operates in 3,300 post offices, on behalf of 79 banks and authorised deposit taking institutions (ADIs), managing \$10 billion in deposits and withdrawals each year. However, the services provided are limited and the financial viability of this model is questionable. According to the Senate Inquiry into Banking Closures in Regional Australia, *“While the Bank@Post service has been largely useful for basic, small transactions, it is not an adequate substitute for full bank branches.”*
- Bank branches in regional and remote areas need direct support to keep services available in these areas. In other sectors of the economy, there are provisions for delivering essential services to vulnerable cohorts through Community Services Obligations (CSO). A CSO is a government-mandated requirement to provide a service that may not be commercially viable on its own, benefiting the public. For example, in the telecommunications sector, a levy has been used to deliver infrastructure, such as fixed lines and payphones, in the transition to mobile technology. Hearing Australia administers a CSO program, funded by the Department of Health to provide eligible clients access to hearing services and devices.

WHAT ARE WE CALLING FOR?

- Increase the Major Bank Levy to provide a CSO to an appropriate entity to offer face-to-face banking services in areas where they are currently lacking but needed. Increase the Major Bank Levy from 0.06% to 0.065% per annum. In effect, this would be a levy on the largest banks which have closed their regional and rural bank network, as the CSO would support those banks that have retained their network.

Budget impact

- The change would have a limited cost to the Federal Budget, and would raise approximately \$150m per year as estimated by the [Parliamentary Budget Office in 2024](#).



HEALTH

Recommendation 9:

Direct the Productivity Commission to conduct a full review of the private health system.

Overview

- In 2018, Federal Labor's policy in Opposition was for the Productivity Commission to conduct a full review of the private health care system.
- The [Productivity Commission](#) (through its precursor, The Industry Commission) last undertook a full review of private health insurance in 1998.
- Despite several subsequent government and industry reviews and processes, including the ACCC PHI Ombudsman and the PH Ministerial Advisory Committee (2016 – 2018), private health insurance holders continue to face premium increases, product limitations, and soaring out-of-pocket costs.
- With more than 15 million Australians holding private health insurance, it is time government undertakes a systemic review of private health, with the view to redesign the private health care system with fit-for-purpose policy settings that ensure greater efficiency and lower out-of-pocket costs.

WHAT ARE WE CALLING FOR?

- A reference to the Productivity Commission to undertake a comprehensive, system-wide inquiry into the private health system with a particular focus on:
 - growth of private health insurance premiums, specialist fees and out-of-pocket expenses;
 - value and scope of product offerings covered by private health insurance;
 - interactions with the Medicare Benefits Scheme (MBS), Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) and other health system funding mechanisms; and
 - reforms to minimise premiums and out-of-pocket costs.

Budget impact

- In 2022-23, the [Productivity Commission](#) completed seven inquiries and other government commissioned projects at a cost between \$1.3 to \$5.3 million.
- As we are recommending a full and comprehensive inquiry into a complex system, it is likely the cost to government would be towards the upper end of previous inquiry costs.

Recommendation 10:

Create a targeted Seniors Dental Benefits Scheme (SDBS) to provide seniors with assistance to meet dental costs.

Overview

- According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), older people, especially those with [low socioeconomic status](#) and those living in residential aged care settings, are more likely to have [poor oral health](#).
- Older people who cannot afford private dental care must rely on public dental services, which can involve being placed on lengthy wait lists.
- As people age and become increasingly frail, the ability to adhere to good oral health practices can decline dramatically.
- According to the final report of the [Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety](#), poor oral health has many adverse consequences and interrelations. It can:
 - affect a person's ability to speak, eat, and socialise.
 - contribute to social isolation, functional impairment, pain and discomfort, ill health and even death.
 - contribute to health conditions, and is linked with other chronic conditions, such as diabetes, respiratory diseases, and cerebrovascular diseases.

WHAT ARE WE CALLING FOR?

- Establish a Seniors Dental Benefit Scheme (SDBS) to provide \$500 per year towards interventions to improve oral health outcomes among older people based on the existing Child Dental Benefit Scheme (CDBS).
- Initially, implement a means-tested SDBS targeted to older people before expanding to other groups.

Budget impact

- If eligibility was provided to Pensioner Concession Card and Commonwealth Seniors Card holders (as recommended by the Aged Care Royal Commission) the cost to government would total \$1.6 billion per year.
- If eligibility was provided to all Pensioner Concession Card holders, the annual cost would be \$1.33 billion per year.
- If eligibility was restricted to approx. 500,000 low means pensioners using NSA's proposed PECC, the cost to government would be \$250 million per year.



AGED CARE

Recommendation 11:

Reduce the waitlist for Support at Home (SaH) to three (3) months by 1 January 2027 by promptly releasing new packages and increasing the aged care assessment workforce.

