

# MEDIA RELEASE

## AGED CARE ROYAL COMMISSION MUST TACKLE THE CAUSES OF THE CRISIS

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The Aged Royal Commission, which was announced yesterday, must investigate ways to provide long-term financial stability for the sector, according to the Health Services Union (HSU).

HSU National Secretary Gerard Hayes said aged care workers were pleased their calls for a Royal Commission had finally been heeded, but were worried the Federal Government would steer the Royal Commission in the wrong direction.

“This Royal Commission must ask the right questions about aged care in Australia,” Mr Hayes said.

“It would be a tragic missed opportunity if the Royal Commission becomes an exercise in scapegoating workers and individual operators rather than tackling the underlying systemic problems in the sector.

“It must go beyond simply asking what’s happening and get to the bottom of why it is happening, and how it can be fixed.

“That means tackling the core issue of financial sustainability, so that aged care providers can afford to provide the level of care Australians deserve, while also providing appropriate pay and conditions for staff.”

Mr Hayes said Scott Morrison, as Treasurer, made massive cuts to aged care programs – such as slashing \$1.2 billion from the Aged Care Funding Instrument in 2016.

“Nothing says more about our values and priorities as Australians than the way we treat and care for our older citizens,” Mr Hayes said.

“Too often we hear stories of aged care facilities across Australia being forced to scrimp on basics and struggling to make ends meet.

“As a result, the standard of care, quality of food and cleanliness of facilities are all at risk of falling well below the level that all Australians deserve.

“Analysts have found that over 40 per cent of aged care homes are currently running at a loss. In outer regional and remote Australia around 56 per cent are operating at a loss.

“We need to make sure aged care is properly funded to meet the growing demand, and to guarantee older Australians choice and control over their care arrangements.”