

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **COTA leads consumer support for 25% pay raise for aged care workers**

Council on the Ageing (COTA) Australia is leading the aged care consumer sector in backing claims for a 25% pay boost for aged care workers, releasing a formal statement of support today as the country celebrates *Thank You for Working in Aged Care Day*.

In a public statement endorsed by Carers Australia, Elder Abuse Action Australia, Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, LGBTIQ+ Health Australia, National Seniors Australia and the Older Persons Advocacy Network, COTA Australia says the claim for a 25% increase in the various aged care award wages currently being considered by the Fair Work Commission sets the bar if Australia is serious about building a safe, secure, respectful and rights-based aged care system.

"The fact that aged care workers are currently paid significantly less than people working in equivalent jobs in other industries is a real risk to older Australians," says COTA Chief Executive Ian Yates.

"For years COTA has backed the advice of experts, most recently the Aged Care Royal Commissioners, that raising wages in aged care is essential to achieving better outcomes in the system.

"Older Australians and their families expect and deserve a world-class aged care system, but big changes are needed if we're to attract and maintain a skilled aged care workforce.

"The consequences of failing to pay workers properly are far-reaching. When our aged care staff are overworked and underpaid, our society's perception of the value of their work diminishes and the quality of care for older Australians suffers."

Mr Yates said based on submissions to the aged care industry work value case currently before the Fair Work Commission, the Commission will establish the appropriate increase in the hourly rate for aged care workers to ensure we can attract the right people.

"Older Australians value the aged care workers who care for them and want them to have secure, safe, well paid jobs to provide the care that older Australians deserve," says Mr Yates.

"The bottom line is that if Australia is to have a quality aged care system, the public, through the Government, and the users of aged care, need to be willing to pay for it.

"It's not good enough that aged care workers are amongst the lowest paid in the nation when their work is essential to the health, wellbeing, and dignity of tens of thousands of older Australians.

"It's time we started properly valuing the vital work done by Australia's aged care workforce."

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COTA's statement of support is available here: <https://www.cota.org.au/news-items/cota-leads-consumer-support-for-25-pay-raise-for-aged-care-workers/>

**COTA Australia is the peak policy development, advocacy and representation organisation for older Australians, representing COTAs in every State and Territory and through them over 500,000 older Australians.**

## Statement of support for increasing the aged care award wages

Australia's aged care system has been letting older Australians down. A national, whole-of-government overhaul is needed to build and maintain the world-class aged care system that older Australians deserve and expect: one that guarantees dignity, choice and control for everyone receiving care. The Federal Government's response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety makes big strides in that direction.

However, increasing the wages and conditions of our aged care workforce is utterly essential to achieving this goal.

Aged care workers do some of the most important work in our society. But this is not reflected in their remuneration, training or career pathways. It is a national shame that aged care workers are among the lowest paid in Australia.

This must change.

The undersigned consumer organisations support submissions to the Fair Work Commission requesting a 25% increase in the aged care award wage. The Fair Work Commission will establish the appropriate increase in the hourly rate for aged care workers to ensure we can attract the right people.

We call on the Government to join the Fair Work Case in order to speed up the process, and also make provision for an increase in award wages in its budget.

The various aged care awards must improve wages and support the skills and career paths development of our aged care workforce, to ensure better care for older Australians. The new Independent Aged Care Pricing Authority must also take into account the pay required to attract a quality workforce able to deliver high quality care.

If Australia wants the highest quality aged care system, then it must also accept the need to value the workforce with appropriate levels of remuneration.

We thank each and every aged care worker for their incredible contribution to the fabric of our nation and the essential care they provide to tens of thousands of older Australians.



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