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SPEECH

AUSTRALIAN AGED CARE QUALITY AGENCY BETTER PRACTICE CONFERENCE 2017

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Good morning everyone.

Before I begin I want to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the Wadjuk Noongar people, and pay my respects to Elders past and present.

I want to thank Nick Ryan [CEO] and his team at the Australian Aged Care Quality Agency for convening these important Better Practice conferences across the nation.

I also wish to acknowledge Karen Jacobs and Sheryl Quartermaine, from the Ngoonbi Community Services Indigenous Corporation, and extend a warm welcome to our distinguished international and interstate guests.

Your theme for the next two days reflects the spirit of change for the better, that we share – of Rethinking Aged Care by discovering, connecting and creating.

I am passionate – and so is the Turnbull government - about safety and quality aged care reforms.

I know you are too – because ageing and aged care are universal issues that touch each and every one of us personally, and are fundamental to our families and communities.

This conference brings us together so we can share information and learn from each other's experiences.

It's also an opportunity to recognise the people and organisations who continue going above and beyond, to find new and innovative ways to provide quality aged care services.

Community expectations of the aged care sector are rightly high – because all of us expect our family members and ourselves to be treated with nothing but dignity and respect.

Discovering new ways of meeting older Australians' needs is essential to the future of sustainable aged care.

We must cast our eyes and minds everywhere, analysing what it is we do well, encouraging innovation at home, and looking at how international experience can be adapted to benefit Australian care.

Today, we will hear from North America's Dr Allen Power, who's acclaimed Eden Alternative organisation is built on the philosophy that no matter how old we are or what challenges we live with, life is about continuing to grow.

This is a powerful – and empowering – premise.

We MUST think in terms of living beyond 100, and foster a care system that aims to maintain social cohesion, and active contribution from our elders, right through.

Recently, I met residents and staff in Australia's first "small household " aged care complex I firmly believe this type of accommodation will become a major part of our residential care now and into the future.

Located here in Perth, MercyHealth's Edgewater complex is based on a Netherlands model, that brings small groups of no more than 8 people together in individual houses, each with their own kitchens and homely facilities.

When I go into aged care homes, I regularly meet management and staff, but at Edgewater I actually knocked on the door of each house, gave a small gift of appreciation, and was welcomed in by residents.

It was like going into someone's home – which is exactly what I WAS doing, and how I believe most people would like aged care to be.

Residents are regularly involved in meal preparation, gardening, excursions and a wide range of activities, both within each house, and in the larger complex – which in this case has four, standalone homes.

At Edgewater, I found among residents an incredible feeling of camaraderie and support for each other.

As much as possible, they manage their own lives – there is a strong sense of ownership and safeness, supported by a specially developed, multi-skilled staffing model.

In its first year of operation, the centre has already recorded impressive health and wellbeing results for residents, with less falls, fewer hospital admissions and improved wellness, especially in terms of weight retention.

Importantly, it is also financially viable, with the project to be extended to include a much larger cluster of houses, and even a proposal for a co-located school.

Imagine that – children and education incorporated into the broader grounds of an aged community. I had the opportunity whilst in Berlin recently to see the realities of such a model which involved the elderly and the young coming together – it would be great to see this sort of integration become a reality in our own backyard.

MercyHealth is now planning a rollout of these small houses Australia wide, in what is a prime example of discovering, re-thinking and creating new ways of caring.

Connections across the aged care community are vital, as is connecting older Australians with the care they need.

These are both areas where I believe technology will play an increasingly important role.

There is already an Australian-designed app helping thousands of people link directly with individual home care providers, promising to improve choice in tailored home care services.

In the residential space, another successful app, Emprevo, is supercharging the all-important connections between the staff who provide care, and the homes themselves.

After three years of development, it is now helping improve care delivery, by giving staff shift flexibility and allowing providers to more easily fill their rosters.

This has resulted in additional time available to spend with residents, greater job satisfaction and improved staff retention – which can only be positive for the quality of care.

Emprevo makes it easier for carers to access shifts, and supports older workers – especially women – to re-enter the workforce as their life styles permit.

A few years ago, who could have imagined either of these mobile technologies, and how they could enhance aged care – so who knows what creative approaches are around the corner?

What we do know, is that creativity and change are vital – and we look forward to the results of the raft of exciting projects now funded by the latest \$34 million Dementia and Aged Care research grants.