Overview

- The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety recommended the Home Care Package wait list be cleared by immediately increasing the number of packages available and then allocating packages within one month of assessment.
- After making significant progress, the situation has gone backwards as people wait months for help, according to the [My Aged Care](#) figures.
- In [evidence to Senate estimates](#), the Department confirmed 328,014 Home Care Packages program places transitioned into SaH on 1 November 2025. There were 107,281 people on the National Priority System waitlist at the end of October, either waiting for a package or a package at their approved level. [Furthermore](#), there were approx. 68,000 people waiting for a comprehensive assessment for either care at home or in a residential care setting.
- Government should not wait for funding reforms to take effect and should urgently release more packages to start bringing the wait list and waiting times down.
- While wait times will be affected by workforce shortages, it is important to release additional packages as a first step, as this will signal to providers to increase workforce capacity and improve service availability.

WHAT ARE WE CALLING FOR?

- An immediate increase in the number of government funded Support at Home packages to reduce the wait list to approx. three (3) months by 1 January 2027 (at current levels we estimate this will require approx. 62,000 additional packages to be released above those already announced for 2026).
- Secure additional resources to fully establish the new single assessment workforce, ensuring older people are not waiting for assessments.
- Provide data forecasting demand to providers ahead of time to give them greater understanding about the location of future demand to assist in workforce planning

Budget impact

- Based on the cost of providing 24,100 packages in the 2024 budget (\$531.4 million) the cost of 62,000 additional packages will be approximately \$1.367 billion. This will be a temporary budget outlay until changes to consumer contributions provide additional funding for resourcing.

Recommendation 12:

Increase transparency by creating a simple aged care provider performance scorecard to assist consumers.

Overview

- Quality of care and financial transparency, as highlighted during the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, are paramount to consumers.
- NSA surveys have consistently indicated financial transparency as a key concern for older Australians. This concern will grow as older people contribute more for care.
- Since the Royal Commission, numerous innovations have emerged to enhance the transparency of aged care providers performance, regarding quality and financial management. These include star ratings and dollars for care etc.
- This plethora of data is overwhelming and beset by significant methodological problems and data errors.
- While disclosure of all providers financial data is critical, there is a need to extract the most relevant performance indicators to support decision making and encourage appropriate provider behaviour.
- As in the superannuation sector, consumers need a simple “performance” test showing a providers’ quality rating and financial sustainability as key metrics.

WHAT ARE WE CALLING FOR?

- A streamlined one-page consumer facing “performance” scorecard that allows consumers to quickly and easily understand if a provider meets acceptable “service quality” and is “financially sustainable”. The tool should be modelled on Figure 2 overleaf to enable consumers to easily understand a provider’s performance relative to other providers and acceptable norms.
- Providers located in red zones would be classified as providing poor quality of care or excessively low or high profitability. Data for “quality” could be sourced from the existing star rating system. While the information on “financial sustainability” could derive from the existing [Aged Care Financial Report](#). As such, this approach will not be onerous on providers.
- Profitability data could be averaged over time to accurately reflect providers circumstances and should account for capital costs associated with refurbishment and expansion for providers offering residential care.

Budget impact

- The cost to design and implement a new consumer facing performance tool should be significantly less than previous transparency projects given much of the data is already collected (\$100 million was allocated in the [2021 Budget](#) for several projects to deliver improved consumer transparency, including Star Ratings).

