

BETTER ACCESS TO CARE FOR OLDER PEOPLE AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Issue: It is important that older people, people with disabilities and people returning home from hospital gain access to the right services to meet their care needs.

A new system to support older people, people with disabilities and people leaving hospital to navigate the care system and receive better care in their own homes, will be available by December 2007.

To achieve this, the Australian Government will improve and strengthen the Aged Care Assessment Program, clearly identify entry points into the community care system and improve eligibility and assessment processes for the Home and Community Care Program.

Improving the Aged Care Assessment Program

A range of activities will improve the timeliness, quality and consistency of Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT) recommendations. ACAT teams comprehensively assess older people's care needs and refer them to the most appropriate services available to meet those needs. ACAT's timely delivery of quality assessments is essential to ensure that frail older Australians access appropriate and cost effective services.

The Australian Government will contribute funding of around \$13 million over four years to the states and territories to help support ACAT participation in activities to improve quality, consistency and timeliness of assessments.

Another \$5 million will be provided by the Australian Government over four years for initiatives relating to its aged care program responsibilities, including national training initiatives, improved communication, review of team structures and quality and accountability frameworks.

Simplifying access to care services by streamlining arrangements in the Home and Community Care (HACC) program

Easy to identify 'entry points' into HACC will simplify access to care. These entry points will determine eligibility, undertake an assessment to identify the need for service and then refer to appropriate services. Entry points will also be able to refer frail older Australians who have more complex needs to Aged Care Assessment Teams, so that a more comprehensive assessment can be undertaken. Access will also be made easier by developing nationally consistent eligibility and assessment processes.