All of these developments will underpin two of the key aspects of quality aged care - empowering our elders and ensuring they have as many options as possible.

A few recent high-profile aged care failures have brought into sharp focus where aspects of our systems have sadly let us down.

One of which will be familiar to most of us here, the appalling situation that unfolded at the Oakden Older Persons Mental Health service in South Australia.

This represents the exact opposite of choice and empowerment – where some of our most vulnerable citizens were let down by the provider, and the regulatory system.

The service is now closed - and soon I will be closing the loop on improved regulation, with the release of the Government's response to the comprehensive review I ordered, following the Oakden disaster.

The review I commissioned received more than 400 public submissions – with the breadth of this response highlighting how important safe quality aged care is to the sector and the wider Australian community.

I am also becoming increasingly concerned about the number of people who meet with me in respect of pressure sores and issues of incontinence.

The latest figures I have seen suggest that 10.3% is the estimated prevalence rates of pressure injuries in Australian residential aged care facilities.

When compared with other countries, there is room for improvement, so I am writing to all aged care providers asking them what they are doing to address this issue.

It's just not good enough to say most people in Australian aged care are treated well.

EVERY person deserves dignity, and everyone has the right to proper care – not just physical attention, but kindness and consideration that respects the individual.

The Turnbull Government is making fundamental reforms to the aged care system to ensure it provides that level of care, and the highest quality services that meet consumer needs and preferences.

Changes are being progressively implemented to create a competitive, market-based system where consumers drive quality, where red tape is reduced for aged care service providers, and where transparency and accountability are top priorities.

I believe innovations like the “small house” living system I mentioned earlier will expand the residential care offering, and that many people will vote with their feet, and thereby influence the market.

We must have the courage to embrace change – and the Turnbull government is not afraid to lead by example.

For the first time, we now have a transparent national queue system for the provision of aged care at home.

We are also working in partnership with older Australians, the aged care sector, researchers and the community, to develop a Single Aged Care Quality Framework that will drive even more consumer-focused care.

The Framework includes:

- a new set of quality standards that will apply to all aged care service providers;
- new quality assessment arrangements for assessing performance against the new quality standards; and
- improvements to the information available to consumers to support them in making choices about their aged care.

Earlier this year we undertook public consultation on a single set of standards and options for new quality assessment arrangements, and are now making adjustments to the framework and refining the draft standards.

Five years on from the beginning of the Living Longer Living Better reform process, it certainly is an opportune time for rethinking aged care.

David Tune’s independent Legislated Review of Aged Care has been released and is now being considered by government and analysed by the aged care sector.

As the recommendations are worked through, one of our primary considerations will be helping older Australians remain living in their own homes and communities for as long as possible, especially in regional, rural and remote areas.

Importantly, we have already ruled out implementation of two of the recommendations.

The Government will **not** include the full value of the owner's home in the means test for residential care, nor remove the annual and lifetime caps on means-tested fees.

The review's findings are now being carefully examined in the context of work by a special taskforce in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, which is considering ageing more broadly.

As you embark on two productive days of discovery, connection and creation, I want to extend my congratulations to the **Hall and Prior Health and Aged Care Group in WA** which received two Better Practice Awards this year.

The team at **Tuohy Aged Care Home** were recognised for implementing the *My Life, My Wishes* program, ensuring all care recipients have their funeral wishes and life history documented while they are in Tuohy's care.

The **Freshwater Bay and Mosman Park Aged Care Homes** have successfully reduced the use of the medication Risperidone in people with dementia, while maintaining their quality of life and wellbeing.

My congratulations also to **Rainbow: the Multicultural Aged Care Program in Maylands** on their award, which recognises their imaginative delivery of flexible, tailored care for people with a Slavic background.

Each of these organisations has been singled out for creative approaches that have improved the aged care experiences and quality of life of many people.

During this conference you will see and hear a lot about innovation, continuous improvement and what it means to deliver high-quality care.

This is a critical opportunity to focus on what you are already doing well, and actively assess where you can make improvements.

I am sure you will take many ideas away from this Better Practice conference that will help you provide even better services to the older people who entrust you with their care.

A stronger, sustainable, more resilient and even more respectful Australian aged care system will be the result of your success.

Thank you.