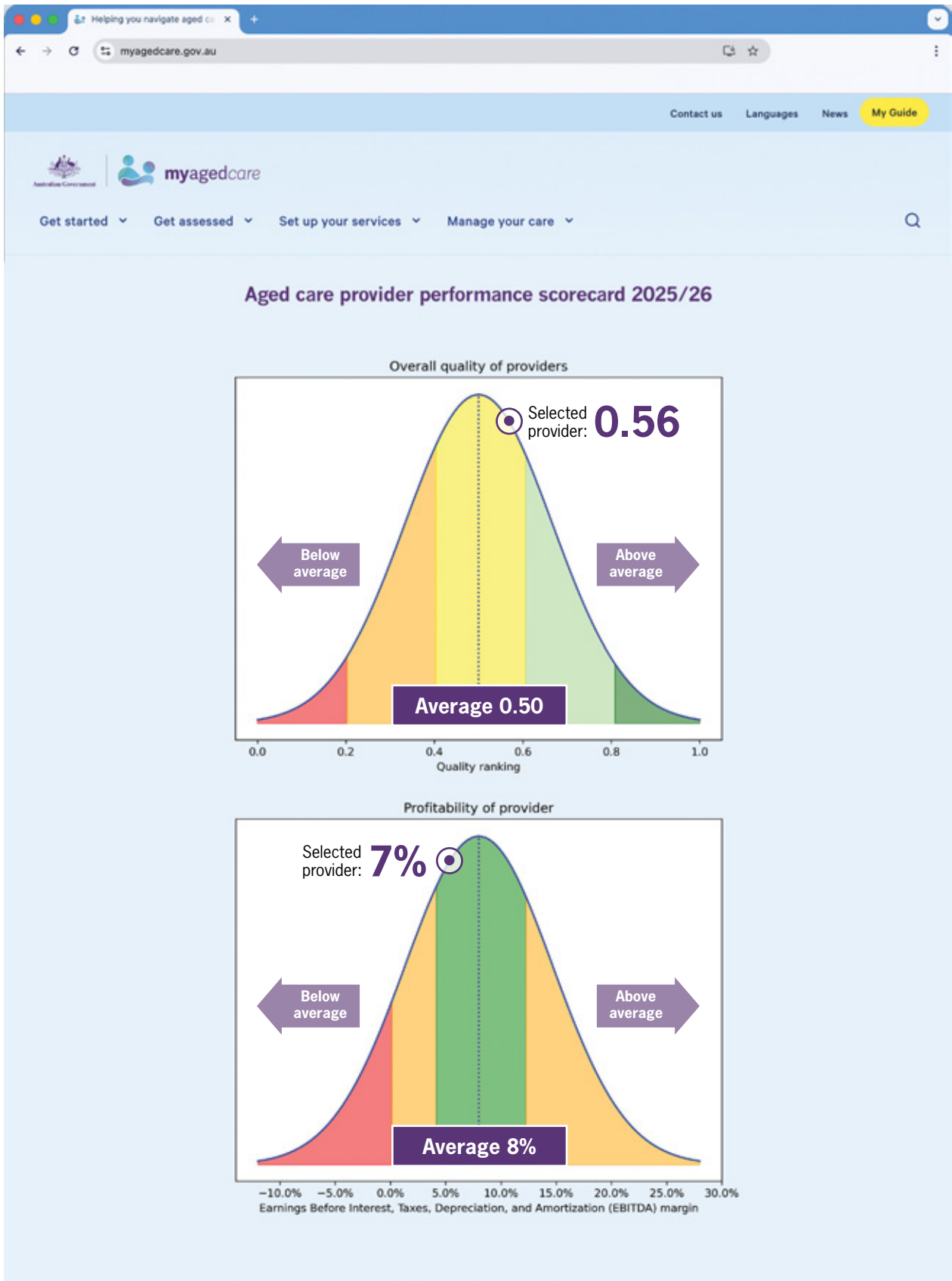


Figure 2: Concept design for proposed Aged Care Performance Scorecard

Recommendation 13:

Establish a cross-government state and federal taskforce to develop solutions that ensure aged care services meet the needs of patients stranded in hospitals.

Overview

- According to the latest [Productivity Commission](#) Report on Government Services 2022-23,
 - 4,022 people in public hospitals waited 35 days or more for admission to residential aged care or needed assistance at home with no other household member available to provide care.
 - People eligible and waiting for residential aged care represented a total of 438,779 patient days in 2022-23 across hospitals in Australia.
- The situation of older people stranded in hospital is worsening and requires urgent attention. It negatively affects older people who should be discharged home or transferred to appropriate residential care. It also has flow on impacts for the health and hospital system contributing to delays in access to hospital for all.
- The needs of older people stranded in hospital must be prioritised within the aged care system by addressing shortfalls in aged care services.
- Three cohorts are notably overrepresented in the stranded patient data – people with dementia, people from non-metropolitan areas, and people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

WHAT ARE WE CALLING FOR?

- The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing should convene an emergency taskforce made up of federal, state, and territory health officials, aged care providers, consumer representatives, and experts. This task force will develop a comprehensive action plan to address the specific needs of stranded patients and engage in ongoing monitoring of any response.
- One of its primary actions should be to identify changes to aged care funding models to quickly increase bed capacity for target groups and to ensure providers have adequate funding to address specific cohorts with higher needs, such as those associated with dementia.

Budget impact

- The main expense will be resourcing for secretariat and support functions, ensuring the taskforce operates effectively. We acknowledge that significant new funds will be required to ensure that services exist where they are needed and to meet the complex needs of older people and welcome [the announcement](#) of \$2 billion over four years as part of the solution. Government may need to further explore revenue models to ensure government can meet demands sustainability.

National Seniors Australia

ABN 89 050 523 003

Suite 19A, 160 Ann Street
Brisbane QLD 4000

GPO Box 1450,
Brisbane Qld 4001

P: 1300 76 50 50

E: policy@nationalseniors.com.au

1300 76 50 50

nationalseniors.com.au

National Seniors
AUSTRALIA ■

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